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Dear Carer

I hope that you and your loved ones are well. I am writing to provide you with a quick update on a number of issues that may be of interest to you.

Day Services

We are continuing to open up our day services and are trying to do that as safely as possible whilst phasing out some of the measures that we have had in place. From this week, the procedure of collapsing 'bubbles' when there is a positive case within Day Services will cease unless we are instructed to do so by local Health Protection Teams in the event of an outbreak. Instead, where your relative has been identified as a 'close contact' of a positive case, they may continue to attend the service subject to them being fully vaccinated. We will encourage those people to obtain a negative PCR test and undertake lateral flow testing, although this will not be mandatory. For anyone who is identified as close contact and not fully vaccinated, they will have to isolate for 10 days in line with government guidance and will therefore not be able to attend the centre until the end of their isolation period.

We hope that this change eases some of the pressure that families have experienced in recent months, while ensuring that the services can run as safely as possible.

We are continuing to work with transport and they have provided the following update that they have asked us to share with you:

Due to huge demand for drivers across the industry Passenger Transport are struggling to recruit and retain drivers and our Private Hire Partners are also struggling which has meant full remobilisation across Adult's transport is taking longer than expected, and with continued high levels of COVID related absences it has led to a number of late arrivals and service failures for which the service apologise. The team are working hard on recruitment and training and scheduling in the remaining centres and looking at innovative ways of getting the service out.

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We are also hoping that people who attend our respite services can start to go back to their day service, whilst they are on their respite break. We are hoping that this will restart as soon as practically possible, though I am mindful that this may be challenging to restart in the near future given the demands on the Council's transport service outlined above.

Mandatory vaccinations for care workers

You may have seen in the press in recent weeks news about vaccinations being made mandatory for staff who work in health and social care settings. These changes in regulation from government impact on our services in different ways. For our respite services, from 11th November, we are no longer permitted to deploy any staff in our respite services unless they are fully vaccinated or have a medical exemption from being vaccinated.

Within the last week the government have announced that they intend to extend mandatory vaccinations for all staff working in services regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). For us, this means that staff in our supported living services will only be able to be deployed in services if they have been fully vaccinated or if they have a medical exemption from being vaccinated. We are still awaiting full guidance on how this will be implemented by government, but we anticipate that this will take effect from April next year.

The government have not yet extended this condition to non CQC regulated services, such as our day services.

Our position is that we have always promoted the take up of vaccination across the workforce as we believe it is the best way that people can keep themselves, their families and the people who we support safe. However, we have not insisted that staff get vaccinated as a condition of their employment as we do not believe that regulation is the best way to encourage vaccine uptake, particularly for people who have great hesitancy about getting the vaccine.

I am hopeful that with the high percentage of staff who have been vaccinated already, that any issues of continuity that these new regulations bring over the coming months can be managed as smoothly as possible across our supported living services.

Changes in management structure

I am pleased to be able to let you know that we have established a new post of Deputy Chief Executive. This post has been approved by the Board in order to provide additional resilience and stability to the senior management team due to my reduction in working days per week and due to the ongoing impact that Long Covid is having on my health and my ability to fully undertake my role when I am in work.

I am pleased to let you know that Neil Morrisroe has been appointed to the role of Deputy Chief Executive and Vanessa Butcher has been appointed to the role of Operations Director. Both these posts are temporary until April 2023, when I fully retire and by which time a new Chief Executive will be in post.

Following these appointments, the Senior Area Manager responsibilities will be aligned as follows:

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Day Services and Respite & Emergency Services – Marie Simpson

East North East Supported Living and Specialised Services – Don O'Connor

West North West and South South East Support Living Services – Victoria Kay

These changes will take place on 1st December and I hope that they will provide stability and continuity over the coming months.

Additionally, three of our longest serving Area Managers, John Barr, Lynne Saunders and Alison Barr are all due to retire in the first 3 months of 2022. Whilst their experience and expertise will be greatly missed, it does provide opportunities for career development within our structure. In order to ensure that we can have as smooth a transition as possible, we have already interviewed for a number of posts at Area Manager, Service Manager and Support Leader levels. We are in the process of finalising who will go where in this 3D jigsaw and I will let you know the planned arrangements once these have been finalised. This set of moves will happen over a staggered period between December 2021 and March 2022.

I sincerely hope that all these changes can be introduced as sensitively as possible and that the changes do not have an adverse impact on the quality of support to the people in our care.

Carers Leeds – independent support for family carers

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 380 4300 for information, advice and emotional support.

Finally, just to thank you again for your continued patience and support.

Keep well and stay safe.



Andy Rawnsley
Chief Executive

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