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Hi everyone

I hope that you and your loved ones are well.

I just wanted to write to provide you with an update about our services.

Firstly however, a huge thank you for your incredible dedication, flexibility, generosity and kindness.

We support some of the most vulnerable people in the city and it is remarkable how collectively we are managing to keep people safe. Everyone of us has been impacted either directly or indirectly by Covid-19 and I'm sure each of us has our own worries for ourselves, our families, friends and those who are close to us. Some days are better than others – but I never fail to be impressed by the resilience, creativity and utter dedication that people demonstrate to keep our critical services going.

Overview

At the time of writing we have had 14 people we support who are or have been symptomatic, six of whom have been tested positive, five fully recovered, two people still very ill in hospital and sadly, one person who died. Given the number of people we support and the vulnerabilities of many of those people, the combined efforts of everyone in keeping people safe has been remarkable.

In all circumstances where staff themselves become symptomatic, they are **not** in work and at present we have 22 staff of an almost 800 strong workforce self-isolating due to either they or members of their household being symptomatic. The introduction of testing for care workers from Easter time has started to help and to date 8 members of staff have tested positive and thankfully only one person required hospital care. Additionally we have 79 staff who, due to their circumstances and vulnerability are currently working from home for 12 weeks. On top of this we have between 40 to 50 people off each day with non Covid-19 illnesses.

It is good that social care is finally getting the recognition our collective work deserves – it is just such a pity that it has taken a global pandemic for our work to be recognised at a national level.

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Anyhow, in relation to our services – here is the current state of play:

Day Services

As you will know, we closed our day services on 18th March in advance of the national lock down, in a bid to try to reduce the risk of any spread of infection. Whilst our day services remain closed, we are trying to keep in touch with people who live at home on a regular basis. For some people this is providing support in the family home, for others it is taking customers out for some fresh air and exercise, keeping in touch by phone or joining in virtual activities (although virtual, they are actually amazing!!), whilst for other families it is helping by doing shopping trips. A good number of staff from day services have very kindly volunteered to do shiftwork and this is really helping to ensure we can keep our accommodation services going.

Respite

Understandably, many family carers have chosen to keep their loved ones at home during the lockdown period. Given the fall off of demand for respite, we have changed the use of one of the Scott Hall services to be a second emergency unit, to meet the needs of some people and their families who now need an emergency resource more than ever. We are continuing to provide respite where families want to take up their allocation. Additionally, we are trying to be more flexible about our respite offer. This includes offering nights for just one person at a time or for stays just for sibling groups.

Supported Living

We have redirected most of our remaining staffing resource to support people in our supported living services, where we are trying our best to keep people safe. You may already be aware that we have reduced family visiting to only the most essential visits, and other than staff going into services all other non-essential access to those properties is not taking place. This has led to the need for more imaginative ways to keep in touch and to keep active – and some of the activities that staff are supporting people with are fantastic!

In a time of ever evolving government guidance, we have moved to a position where all staff are provided with enhanced PPE with staff wearing both masks and eye protection for all care tasks. This should further help reduce the risk potential of passing on the virus, particularly given that there is growing evidence that people who are non-symptomatic could pass on the virus.

Finally, a simple ‘thank you’.

Keep well and stay safe



Andy Rawnsley
Chief Executive

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