 **Carers update – 15.09.2020**

**Introduction**

Having endured another five weeks of local restrictions, meaning we had to put on hold our plans to further expand the re-opening of our day service and locality service, we were finally given the all clear as the local restrictions were lifted as of the 2nd September.

What the lifting of the restrictions have meant for us is that we are now able to put into place those plans we had for our second phase of bringing people back into services. However, what we have found is the impact of the local restrictions have increased peoples anxiety levels again and we are working closely with individuals, reassuring them about the safety measures we have put in place.

Whilst having the local restrictions lifted is a positive, it is also a reminder of the need to ensure that we all continue to follow the guidance in place including;

* wearing our masks when we should be when out and about
* washing our hands regularly
* not attending work or going out if we have any symptoms of Covid19 and making sure we get tested as soon as possible

By doing this we can hopefully avoid being put back into local restrictions, but we should all remember that we are only one of two local authority areas within Greater Manchester where restrictions have been lifted but we have all seen that restrictions can be implemented swiftly where deemed to be required and it would appear that the infection rates across GM are increasing with Stockport moving into an Amber position from green.

**Skills and Leisure Groups**

We have brought our second phase of people back into Skills group as of the 7th September. We are expecting a further 11 people back into the service and at that point, Granville House will be at capacity in relation to the additional measures we have had to put in place regarding social bubbles and social distancing measures.

We have access to Prospect House which had been being used by the Leisure Groups, which we hope will restart in the next few weeks, but we will be looking for another building venue for the leisure groups to use until we are able to fully return to the groups being community based. Having access to Prospect House again for Skills group should enable us to be able to manage the majority of the remaining people yet to return to service.

During the local restrictions and prior to services re-opening, we have been continuing with the welfare calls to yourselves as carers. We have noticed a significant increase in anxiety in relation to returning to services due to the local restrictions and we have been working hard to reassure you about the measures in place, how those have worked to date and how we will support more people back into service, whilst ensuring the building is Covid secure.

We totally understand people’s anxieties, but we do need people to return to services as either the way they were pre Covid or to consider an alternative offer from us – we want to support you and your cared for’s health and mental well being. We have and will continue to discuss potential alternative offers during our welfare calls in terms of offering in house support, community based support and small interest group support.

We know that peoples preferred option will be to have the support at day services that they had pre lockdown and we want to deliver as much as that as we can, taking into account the restrictions we are working under. But as a Provider, we have to be realistic about what this actually means for people and be as flexible as we can in working with you as carers about potential alternative offers of support in the interim.

**Localities work**

We’ve been delivering an increasing number of 121 support hours in the localities since the service fully re-opened on 1st July and this has been going well to date. Like Skills, we had planned to increase the hours we were supporting from the 3rd August, but we had to put this additional support on hold due to the local restrictions in place. This was coupled with the fact that for the hours that were being delivered there was an additional caveat of not being able to cover these hours with additional staff if the persons regular support worker(s) were off sick or on annual leave during the local restriction period.

It’s been a very frustrating time for all concerned. We have continued with the welfare calls to yourselves as carers and again been reassuring you about the measures in place to ensure people’s health and wellbeing, as and when we could start to increase our service delivery, which we have been doing since the local restrictions were lifted.

**Cheddle Lodge**

The Government announcement re weekly testing for staff and 28 day testing for residents as standard was expected to come into effect for Cheddle Lodge at the end of August. This hasn’t happened yet and we are waiting for further information about when we can expect this to be the case. In the interim, we are continuing with monthly testing for all staff across our services who are actively providing support to our service users.

We have had confirmation that family visits can be reinstated following them being put on hold as part of the local restrictions, which meant that we had to revert to the use of Skype etc to keep in touch with families in the interim. Visits will initially be outside visiting only but we hope this will quickly be amended to enable inside visits to people living at Cheddle.

We are also beginning to think how we come out of full lockdown at Cheddle Lodge so people can start to access their local community again. This will not involve returning to day services etc at this stage as we want to ensure that we take any lifting of the lockdown slowly to ensure we continue to keep people safe and well.

**Brecon Close**

The staff team at Brecon Close are settled and once again providing support to the person living there. Not all activities have been reinstated but access to the local community and being able to have a change of scenery, as in trips out in the car etc are helping some sense of normality to return.

**Wheelers**

We know people are very keen to see Wheelers up and running again and we had planned for this to be the case from the beginning of August but were hampered by the local restrictions. Our priority is to ensure that our day service and locality work is offering as much support as possible over the coming weeks including reintroducing our leisure groups. Wheelers will re-open again and information about when this will be and how we will be operating will be shared via our dedicated Wheelers Facebook page so please keep your eye out for this in the coming weeks.

**Meridian House**

The situation remains the same at Meridian as in we still have staff working a mixture of office based and home based working – numbers in the office remain capped at eight at any one time.

Over the next few months, we will start the migration back to Granville House but maintain a mixture of home and office working for staff to ensure that we remain compliant in relation to social distancing for the building as a whole and for the office space available.

Due to the impact of Covid -19 we have had to make a small number of staff, predominantly based at Meridian House but at Granville House as well, redundant. This has included the Fund raising team, due to cancellation of all planned events etc for this financial year, as well as an admin resource and the admin and cook resource based in Skills group.

These redundancies have not been easy decisions and we appreciate that this comes at a very difficult time in relation to lots of people who are finding themselves in similar situations across the country.

**And finally……**

We are very focused on wanting to ensure that we are bringing people back into service or/and discussing alternative ways in which we could offer support to enable you as carers to have a break from your role and for us to be able step in and offer support as soon as we can.

We know that you are concerned about what this might look like for the person you care for particularly for those of you who have not yet started back in services. However, just to reassure you we have successfully been delivering services throughout the lockdown period across Cheddle Lodge and since the lockdown period lifted in both Skills and the localities. We are in close contact with our local public health team, who are very proactive in sharing information and acting as a resource for queries etc.

All our buildings are Covid secure and have comprehensive risk assessments in place that are regularly reviewed and updated. We have all the PPE required to enable us to deliver a safe service and have sufficient stock levels, whether this is for a building based service or for support in the wider community. All our staff have been inducted into the new way of working, understand what PPE they need to use and how to safely dispose of it, across all our services there are enhanced cleaning schedules in place for buildings and vehicles and monthly Covid-19 testing of staff is taking place as an additional precautionary measure.

We are involved in regular meetings and discussions with local Commissioners so we are aware of what the local position is for Stockport in particular and surrounding areas where we are either directly supporting people or people are travelling in from for a service from us.

We have sent out an additional communication this week to all those people who have not yet returned to services to outline how we plan to offer support over the next few weeks. Please make sure that you read this additional information if you are in this position and make use of the welfare calls to discuss any worries and concerns you may have.

We are really looking forward to welcoming all the people we support back into service in the coming weeks and we are ready and able to provide support that takes into account the additional measures needed to keep people as safe as possible from the impact of Covid-19.

**Senior Leadership Team**