

**Carers briefing – 15.06.20**

**Introduction**

Since our last briefing there have been several changes in what we’re now able to do, as in the general public and how we can spend our time , with even more changes planned from the today (15th of this month) which sees most shops re-opening and for those people who use public transport, face coverings also becoming compulsory.

We have been having more detailed conversations with you over the last few weeks, in relation to how you feel about services re-opening. This has included how you feel about the person you care for accessing services again and in particular, Skills Group and the 121 work we provide, supporting people in the local communities.

As expected, we have had a mixed response, but what we are starting to see very clearly is that you are beginning to think about services again, and what you feel you would need from us as a provider. As carers, you tend to be falling in to one of three categories:

* Those who want services to start again as they were pre lockdown and as soon as possible;
* Those wanting to see what, if any impact, the relaxation of the wider restrictions might have on a potential second wave of infection;
* Those wanting to continue to self-isolate.

As a result, we have started our planning process for both Skills Group and localities in terms of delivering a reduced phased return of services again to those we support. We have developed these plans and liaised with the local authority in order to reach a consensus on our approach and agreement to our proposed phased opening.

**Skills Group**

We mentioned in our last briefing that we wanted to see what was happening in schools and how they were planning to manage the re-introduction of children back into the school environment. We know that this has stalled as of last week and the plans for more children to return to school before the end of the academic year will now not happen. However, schools are open and more children are attending than previously and it has been interesting to read, and also see the guidance that has been shared as to what and how schools have been expected to operate and how they have put the guidance into place.

Whilst initially we didn’t feel this would be helpful for us, the guidance to schools has evolved and we have been able to take into account some of the ways in which schools are working and consider how we might be able to replicate that for Skills Group.

Following our conversations with carers of people using Skills Group, we have identified the first phase of people returning to the service, prioritising those people living alone or at home with carers. We have also taken their needs into account, the environment of Granville House and the number of staff we feel we will need to be able to provide the support, in the new way of working we will be adopting.

We plan to open our doors to Granville on the 06.07 for the first phase of service users to return to us, who will represent about a third of the normal number of users accessing Skills on an average day. More detailed information will be shared directly with the carers of people accessing the service about how the service will operate including drop off and pick up arrangements etc and how we will need to work together to ensure people’s health and wellbeing.

This information will include details about the work that has been completed and is in the process of being put into place to ensure that we are able to comply, where possible, with social distancing, infection control measures required re the use of PPE etc and amended cleaning schedules etc.

**Localities work**

Similar work has also been undertaken in the localities in terms of speaking with the carers of people accessing this service, about a possible return to service and what this might look like for the person they care for. Again, there has been a similar response in relation to people falling into one of three categories about how they feel about returning to services.

Because of the nature of the work and how support is provided - in smaller numbers of hours and non-building based in the main in the community - we have seen greater interest in people wanting to start their service again. We have shared this information with the local authority, as we are keen to work collaboratively with them as we have done to date about service provision during the pandemic.

We are anticipating that by the end of this month we will be delivering about 45% of our normal level of service in the localities. Similar work to that in Skills Group is being undertaken at the moment in relation to planning what support might look like for people, PPE measures required and identifying how and when support will take place.

We have been delivering a small number of hours across the last three months in the localities, so we have the learning from this as well as the learning from Cheddle Lodge – our residential care home-, which we have made sure we have included when planning to begin to open up services again.

There will be a new normal for many people in this service in terms of when their support may be provided as we will need to do a lot of work in relation to allocating staff and ensuring that we haven’t got lots of different staff doing small numbers of hours for example. Again, more detailed communications will be shared with carers of users of this service about what new measures will be in place and expectations in order to keep people safe and well.

We will continue with the welfare calls to all service users who have not yet returned to services, as it’s important that we do this so we can keep people informed of our progress to date but also so we can offer reassurances to you as carers in particular, about the person you care for, about returning to services.

**Cheddle Lodge**

People living at Cheddle Lodge remain fit and well, and whilst being at home every day is beginning to be felt by some people, in the main the residents have coped with the situation very well. We have now proactively tested all residents and staff for Covid-19 and we want to be able to do this on a regular basis as a way of managing the ongoing situation.

One of the hardest things for people has been not seeing their families and vice versa. More recently, we have been working with families as to how we can manage social distancing visits to Cheddle Lodge. To date the approach that’s been used has involved carers being in the garden whilst their cared for come to the patio area adhering to social distancing and this has worked well and has given family members reassurance, as well as being really positive for the people living at Cheddle.

We hope as more time goes on that we will be able to support people to be able to go out locally from the home, but we need to remain cautious for the moment whilst restrictions are being lifted in the wider community, we just need to understand what if any impact there might be from this. What we don’t want to do is undo the hard work of the last three months for the sake of a few more weeks.

The staff supporting Cheddle Lodge have done a great job to date in keeping people safe and well, and given the impact that we know there has been for some care homes re Covid-19, this is to be commended.

**Amended Government guidance**

As already mentioned, the Government guidance about what we can and can’t do has been changing rapidly, with even more changes announced this week. Attached to this Carer briefing is the latest Government document about what we can and can’t do – this document is updated on a regular and ongoing basis so the best we can say is that at the time of attaching it, the information was correct.

Some of the guidance has remained unchanged such as the need to:

* **Stay at home as much as possible**
* **Work from home if you can**
* **Go to work if you can’t work from home**
* **If you can, wear a face covering in enclosed spaces**
* **Keep your distance if you go out – Social distancing 2m apart**
* **Wash your hands regularly for a minimum of 20 seconds using soap and water/ or hand sanitiser with 60% alcohol**
* **Do not leave home if you or anyone in your household has symptoms**
* **Preferably walk, cycle or drive to places**

Our communities are starting to come back to life but this is the time when we need to be extra vigilant about what we do, where we are going and our contact with others. We have reminded our staff, and would like to take the same opportunity to remind you, our carers as well, of the importance of being mindful of what’s being asked of us all. This will be especially important as we start to open our services up again, given the level of need of the people we support.

**And finally……**

We will continue with the weekly welfare phone calls to people not in service currently or in the first phase of services re-opening so we can keep you updated as to what’s happening and the progress we are making. Please feel free to ask any questions during these calls that you have that might help with making decisions about the person you care for returning to services.

We will do our best to answer any queries/concerns that you might have and to give you reassurances about the steps we are taking to enable us to offer a safe service to those you care for. We know they are very important people to you with additional vulnerabilities and we want to make sure that we are helping people to have a good day whilst keeping them safe and well. By working together, we are sure that we can achieve this in the coming months.

**Senior Leadership Team**