



Covid-19 update 04/7/2020

Dear All

As always, I hope this letter finds you well. Since the last update we have seen a number of changes nationally, and now locally, to the ongoing lockdown. This continues to be a worrying time for many, and recent and pending local changes only add to the confusion.

Many of you will have experienced first-hand our new visiting rules, which so far have been well-received. That said, the recent weather has made some of these visits a little testing. We are aware that the wind and rain has exposed short-comings in current arrangements and are currently putting together plans to be able to support visiting indoors. These are still in the early planning stage but we will have some safe indoor spaces that we can use in the near future.

In my last update I explained that we did not have any plans to change or relax our visiting rules and I am sorry report that this remains the same. Although we have seen the Covid-19 alert level reduce from 4 to 3, the 'R' value remains too close to 1 for us to be able to relax visiting restrictions. The recent events regarding Leicester and the first of what many think will be a large number of local lockdowns brings the prevalence of Covid-19 in our communities back into sharp focus. The potential of a second waves remains very real. I know that this is hugely disappointing – I absolutely understand the upset and distress that this causes on all sides. Please be assured that this is something we talk about and reassess regularly, and as soon as we can we will start to relax the restrictions.

We have now been able to access and carry out testing on all our Residents and Staff. This has resulted in some asymptomatic cases being identified in our homes, and indeed many homes across the country. One of the key findings from this is that we still do not know how long older people may carry the infection (and thus test positive) but show no outward symptoms. As a result, without regular testing, we cannot confidently say that a home is 'Covid-free'. Only better and more regular testing, and an effective vaccine will make this possible.

Many of you will have heard the recent announcement about monthly testing of residents and staff in care homes. We have no details at the moment about how this will work, but we will let you all know when we have something concrete to report in relation to this. In the meantime, we are continuing with our Covid prevention measures in the homes to the best of our ability and the staff team continue to be amazing and responding to everything we ask of them.

I would like to say a huge thank you to all of you for your support and kindness throughout what has been a really challenging and testing time for us all. I know we have made decisions that impact on you and your family and that you have all been very worried about your loved ones. Your support has been very welcome, and as soon as we can welcome you all back in our homes we will. In the meantime we will continue to do all we can to deliver the best care to our residents and each other.

Stay safe everyone

Richard

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