

15 March 2021



N: Neil Morrisroe
E: neil.morrisroe@aspirecbs.org.uk
A: Westfield Chambers
Westfield Business Park
Lower Wortley Road
Leeds LS12 4PX

Hi everyone

Easing of National Restrictions

As we approach the first anniversary of Andy's first Covid-19 update letter to you, the Government has unveiled its four-step plan for easing restrictions in England. From 8th March schools re-opened and, if all goes to plan, further restrictions will be lifted later this month and in April and June. There will be a gap of at least 5 weeks between each of the steps to allow the Government to assess the impact of each change on infection rates and hospital admissions.

Our priority continues to be the safety of the people we support and you. Given the vulnerabilities of the people we support, and the fact shielding for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable continues to be in place until at least the end of March, we will continue to adopt a cautious, steady approach to the re-introduction of services, in line with emerging government guidance.

I am pleased to say that, in line with reducing infection rates both in Leeds and nationally, we have also seen a reducing number of infections across Aspire, currently none of our staff or the people we support are symptomatic.

Supported Living Services

We have continued to provide supported living services throughout the pandemic. This has been made possible with the support of the many staff from our day services who have temporarily moved across to support people in our supported living services. Regular testing of staff has been taking place in supported living services for some time.

Day Services

Day services will continue running with bubbles of one for the time being. Managers are contacting family carers to discuss their views and concerns as we prepare to get services back to running bubbles of six. However, there is no fixed date for this as yet: we will track the government's easing of restrictions, but will not expand the bubbles until we are confident that the views of families have been taken into consideration, resources are in place such as transport and that supported living services will not be negatively impacted by staff returning to day services. In the meantime we continue to prioritise day services for people living at home with family carers or St. Anne's carers. I am pleased to be able to let you know that the Government has announced weekly Covid PCR lab-based testing for day services staff. This is a most welcome development which, when the kits are delivered, can only support our aim to have more people returning to day services.

Respite Services

Our respite services have continued throughout the pandemic, though demand has reduced. We are adopting a cautious approach as the lockdown restrictions ease in responding to future demand for respite services though, wherever possible, we are trying to meet the respite needs of the

www.aspirecbs.org.uk



people we support and family carers. Weekly testing for respite staff has been in place since the end of 2020.

Vaccination Programme

The national vaccination programme is well-underway. All our staff have been offered an opportunity to have the vaccine and our 600th member of staff recently had their first dose. Whilst a few people have reported feeling unwell for a short time after having the vaccine, no-one has reported any significant negative side effects. It is fantastic that around 2/3rd of staff have taken up the vaccine and I urge those who have not yet done so to get an appointment booked as soon as possible.

Locally, people with a learning disability have been offered the vaccine, irrespective of age or underlying health issues. It is pleasing to see that the Government has now extended this opportunity to all people with a learning disability across the country following the recent well publicised case about the sister of DJ Jo Whiley. Within our supported living services 237 out of 319 people that we support have now had their first dose of the vaccine which is a tremendous achievement.

Pay Award

As you may recall following the communication after the Board meeting in January, we have again committed to pay all staff, as a minimum, the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage. Therefore, new Aspire Support Workers will have a pay rise of 2.15% from 1 April 2021, taking their pay from £9.30ph to £9.50ph. We will also uplift the small number of TUPE'd staff who are currently paid below £9.50ph. The new rate will go into pay packets from the May pay date, but will be back dated to April.

For all TUPE'd staff (and staff employed since spin out at a rate above Support Worker) we will mirror the Local Government pay award, as we have done in all previous years, so that TUPE'd staff are 'no better, no worse' than had the transfer not happened. As yet these national negotiations have not been finalised, though the present offer from national employers is a minimum of £250 for anyone earning less than £24,000 and 0% for anyone earning £24,000 or above. Once the negotiations are completed, any uplift will be back dated to 1 April 2021 and, for TUPE'd staff who are receiving an uplift in May, their pay will be further uplifted if the Local Government pay award takes them above £9.50ph.

As Easter approaches, and with the good news about falling rates of transmission, we will all be hoping that the easing of restrictions goes to plan. Given the vulnerabilities of the people we support, it's vital that we continue to maintain our high standards of cleanliness and keep our safety/infection control protocols in place.

Once again, thank you for all you are doing to keep people safe, well and connected in these difficulty times.



Neil Morrisroe
Operations Director

www.aspirecbs.org.uk

