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

Maintaining a safe service during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Date: 9th April 2020

Firstly, may I begin by reassuring you that we are working extremely hard, to ensure we continue to be 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, they will need to stay at home for 7 days
* live with someone who has symptoms, they will need to stay at home for 14 days
* 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 revised message is that staff should arrive at your home, wearing a clean apron and gloves, which they will change between tasks as appropriate, washing their hands between changes, if your facilities allow this. Hand gel will be used if not.

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

* A persistent cough
* A fever

**or for 7 days after being tested positive with the virus.**

On leaving the service users home, staff must ensure they take off PPE 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 a safe place, protected from wildlife, for 72 hours before placing it into household rubbish.

The Tonbridge School in Kent have very kindly made Visors for our Care Staff, to wear in situations where they are delivering a service, where there is a risk that droplets from a Service User, could enter the Carer’s eyes. These are re-usable and will be decontaminated between use. We really appreciate this and thank them. We hope to receive these shortly.

You will be aware from National News that PPE stocks are limited. We currently have access to Gloves, Aprons and Hand Gel and some Face Masks. We are working with Local Governments to ensure we have enough supplies of Fluid Resistant Face Masks to attend symptomatic patients. Use of PPE and Handwashing are the most important actions we can undertake to prevent cross infection.

Enfield Council announced yesterday that they are to issue stocks of other masks to all Care Staff working in the Borough, to wear during every session of care delivery. We hope to receive these supplies shortly.

We are aware that Essex County Council do not currently have enough stocks to make this same commitment.

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

We continue to work with hospitals to facilitate the Discharge of Patients who are medically fit, to return home. 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 facilitate this.

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

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

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

I thank you for your continued support.

Keep safe.



Catherine McBride

Managing Director.