

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE 17 APRIL 2020

Dear Relatives and Residents

I would like to take this opportunity to update you about how the Coronavirus outbreak is affecting the care home. We are hopefully a couple of weeks away from the virus peak and I know that you are all worried about the current situation. I would like to reassure you that our leadership team takes this responsibility very seriously and are doing everything possible to keep our residents safe. You will see that our isolation policies have been considerably escalated following recent UK gov advice.

Due to the fast pace of change during the pandemic, we are monitoring public health advice, regularly reviewing policies as necessary and making changes within our homes. This does create even more work for our team so I would like to ask you for your understanding about any issues this may cause. I would like to record my personal thanks to our hard-working team who are mostly maintaining full rotas and continue to provide the best care possible to all our residents.

We understand the value of sharing information and we have drafted a Q&A below to help answer some of your questions. This information will also be made available to relatives via our Conniston Care web site www.connistoncare.co.uk
Thank you for your patience at a time when it is heartbreaking not being able to have your friends and relatives visit.

Yours sincerely

Paul Milner (Director)

Q: Why are most residents being asked to stay in their rooms ?

A: As per UK government guidelines, all individuals are being asked to practise social distancing where possible. This means keeping a distance of at least 2 metres between you and another person. The aim of this is to try and stop the spread of the virus. This means we have asked all residents to stay in their rooms as much as possible, including mealtimes.

Q: How is this affecting residents' social life ?

A: We understand staying mainly in rooms is affecting your social lives. However, we are trying to mitigate this with rotating invites to participate in activities with strict social distancing. Activities will be limited but continue although this may get more difficult. We will be arranging entertainers to perform in gardens, weather permitting, for residents to enjoy from their rooms or lounges.

Q: How can I contact a loved one ?

A: We have acquired more mobile phones and iPads to enable telephone calls and Facetime/Skyping contact with friends and family members. If you would like further information, please contact a staff member.

Q: What coronavirus precautions are you taking ?

A: Our whole team is trained and experienced in rigorous infection control and PPE (personal protective equipment) procedures. Although this is for more typical virus outbreaks such as influenza, the principle is the same but now with an even more robust approach. In addition to this, we are now taking all residents' temperatures twice daily and staff are isolating at home when necessary in accordance with government guidelines.

Q: Why is our team not being tested ?

A: We have to wait for government testing and are following instructions from Public Health. Tests have been provided first for the NHS and we await further details as more testing becomes available which has been promised soon.

Q: Are you taking new admissions ?

A: Yes, UK government has asked care homes to continue to take admissions to help the NHS hospitals save their beds for the critically ill. However, all new admissions will receive 14 days of precautionary isolation care.

Q: Why is the isolation period now 14 days and not 7 ?

A: This follows new UK government advice to all care homes.

Q: What if a resident has coronavirus symptoms ?

A: If you develop coronavirus symptoms, we will immediately start precautionary isolation care for 14 days and contact NHS 111. The care team will support you through the illness as much as possible. If symptoms persist or if your health deteriorates at any time, then we will take medical advice and have further discussions with you about your wishes. Admittance to a hospital may become necessary.

Q What if a resident is diagnosed with coronavirus ?

A: The resident would already be in precautionary isolation so this will continue.

Q: What if relatives can't get through to the home's phone to get an update on a resident ?

A: Our home is extraordinarily busy right now so please be patient. We ask for your understanding and help by nominating one lead family member to call the home for a health update who will share the information with your other family members.

Q: Will residents still be going on trips or be allowed outside the home with relatives ?

A: Not until further notice. We are sorry but this is against government guidelines

Q: Will external service contractors still visit ?

A: No, unless it is absolutely necessary and our maintenance staff can't resolve a problem requiring immediate attention.

Q: Will maintenance contractors still visit the homes ?

A: Yes, but only for essential work as our own maintenance team will continue routine maintenance and safety checks.

Q: Do you have enough masks for your team ?

A: Yes, currently we have enough face masks and other personal protection equipment. We are being supplied with a small amount of UK government PPE and are topping this up by purchasing more, direct from suppliers.

Q: What if team sickness and self-isolation gets worse ?

A: Despite high absenteeism, we are mostly maintaining full rotas with our amazing team working extra shifts, plus agency use and recruitment. We may need to ask the non-care team to help carers. We're also asking for community volunteers to help support our carers. It appears that some local authorities are creating emergency social care task force teams. If team absence worsens and falls short of our rota, we will have no alternative but to prioritise care over other activities.

Q: Is agency use risking bringing the virus into the home ?

A: When agency is necessary, we are looking to offer agency workers full-time hours on our rota where possible to help avoid the risk of them working elsewhere.

Q: Who can volunteer to help ?

A: We would be pleased to hear from any person with no significant health issues who would like to help. Contact the home manager who can take details.

Q: Will the catering service be maintained ?

A: Yes, our food suppliers have assured us of supply and we have contingency plans around our catering teams.

Q: Have you got the financial resources to cope ?

A: We have excellent resources and further financial support is available if required. However, we do expect a huge financial impact on the business and have contingency plans for this.

Q: How long will this last ?

A: There is no definite answer to this question but the government's social distancing measures will slow the spread of the virus. Realistically we expect it to last weeks but we will continue to do everything to support and protect all of our residents and team and will always follow advice from the authorities.