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Hi everyone,

I hope that you are all as well as can be and that you manage to spend some time with your loved ones over the festive season.

Throughout the year the Aspire Board, myself and the senior team have been very proud of the way staff across Aspire have risen to the challenges that have come our way due to the pandemic. We have all faced our own personal challenges both at work and in our private lives. Your kindness, compassion and determination to keep going continues to echo what is best about the work that we collectively do.

Yet again, individuals and teams have gone above and beyond to help the people we support, colleagues and themselves to stay safe.

Whilst there is hope ahead in the shape of the booster programme, the reality is that life is unlikely to return to anything like pre-Covid days for some time yet. So, as the festive season approaches, I'd like to just say a massive thank you for everything you have done this year, and will no doubt go on to do in the year ahead.

Pay rates over festive period

Given the increasing impact of the rise in case numbers of people either testing positive for Covid, or being identified as contacts and needing to self-isolate, there is an urgent pressure to cover shifts in some of our supported living services. Therefore, given these exceptional set of circumstances, the following rates of pay will be applicable for anyone who works any of the following days:

Date	Day	Time	Rate of pay
24/12/2021	Friday	4pm – midnight	Triple time
25/12/2021	Saturday	All day	Triple time
26/12/2021	Sunday	All day	Triple time
27/12/2021	Monday	All day	Double time
28/12/2021	Tuesday	All day	Double time
31/12/2021	Friday	4pm – midnight	Triple time
01/01/2022	Saturday	All day	Triple time
02/01/2022	Sunday	All day	Double time
03/01/2022	Monday	All day	Double time



These rates are applicable to all staff who work these dates, including people already planned to work said shifts and those who put themselves forward to do so now.

Where staff have already put themselves forward to do bank, this will be paid at either the bank rate or their prevailing hourly rate that would have applied to picking up additional hours, whichever is the higher.

Additionally, staff are not limited to the number of shifts they are paid these enhanced rates for by working on these dates.

Mandatory vaccinations to be extended to all regulated social care settings

You will be aware, from previous letters from me, that we are no longer legally able to deploy staff in our respite and crisis units unless they have been fully vaccinated or have a medical exemption in place.

You may have also seen in the press that the government have now extended mandatory vaccinations to wider parts of the health and social care workforce which includes all regulated care settings. For us this will apply to both our respite services and now our supported living services, both of which are regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). We understand that this will come into effect from 1st April 2022. This will mean that staff who work in our supported living services will need to have had to have their first dose of the vaccine in January 2022 which would allow for the 2nd dose to be given before the 1st April deadline. We are still awaiting details of how and when the roll out of this extension to the regulations will take place and I will be back in contact with you once we have further detail about this.

As ever, I would encourage anyone who has not been vaccinated to do so, as this is the best defence against any serious effects of contracting Covid19 – as well as encouraging booster jabs and flu jabs, which will help keep ourselves, family, friends, colleagues and the people we support as safe as possible through the winter months.

Impact of rising infection rates on services

As you will have all seen across all news platforms, there is a significant increase in infections up and down the country and government are constantly reviewing their position on restrictions. We are following both this upward trend in infections and the daily updates in government guidance – so that we are ready to respond should either the level of staff absences or government restrictions mean that we are unable to provide all the services we currently offer. Although I hope that we do not again need to reduce our day services offer or indeed need to temporarily close again, we are contingency planning, should this be the case.

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Recruitment

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented Aspire and our staff with huge challenges and continues to have a significant impact on the organisation, each of us and the people we support.

Despite more people coming into social care at the start of the pandemic, Aspire now have more vacancies than we did before the pandemic. In recent years we have recruited a number of great staff who have come through recommendations from either the families of the people we support or through recommendations from our own staff. If you are aware of anyone who you think has the qualities to be a great care worker and may be interested in working for Aspire please ask them to contact Marc Barnes (Resourcing Manager) on 0113 3781025 or visit our website <http://www.aspirecbs.org.uk/aspire-careers-and-volunteers> If you refer anyone and they pass probationary you will receive a gift card as part of our refer a friend scheme.

Mental Health Support

West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership are offering support if you need urgent help for your mental health during the Christmas period, their crisis lines are open every day, round the clock. They can be contacted on:

Leeds	0800 183 1485
Bradford	0800 952 1181
Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield	0800 183 0558

I hope that you each manage to spend some time with the people who are most important to you over the festive season. For those of you who will be working, particularly on the main celebration days, you have my thanks and my respect. For those of you who are having a break, I wish you a well-deserved rest.

All the best to you and yours



Andy Rawnsley
Chief Executive

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