



## **Coronavirus – Information for families and friends**

### **Temporary restrictions on visits**

The welfare and safety of our residents and colleagues is always our priority. The recent outbreak of coronavirus has heightened the need to take more steps to protect everyone in our homes.

Following a review of the latest public health information, we have made the difficult decision to suspend all visits to our care homes, including those from relatives and friends. The only exceptions will be for essential medical visits or for exceptional circumstances agreed in advance with the Home Manager.

We have not taken this decision lightly as we know how important contact with loved ones is in the lives of our residents. However, we understand the severity of coronavirus and the impact that a significant outbreak could have for those in our care. We are treating this with the greatest seriousness and are taking these additional measures to shield our residents as much as possible.

We appreciate how difficult these restrictions are, but we ask for your support in following them.

### **Helping residents and family stay close**

These are extraordinary times and we have tried to introduce as many accessible and easy ways to communicate as possible to help keep our residents feeling cheery and connected with families, friends and the wider community.

Never has there been a better time to introduce our older generation to technology and our younger generation to traditional letter writing to keep in touch with one another.

Our teams are always on hand to assist with telephone and video calls as well as emails and letters to help our residents stay in touch with their loved ones.

## **Keeping residents connected within the home**

Socialisation continues to be an important aspect of daily life. Our teams are dedicated to providing our residents with as much social interaction and entertainment as possible. However, we are taking measures and limiting the number of people in the dining rooms or lounges at the same time and creating more, smaller dining spaces.

Activities are still taking place but at all times being mindful of social distancing where possible. Whilst the weather is nice we are also encouraging residents and the team to go outside and have some fresh air.

## **Moving into our care home**

If you are looking for care for your loved ones during this period of isolation, we can still help. Although we have restricted visits to our care homes we feel it's even more important to provide those looking for care, the opportunity to find out more about us.

With this in mind we are scheduling calls with our Home Managers instead of face-to-face show rounds in our homes so we can give you all the information you need. We can answer your questions about availability, the type of care required, the assessment process, our coronavirus strategy, the types of activities still on offer, our food & dining offer, fees, how we can make the move into a new home easy and much, much more. We are keen to support and reassure you in what is a challenging time, so please feel free to arrange a call with our Home Manager and let us help you find the right care for your loved ones.

## **Commonly asked questions**

We appreciate at a time of uncertainty many family members are seeking further information and reassurance about how we are caring for their loved ones and how COVID-19 is affecting life in our homes.

Below are answers to some commonly asked questions which you may find useful. But please do not hesitate in contacting the home directly should you have any further queries.

We want to thank all those in our care, their relatives and friends for their continued support at this time and to recognise and thank all our colleagues for their passion and commitment in delivering care in such difficult circumstances. We know they have the knowledge, skills and resources to minimise the risk that coronavirus presents.

As this is a developing situation, we will continue to monitor all government advice and update our approach in accordance with the latest recommendations and keep our teams, residents and their families fully informed.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Home Manager.

## **COVID -19 - Commonly asked questions by our families**

The welfare of our residents and teams in our homes is our priority and as a company we are constantly monitoring and acting upon the latest government guidance for the coronavirus. Below are some commonly asked questions by families. Please be mindful they may be amended to align with latest government guidance and legislation.

### ***What are the symptoms of COVID-19?***

*The symptoms of coronavirus are:*

- *a cough,*
- *a high temperature,*
- *shortness of breath.*

*But these symptoms do not necessarily mean you have the illness. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu.*

### ***What is the guidance on people visiting the homes?***

The welfare and safety of our residents and colleagues is always our priority. We have taken the difficult decision to suspend all visits to our care homes, including those from relatives and friends. For the time being, we will only permit visits for medical purposes or exceptional circumstances, agreed in advance with the Home Manager. We're working hard to keep day to day life at our homes as normal as possible and maintain the wellbeing of our residents. Our teams are on hand assist with telephone and video calls as well as emails and letters to help our residents stay in touch with their loved ones during this time. We will continue to review this policy in accordance with the latest government advice and keep residents and their families informed of any changes to the operations of our care homes.

### ***Can contractors still come into the home?***

Our homes still needed essential planned property maintenance to continue so we can keep our buildings safe to operate in. Homes are given advance notice of when visits

from contractors are due so that they can plan and where necessary select an area of the home for necessary tasks to be undertaken to keep everyone safe and protected.

### ***Is social distancing being practiced in our homes?***

Whilst we want to make sure we put in as many measures as we can to protect the residents and the team remember this is our residents' home. We are applying the same rules to our residents. In any areas of the home where we have people who are not showing any signs of the virus then the residents can move around freely. We are taking some additional measures and we are asking not to have everyone in the dining rooms or lounges at the same time. We are creating more smaller dining spaces, splitting the use of lounges or doing two sittings. Activities should still take place we are just suggesting team members put the chairs 2m apart wherever possible. Whilst the weather is nice we are also encouraging residents and the team to go outside and have some fresh air.

### ***Are you still accepting new admissions?***

We continue to work in partnership with Public Health England, local NHS systems and Councils to ensure our joint infection control precautions continue to follow the latest National expert scientific advice. This is to ensure we continue to support our residents and employees in the most safe and effective way during these unprecedented times

We are continuing to take new admissions into our home with strict admission criteria agreed by the CCG/LA. We assess everyone that moves into our home following Source Isolation Guidance and every new resident will be isolated in their room for a period of at least 7 days. If a resident continues to show no obvious symptoms they will be allowed to leave their room.

In any areas of the home where we have people who are not showing any signs of the virus then the residents can move around freely. We are taking some additional measures and we are asking not to have everyone in the dining rooms or lounges at the same time. We are creating more smaller dining spaces, splitting the use of lounges or doing two sittings. Activities are still taking place but requesting that wherever possible team members put the chairs at least 2m apart. If the weather is nice we are also encouraging residents and the team to go outside and have some fresh air.

### ***At what point will a resident be tested for COVID-19?***

Anyone who shows any key symptoms such as increase in temperature or a new continuous cough will be assessed and their GP/NHS 111 notified. Information is also shared with Public Health England who will arrange for Covid-19 testing as necessary. They will make an assessment on the medical oversight that is required and advise the home accordingly on how best to care for the resident, whether that be in the home in isolation or at the hospital.

### ***Who, decides when or if a COVID-19 test is administered?***

As outlined above this is currently being managed by the NHS. With GP input decisions are made by the local health protection teams – by linking with the wider NHS and Public Health England.

### ***What is the policy if a resident tests positive or show symptoms?***

All homes have clear updated guidance on managing coronavirus with action cards and business continuity plans. In the event that any resident develops symptoms of COVID-19 and/or are confirmed as having COVID-19 there are clear jointly formulated plans. We will work in partnership with the NHS and local health protection teams to minimise the risk of further transmission and will be following strict adherence to infection control measures and Source Isolation Guidance (barrier nursing). These plans also include the screening and non-admission to a care home displaying any symptoms of COVID-19.

If not admitted to hospital the resident will be isolating in their private room for a minimum of 7 days and have a specific COVID-19 care plan created for them and follow source isolation guidance. With teams following standard protection precautions.

### ***When and how will a relative or guardian be informed of any ‘changes’ in a resident’s condition (e.g: if they have developed a cough or have a temperature?)***

As well as regular general updates, the Home Manager or Nurse in Charge will be expected to provide an update on any change to an individual’s COVID-19 condition as they occur. However, they will only notify the Next of Kin and/or named person(s) who information can be shared with for that individual.

### ***Who, ‘medically’ can a relative or guardian speak to directly regarding a resident’s condition and their concerns?***

A relative or guardian can speak to the nurse in charge and/or the Home Manager who would have oversight on all residents. Typically, you would also be able to contact the registered GP for that resident.

### ***What happens if a colleague tests positive or displays symptoms?***

If a member of the care team tests positive or displays symptoms NHS111 and Public Health England guidance is followed. We ask colleagues to remain at home for a minimum of 7 days. If a member of family is confirmed positive then they need to stay at home for a total of 14 days.

### *What equipment is available to protect our staff?*

Our first priority is the safety and wellbeing of both residents and staff, and we are putting all our resources and energy into supporting and protecting everyone in our homes. Like all organisations in the health and social care sectors, we have been affected by the global and local shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE). Our focus has been on securing PPE for all of our homes and we achieved this for a vast majority of our homes. Our team has been sending daily updates to the homes on our efforts to secure masks and other equipment while ensuring all colleagues are implementing our strict procedures for health and safety.

In this difficult time, we are endeavouring to be transparent with our staff about the actions we are taking to maintain the highest possible standards within an environment of country-wide supply chain issues. We are working closely with our suppliers and with the NHS to access further supplies to be distributed across our homes.

Protecting our residents requires dedication from every part of our business and we are committed to fulfilling our responsibility to ensure a safe working environment for all our staff.