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Hi everyone

I hope everything is as well as it can be with you all, Once again, I'd like to thank you for your ongoing commitment and dedication to the people we support.

As you will have seen and heard, the government is planning to end all restrictions on the 19th July. This has a number of implications for us in both our personal and working lives. I know that many of us are looking forward to the ending of restrictions; –equally there will also be many amongst us who are anxious about this further easing, particularly with the extremely high levels of infections and widespread community transmission in Leeds at the present point in time.

We do not all hold the same views about how the government has dealt with the pandemic, nor how we have dealt with the pandemic here within Aspire – and between us all there is a whole spectrum of views about when and how restrictions should be eased. Collectively across our organisation, we are a kind and tolerant bunch of people – please draw further on your kindness and understanding as we move through the next phases. Our aim has been, and always will be, to tread a path that has the safety of both the people we support and staff at the centre of our decision making as we continue to interpret government guidance on how to respond to Covid, which has often been late or vague, in its applicability to social care.

At the point of writing we are still awaiting any government guidance on what restrictions or standard working practices, if any, will continue to be in place across social care services from 19th June.

Implication for our services – day services

We are anticipating that social distancing will come to an end in buildings – and that would pave the way for us to start to increase the numbers of people who can access day services on a daily basis towards pre-pandemic levels. We are making plans to do this and have been in contact with the people we support and their families to identify the level of service people would want to return to once we are able to fully re-open. Current projections show that this number is likely to be about 90% of pre-pandemic levels.



Implication for safe working practices – PPE and Infection Prevention Control procedures

We are anticipating that the government will still expect PPE to be worn in care services – particularly as they have committed to making PPE free for provider organisations until March 2022. Given the extremely high rate of local community transmission in Leeds (positive cases are as high now as they were in the peaks of the previous waves of infections) it is our intention to continue to adopt the same procedures about wearing PPE as we do now, within both services and office bases. I appreciate that mask wearing has been one of the most difficult things for many people to tolerate and I am hopeful that there will be a time in the future when this can be relaxed in some instances. However, for the time being and until there is specific guidance from government to do otherwise in social care settings, the current practices around PPE, mask wearing and Infection Prevention Control remain in place across Aspire.

Implications for safe working practices - vaccinations

As of today 81% of staff have had their both of their jabs and 80% of the people we support are also fully vaccinated, according to our records. As you may recall from previous correspondence, the government have consulted upon whether vaccinations for care staff be mandatory in Care Homes and they have stated that they plan to extend that consultation wider across social care settings. For Care Homes, the government have said they will introduce legislation in the autumn which will effectively mean that non-vaccinated staff will not be permitted to be deployed in those settings, which for us is our respite services. Clearly, if such a move was extended to all care settings and numbers of vaccinated staff remains constant then we could have a significant number of staff for whom we may have no work. I appreciate that there are a very small number of people who are medically exempt from being able to be vaccinated and that there are a range of reasons why other people have chosen not to take up the vaccine yet. However, I would urge anyone who is able to have a vaccine and has not yet done so – to book yourself in and get yourself vaccinated as soon as possible. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Through the online booking service available to the public on the NHS website - [the Book a coronavirus vaccination service](#)
- If you cannot use the NHS website, you can phone 119 free of charge
- Via your GP.

Vaccinations (and the wearing of PPE and other Infection Prevention Control procedures) continue to be the best defences we have to keep the people we support, ourselves and our families safe.

From personal experience, I would not wish Long Covid on anyone.

Lastly – just a continued thank you for everything that you do each day.

Keep well and stay safe



Andy Rawnsley
Chief Executive



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