**A message to all Individuals we use our services and their families:**

Maintaining a safe service during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Date: 23rd March 2020

Firstly, may I begin by reassuring you that we are working extremely hard, to ensure we are being responsive to Government’s advice as it is released. This involves reading the literature and reviewing the materials they are publishing. These are being updated daily.

It is important that as a service we remain calm and controlled in the delivery of our services. We are a front-line service, with a duty of care to those that use our services, and a responsibility to ensure we safeguard our employees by following Government’s guidance.

This includes:

**Self-Isolation** – Staff are being asked to self-isolate in the case that they:

* have an underlying medical condition which is listed by Government, that makes them more vulnerable should they become infected with the virus.
* have symptoms of Coronavirus, you will need to stay at home for 7 days
* live with someone who has symptoms.
* If they are pregnant.

**Service Capacity** – The impact of self-isolation has reduced our capacity to provide services.

We have now considered each person’s needs on an individual basis and have discussed with family members how they are able to support us. Some services have been suspended and we have identified those who have priority needs. In the event of staff shortages, for those still receiving a service, please be advised it is likely you will experience:

A change in call times: We may have to alter your call times from those that you usually receive and ask for your patience and understanding. We will consider peoples need in order of priority and their level of dependency on our service. This will include times that medication is prescribed. We aim to keep you as informed as possible.

Different care staff: You may also find that you see different care staff to those whom you are used to. We apologise for this but trust that you will appreciate, we are unable to predict those who may become unwell/unavailable for work and we are mindful, that we should keep the amount of different people coming in and out of your home, to a minimum, where possible.

We also need to ensure we make effective use of the time that those staff, who are at work, have. Our priority will be to reduce their travel time as much as possible.

**Please be reminded that non-essential services are being suspended.**

**Appropriate use of PPE**

The overall message is for staff to wash their hands on arriving at your home and then to put on a clean apron and gloves before undertaking any part of the service.

Please note in accordance with Government guidelines, **Water Resistant Face Masks are to be worn only, and only when either the Service Users is displaying symptoms of the virus,** being:

* A persistent cough
* A fever

On leaving the service users home, staff must ensure they take off the Gloves and Apron correctly and dispose of these in a sealed bag. If a Service User or someone they live with has symptoms, used PPE should be disposed off into a sealed bag and then another one, and then left in the house for 72 hours before placing it into household rubbish.

You will be aware from National News that PPE stocks are limited. We currently have access to Gloves, Aprons and Hand Gel. Water Repellent Face Masks have been issued today; each branch has received 300. Use of PPE and Handwashing are the most important actions we can undertake to prevent cross infection.

The use of other non-water repellent masks is discouraged. They don’t offer protection and can lead to a sense of false security, where other recommended cautionary advice is not considered necessary.

Social distancing

All staff are asked to act responsibly on and off duty. We each have our own responsibilities. Being on the front line, we cannot work from home, but all are asked to ensure we:

1. Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
2. Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
3. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. To keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
4. Use telephone or online services to contact our GP or other essential services

Hospital Discharges

Today we have been instructed, that the hospitals need to discharge as many people as possible, to free beds for sufferers of the anticipated peak in Coronavirus cases. We are being asked to work to our full capacity and with other Care Providers to facilitate this. We will be working in order of priority of need, so be prepared, that we may alter visits to faciliate this.

Finally, I attach the link for The Governments advise for the delivery of Homecare and Supported Living Services. Please take the time to read this, to assure we are doing all that we have been instructed to, to keep you, others who use our services and our staff, as safe as possible.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-home-care-provision>

I thank you for your continued support.

Keep safe.

Catherine McBride

Managing Director.