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Dear Carer

I hope that you and the people close to you are well.

Since my last update there has been improvement in the situation across the country and it is encouraging that the numbers of people catching COVID-19 continues to reduce. That said, we continue to take a cautious approach to how we deliver our services, given that the impact on vulnerable people remains high, despite the likelihood of catching the virus reducing.

The government has announced changes to shielding arrangements because the chances of catching the virus have gone down. Fewer people across the country have COVID-19, so there are fewer people to catch it from. The government expects the chances of catching it to be even lower by 1st August when shielding is due to be paused. The changes announced will only happen if the government feels the risk from COVID-19 in the country is low enough. If the risk is still too high, or increases, the advice is likely to change.

These shielding rules affect many of the people we support and we know that shielding is not an easy thing to do, so these relaxations might be good news to you. However, you may also have worries and concerns about you or your loved ones getting outside more, as society opens back up.

### **Covid update**

I am really pleased to be able to report that we currently have no-one who we support who is symptomatic and that no-one we support has tested positive since 24<sup>th</sup> April, which is in itself a huge achievement. I would like to assure you that our PPE stock levels continue to be healthy and it is the use of PPE, vigilant infection control practices and social distancing that continue to be our biggest defences against transmission to the people we support and to each other.

We continue to have 106 members of staff working at home due to their own long term vulnerabilities and some of these staff will start to return to work when shielding is paused.

As restrictions across the country are being eased, we continue to make small steps towards returning our services to a safe way of operating in a COVID-19 world. These steps are outlined overleaf.

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## **Respite**

We have started to see an increase in demand for our respite services in recent weeks, which we anticipate will increase again, once shielding pauses. We have therefore agreed with care management that we will revert the respite unit at Scott Hall back to providing a respite function in August. This unit has temporarily been used as a second 'crisis' unit, which has supported a number of families over recent months whose situations required emergency support.

## **Supported Living**

I am pleased that many families have been able to take up the offer of outside visits, and these continue to be the safest way to visit your loved ones in our supported living services. Our visiting arrangements continue to be that family members can visit, but only outside of properties and in well planned, controlled and safe ways. However, we will keep this position under review as guidance changes. Our approach to any future change to visiting arrangements will be cautious to ensure that the risk to the people we support, especially those in shared accommodation, remains low.

With the further opening back up of society we have implemented a risk assessment tool to allow us to support people to visit families, go back out into communities and enjoy a greater range of activities in as safe a way as possible.

## **Day services**

We are in the process of finalising a detailed recovery plan for a small number of our day services to be able to re-open from the middle of August, albeit on reduced numbers. This will be the first phase in what will hopefully be a gradual return to providing a buildings based day service over the coming weeks and months. Initially this offer will be to those people who live at home with family carers and those who live in the St Anne's Community Carers scheme. We will have reduced numbers of people per day, in order that social distancing can be safely managed.

Our intention from the middle of August is to re-open the three main hubs at Bramley, Potternewton and Rothwell and the following community bases: Strawberry Lane, Cross Gates, Naburn, Blackgates and the Lavinia Baker room at Morley Library. The local managers will be in touch with you about the precise days that each building will open. We are also working on plans to follow this phase with more day services opening during September.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your continued patience and support. I am aware that we are taking a cautious approach as society starts to re-open, but I am keen to ensure that as we start to open up the way we deliver our services, we do so in a way that continues to have the safety of the people we support at the centre of our thinking. Should you want to talk to someone independently about any concerns or support you may need in your caring role there is help available at Carers Leeds. They can be contacted on 0113 3804300 for information, advice and emotional support.

Keep well and stay safe



**Andy Rawnsley**  
Chief Executive



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