

**Carers briefing – 14.07.20**

**Introduction**

The last few weeks have been exceptionally busy, as we have been preparing to reopen Skills Group, re-establish the Leisure Groups and significantly increase the number of hours we have been delivering in the localities during the peak of the pandemic, whilst also still ensuring that Cheddle Lodge and Brecon Close remain well staffed and people are keeping well.

The welfare calls that we have been making to our service users and yourselves have helped identify those who feel ready to come back to their pre Covid-19 service and level of support, which in turn has helped identify the staffing resource we have needed to support this first phase of normal services being resumed.

What all this planning has led us to, is our ability to be able to increase the hours being delivered in the localities from the 01.07.20 and Skills and Leisure Groups opening again as of the 06.07.20.

**Skills and Leisure Groups**

As mentioned Skills and the Leisure Groups re-opened on the 06.07.20. Skills opened its doors to 24 people returning to service, whilst Leisure Groups have seen 34 people returning to be involved in what is very definitely the new normal for the Leisure Groups. These groups are currently operating out of Prospect House, due to the fact that we’re not yet able to deliver the community based sessions we were doing before lockdown.

Interestingly though, we have seen people coming back to the Leisure Groups who we haven’t seen for several months and the feedback from the first week of being based at Prospect House has been really positive, with people really enjoying the range of activities that the staff have put together for them.

Skills Group has had a face-lift whilst the service has not been able to operate and Granville House has been painted throughout, cleaned, scrubbed and decluttered to ensure that we are meeting the guidance in place re social distancing and the increased cleaning requirements needed across the day, whilst people are in the building.

Service users are allocated into “bubbles” on the days they are in service so they are spending time with the same people and same staff members when they are with us – this means they have an allocated room and all activities are managed within this space, as well as drinks and meals being delivered to the door! We also have staff allocated to do additional cleaning re the frequently touched areas across the building throughout the day, as well as designated entrance and exit routes and social distancing measures in place across the whole of the ground floor.

We weren’t sure how well people would adjust to the new way in which we are delivering the service. However, the first week has been a positive one for all concerned and those initial worries and concerns for both Skills and the Leisure groups have not been as concerning by the end of the week.

Staff returning to work came into the services before they reopened - having had a Coivid-19 test - to get used to the new layout, for the changes we have made to be shared with them and their roles in ensuring we keep people safe and well whilst they are with us. Training re the use of the PPE that staff now have to use and the cleaning schedules in place have all been shared and discussed in advance of people coming back into service.

We are now planning for our second phase of people retuning to service and we have earmarked the 03.08.20 for this, but we are seeing a few people re-starting their service before this time as well.

We know it is not easy for our service users to get used to the changes we have put in place and that coming back into a service they have not been to for over three months must be very daunting, as well as for the staff who have come back to work after a period of being furloughed. However, all credit to everyone in making sure people in these two services have been welcomed back and ensuring that they have felt safe and secure in returning to their daytime activities.

**Localities work**

We have been delivering a small number of locality hours throughout the Pandemic, which the fast response team have been leading on. From the 01.07.20 we have seen a significant increase in the hours and by the end of the first full week of July we anticipated that the hours being provided would be 35% of normal delivery, which is really very positive.

Staff that have been brought back off furlough to support this increase in hours have all had a Covid-19 test and additional information and training in relation to the use of PPE, now needed in the service as standard. We have updated the service risk assessments to take into account the support being provided and ensured we have made it as Covid-19 secure as we possibly can for our staff and service users.

Locality managers are also back based at Meridian House on a rota basis, so that they are easily accessible for staff and yourselves to ensure that any worries and concerns can be addressed quickly and easily. Whilst the service is planning for a second phase, like Skills Group, we are seeing a much greater ad hoc increase in demand for services to be restarted from more and more people. We are still prioritising those people living alone or with carers who want to return to services, but we are also working with the supported tenancies as well about support for this group of people.

We are continuing with the welfare calls we have been making, but don’t hesitate to give us a call to discuss an earlier return in the interim.

**Cheddle Lodge**

There has remained a focus on Care homes in the media in relation to Covid-19 and we have started to see the positive impact of this with acknowledgement that more support is needed in this particular sector of adult social care. The Government have announced weekly testing for staff and 28 day testing for residents as standard and we anticipate that this will come into effect at Cheddle in August. In the interim, we will continue with the standard monthly testing of staff that we have been carrying out.

Family visits have started again at Cheddle, which has been welcomed by everyone. The visits are being carried out in a very controlled way, whilst ensuring adherence to social distancing. Family members are using the patio area as their seating area and are provided with a mask, while their family member is sat in the sun lounge doorway. Whilst not ideal, everyone has welcomed being able to spend time together after three months of relying on the internet to see and speak to each other.

Once again, everyone working in Cheddle Lodge – the regular staff team and those who are supporting from other service areas - are to be commended for their commitment and hard work, in particularly over the last four months, whilst the home has effectively been locked down. We are now thinking about how we can start to reduce some of the current restrictions in place without undoing the good work to date in keeping people well and Covid-19 free.

**Meridian House**

As services are starting to open up again, we have slightly increased the number of people working out of Meridian House and amended our phone message in terms of enabling people phoning in to be able to make use of the options again to speak to who they need to. The phones lines are open from 8am-4pm each day and then revert to the on-call number.

However, the majority of staff are still working from home and unless rota’d to be at Meridian to support service delivery, this will be the case for the near future.

**Amended Government guidance**

Government guidance has been changing significantly over the last few weeks. The threat of Covid-19 remains an issue still for all of us and it would be very easy to fall into a feeling of complacency about what we should be doing etc. We would urge everyone to adhere to social distancing of 2m wherever possible and if not possible, then 1m plus with additional safety measures such as a face mask.

For those people who have not yet returned to services we want to reassure you that we have very robust arrangements in place to ensure a consistent approach to how we provide services and keep the person you care for staff as well as the staff teams.

**And finally……**

We continue to see many changes in our wider communities in relation to the continued relaxation of the restrictions that were put in place as we entered lockdown in March. As of 04.07.20, Pubs, cafes and restaurants were able to re-open and for some of us the most important resource – hairdressers – were able to open and work again.

This is probably one of the most critical times, as we begin to all adjust to our new normal and having a sense of freedom that we’ve not had for the last few months. More changes are expected over the coming weeks with people being able to return to indoor Gyms etc very soon.

Now is the most important time to ensure that we are following the guidance in place to ensure we are keeping ourselves, our families and those we care for as safe and as well as we can.

We are pleased to be re-opening our services and we look forward to welcoming service users and staff back into the organisation over the coming weeks.

**Senior Leadership Team**