**Aspire Coronavirus Update 17/3/20 - Supported Individuals and Families**

**Why is this communication being sent out?**

We are sending this out to help individuals and their families prepare for and manage the considerable challenges we are likely to be faced with (due to staff sickness/isolation requirements) over the coming weeks.

Countries across the world are facing a virus for which there is no current cure. The impact this has had so far on many countries has been extensive. The most important thing we can do to counteract this is to follow advice, work together and to support each other in these very difficult (and for many, scary) times.

Since the issue became evident in China and the spread and seriousness of this was apparent, Aspire has been quietly working to develop contingency planning. Advising all staff what to do and adapting the systems we have to deal with bad weather/issues with business continuity to meet the changing advice and challenges experienced as they become apparent. We will continue to do this.

We know these are very challenging times for everyone and want to reassure people as best we can that we are focused on maintaining the safety of staff, supported individuals and their families but we cannot do that alone.

We need your help and support to work with us during this very difficult time.

We have been and will continue to work closely with local authorities to minimise the impact of potentially reduced support offered to individuals.

**What are the symptoms of coronavirus?**

* Recent onset of a new continuous cough
* High temperature (above 37.8). You feel hot to touch on your chest and back

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild infection, however for those with underlying health conditions and frailty it can have a devastating impact.

**What Can we do To Avoid Getting the Virus**

* The most important thing people can do is to wash their hands in soap and water for 20 seconds frequently
* Use hand sanitizer regularly only when soap and sinks are not available
* Keep 2 metres distance from people wherever possible
* Clean hard surfaces (door handles, phones, kettles, kitchen surfaces, desks etc) regularly. The virus can live up to 72 hrs on hard surfaces. The support hub has had a cleaning rota in place for 2 weeks. Households may want to do the same as your homes are places of work for our frontline staff.

The most **recent advice from late 16/3/20** is listed below. This advice affects **supported individuals but also their families**. Aspire is very keen to ensure we all work together to play our part in keeping everyone as safe and healthy as we can.

* People should avoid crowded places such as pubs, restaurants, theatres etc.
* People should work from home wherever possible
* By 21/3/20 those with serious health conditions must be ‘largely shielded’ from social contact for around 12 weeks.
* If one person in any household has a persistent cough or fever, anyone living there must stay at home for 14 days. These people should, if possible avoid leaving the house, even to buy food or essentials. If they have to do this, to stay a safe distance away (around 2 metres) from others.

**People who have to take particular care are:**

* People over 70 years old
* Other adults who would normally be advised to have the flu vaccine (eg, people with chronic diseases)
* Pregnant women

**Please note that ALL GROUP SOCIAL ACTIVITY IS SUSPENDED in the meantime and that support generally may be provided within your home. If possible and appropriate, your staff will try to responsibly plan opportunities for short spells outwith the house while maintaining safe social distances which avoid any non-essential contact.**

**If you have a mobility car and car journey outings are beneficial to you/your loved one’s wellbeing, please ensure that disinfectant wipes are available for staff to clean driving wheel and controls/switches, door handles and seat belts etc. before and after driving the car and that there is enough fuel.**

**What will happen if my support staff cannot be at work?**

It may be that you have people provide support you haven’t previously met. We will ensure staff read the care plans for people and that they carry out support as best they can. We will try to minimise this wherever possible.

Staff have been tasked to create information on each person in terms of risk. They have assessed each individual supported person’s level and complexity of their support needs alongside our understanding of their family, friends and informal supports capacity.

Each person has been assessed as ‘Red; Amber or Green’. This information has been shared with the relevant social work departments.

* Those in category RED are the people we believe to be most at risk and will be the group we most protect. They are in this category due to their level of need, or lack of family/informal supports.
* Amber assessed individuals are those who have an intermediate level of support needs and who have some available family/informal support. This is the second most important group for us to protect.
* Green assessed people are those with either lower level of complexity and/or have family/informal supports who would be able to meet their needs. This is a group we believe to be at least risk. If we have difficulties with high staff sickness levels, this group would have their support reduced 1st.

**How Will I be Advised If I Won’t Get Support as Normal?**

Aspire senior staff will contact you or your named contact to advise you of any problems in providing cover as soon as they can. Emails will be sent out to give notice of any amendments to future support times. Please ensure the service has the best up to date telephone numbers and email addresses to contact you.

It may be some type of support is available, but may be less time. Staff may need to be focused on getting food and medicine to those who are unable to get out of their homes if they are in quarantine for any period.

**What happens to my budget if my support is cancelled due to this?**

SDS budgets are planned over a yearly period. Any unused hours due to the coronavirus will be banked for future use.

**Is there a risk of the infection being brought into my home?**

Staff who provide your support are likely to also visit a number of very vulnerable people. We have advised staff to wash their hands as soon as they arrive in your home and when they leave. You can help them by having soap available with kitchen towel to dry their hands – not a normal towel. This will minimise risk of spread. If staff don’t clean their hands on arrival, or leaving, gently remind them to do so.

As stated above, you can help our staff (and your own home) by x2 daily washing of all surfaces listed above.

Staff have very clear guidance on what symptoms to be alert to and when they must declare a need to self-isolate or alert their manager of infection concerns within any home they visit.

**What if family members have symptoms of coronavirus?**

Anyone who is experiencing symptoms of coronavirus must follow the most up to date guidance issued. **If anyone within a household is self-isolating or diagnosed with** **coronavirus you must inform Aspire immediately**.

**What Else Can I do?**

If you are an informal carer/family member and you are in a position to take on more responsibility in the short term for some or all of your loved one’s care and support, please contact the service managers.

This would reduce the number of people entering your home and minimise the risk of infection being brought into your household. This could also free up some vital staff resources to people who rely completely on their Aspire staff team for their safety and wellbeing. Any cancelled hours will be banked for future use.

For further information

* Watch/listen to BBC for ongoing updates/advice
* UK and Scottish Government Advice on their Websites on up to date advice for public and staff
* NHS Scotland Advice their Website