

## Covid-19 Updated Information for Middleton Hall Residents and Families 2020

### **32. Care Services – Coronavirus Update (Christmas Eve 2020)**

As we enter into the Christmas period, infection levels nationally have escalated significantly since last weekend when London and South East entered new Tier 4 restrictions and other parts of the south are now joining them on Boxing Day. As everyone should be aware the acceleration of the virus in the south is primarily driven by a new strain that is considerably more infectious and it is already putting hospitals under similar pressure to April.

Most worryingly, there have been two cases of the new South African mutation that also transmits faster and is causing younger people with no previous health issues to become very ill.

Not a very cheerful start to Christmas. It is very clear that we all need to be extremely wary over Christmas and New Year.

I am disappointed to let you know that, despite extensive lobbying over the last week, we have now been told that our care service residents will not get vaccinated until week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> January when the first delivery of vaccine to Darlington PCN (Primary Care Network) arrives. At least we have managed to get over two thirds of the care teams vaccinated so far. Some of Co-owners are not able to have the Pfizer vaccine for medical or allergy reasons and this may apply with some residents. We are continuing with daily rapid testing into January.

Middleton Hall's virtual Christmas Play is now live on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/zSFwbchrCbo> Thanks to Alexis, Oli and all the talented cast.

This has been a desperately difficult year throughout the world. Many people have lost livelihoods and loved ones to the worst pandemic since 1918. We have got through the year at Middleton Hall, thanks to the immense efforts of our Co-owners and the support of residents and families. The directors and trustees are immensely grateful for that.

Thank you very much to all the residents and families who have generously contributed to the Co-owners' Fund in the last few weeks. We are distributing money in the Co-owners' Fund to all Co-owners in January – if anyone still wants to make a donation, they can email Keeley in accounts ([klw@mhrv.co.uk](mailto:klw@mhrv.co.uk)).

With our very best wishes to you and your families for a safe and Merry Christmas and a considerably better 2021.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **31. Care Services – Coronavirus Update (18<sup>th</sup> December 2020)**

### Vaccine News

On the good news front, many of our Co-owners have received their first vaccination this week. I had my inoculation last night and, aside from what seemed a not very Covid secure environment at James Cook and the repetitive paperwork, it was utterly painless and I have had no side effects.

I have spent a great deal of time trying to get some answers about when residents are to be vaccinated once it became clear that it would not be this week. Despite communicating with the Clinical Lead for Darlington, two local MPs and Care England which resulted in questions to both the Vaccine Minister and Care Minister I have not been able to get an answer worth sharing (I received three different answers from the Department of Health in one afternoon). It is now unlikely to be before Christmas and more likely during the first week in January. This is incredibly disappointing, given Matt Hancock's statement only ten days ago that care home residents would be vaccinated by Christmas and that they are managing to deliver on this promise in Scotland and Wales.

It is important that we all appreciate full immunity is only gained 7 days after the second vaccine and that it is not yet known if the vaccine stops transmission. The vaccine prevents or reduces illness, but the trials have not proved if a person who is vaccinated can still pass on the virus. We will need to continue with all the precautions for at least January.

Although the Tees Valley has remained in Tier 3, with the relaxation of restrictions for the five days of Christmas, it is expected that there will be a surge in infection in January, much as has happened in the US since Thanksgiving. We will remain very careful and vigilant during the Christmas period – once residents are fully vaccinated, we will be able to begin to relax, but we are not there yet.

### Hairdressing

We will have some hairdressing appointments next week, following the period of self isolation for our hairdresser. We are prioritising those residents who had cancelled appointments last time.

### Digital Care Planning

Our final service went live with our new digital care planning system this week, so all services are running care documentation through a combination of smart phones, tablets and laptops to improve efficiency and reduce potential infection control issues. If residents are wondering why members of their care team are looking at a phone, they are not doing some online shopping – it is the alternative to the paperwork that used to go on behind the scenes but is now done at the point of care. Feel free to ask to be shown how it works!

### Christmas Cheer

The maintenance team with help from Elaine from the Healthy Living team have done a great job on the Christmas lights and tree outside reception. Co-owners have been taking residents out to see the lights.

There are plenty of Christmas events going on from a wandering flautist playing Christmas Carols to the virtual Christmas Play (the red carpet is due to be rolled out on Christmas Eve) – thank you to all those residents, families and Co-owners who are contributing to help make Christmas be as festive as possible, despite the restrictions that the pandemic has brought upon this normally joyous time of year.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please let us know.

Thank you for your support.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

### **30. Care Services - Coronavirus Update and Vaccine news (11<sup>th</sup> December 2020)**

After a period of time with no positive cases, unfortunately we are having to put some precautions in place after one of our hairdressers reported a positive test this morning. We believe the risk to be low as she had negative rapid tests on the three days she worked, but the weekly laboratory test has come back as positive - she is well and has no symptoms, so we are waiting for the result of a further laboratory test, in case it might be a false positive test result. We are asking the residents who had an appointment to keep to their rooms and apartments until we know the second result over the weekend and will take further decisions at that point.

#### Vaccine News

As you will be aware, the Pfizer vaccine is in the process of being rolled out. This update is to provide all our residents and families with the information about the vaccine and the process.

Firstly, the vaccine itself. I have spoken to a number of people about the science behind the vaccine, including a friend who works as a doctor at Imperial College and is an expert in epidemics. He is very confident about the safety of the three leading vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna and Oxford University/AstraZeneca) and the scientific scrutiny behind the scenes.

There has been a lot of misinformation on the vaccine and its safety especially on social media. I have attached the NHS leaflet with this update but you also may find the article below from the BBC news website a balanced guide:

#### [Covid vaccine: What you need to know about vaccine safety – BBC News](#)

The only unknowns are about whether the vaccine reduces the spread of the virus and how long immunity lasts for.

#### Vaccination Programme

We have had the first Co-owners to be vaccinated at James Cook Hospital (the hospital vaccine hub for the Tees Valley). We have managed to secure more than our allocated 2 slots per day and expect the process to speed up next week. Initially we have prioritised Co-owners working in the care services who were being shielded or are vulnerable, then by age and other risk factors from the risk assessments undertaken earlier in the year.

We are hoping that residents may get vaccinated as early as next week so the Care Teams have been working on getting consent forms ready in preparation – thank you to families who have been involved with consent for responding quickly. We understand that we may get a call at short notice if all the paperwork is in place for someone to come to site with vaccines for all the residents in one visit. We have been placed on a priority list due to having all the information that the NHS needs in place.

If we are able to get residents vaccinated next week, it would mean that the second injection would be in the first week of January. That should give antibody immunity seven days later and, assuming the government guidance is relaxed and we also have Co-owners vaccinated, should allow us to start opening up our care services to visitors and reintroducing our normal services from the middle of January.

For obvious reasons, we will remain very cautious until January given high local infections levels. As several families have pointed out in the last week, it would be foolish to let anything go wrong with the finishing line in sight.

I hope my more optimistic tone is not proved misplaced, but it feels that a restricted Christmas should be easier to bear with real hope for the new year.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please let us know.

For the moment, please stay safe.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **29. Care Services – Coronavirus update (4<sup>th</sup> December 2020)**

I am relieved to report that there have been no positive tests for Co-owners or residents in Middleton Court since the precautions taken last week, so all services are operating normally. We have had one Co-owner test positive in Middleton Oaks, but it appears to be low risk based on when the Co-owner worked. It is however a reminder that although infection levels have eased a little locally, they remain very high (double the national average in the Tees Valley) so we need to remain very careful.

The vaccine news is very welcome, but it is not clear how the Pfizer vaccine is going to get to Care Homes yet. It may still be that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine provides the answer so we should hope that MHRA approve it for use in the UK imminently.

The vaccine will be incredibly important and we all have to trust that some of the misleading stories from the “anti-vax” groups do not impact on take up as it is clear that there will not be an end of the pandemic without a high uptake on vaccination. Although, I am always reluctant about taking any medication, even painkillers, I will personally have absolutely no hesitation about being vaccinated for Covid-19. It can clearly be a very unpleasant disease for all age groups and the impact of “Long Covid” on relatively fit people can be devastating.

### Visiting

The sudden change in government policy on Monday about visiting has been causing major concern from the social care sector. A number of Local Authorities have told care homes not to use the new rapid tests (Lateral Flow Tests) for visitors because of concerns over accuracy and some care groups have decided not to allow inside visiting. The trials carried out in November with care homes were in the areas with the lowest infection rates (around a tenth of the infection levels in the Tees Valley), where the overall level of risk was low. The rapid tests are best used as we are using them with Co-owners every day as it improves the chances of picking up an asymptomatic infection.

Following the feedback last week and given how close we are to the vaccine, we would propose to families and residents that we introduce limited inside visiting as an alternative to Visitor Pods where visitor pods are inappropriate or where there should be significant mental health benefits for a resident. We should be able to have that in place from later next week.

### Central Services

Hairdressing is being planned for re-opening next week along with physiotherapy and the following week, podiatry.

### Religious services

We would not wish to let the pandemic completely remove the religious importance of Christmas, so we could try to arrange some form of socially distanced religious service (sadly without carols) close to Christmas, if there is demand for it. Could any residents who would particularly like to attend some form of Covid-safe church service let us know?

For those residents and Co-owners who do fancy some carol singing, the Mayor of Darlington is organising a virtual carol where anyone in Darlington can record themselves singing a carol – see attached for details. Any recording must follow covid guidelines (social distanced or single household).

### Christmas Play

Thank you to the those who have volunteered to take part in the virtual Christmas play – we are still looking for a few more volunteers (residents especially) so please encourage any shy thespians! We have recently recruited a new Marketing Assistant, Oliver Welham, who has a background in script writing so will be working with Alexis on putting the play together. Volunteers to [ab@mhrv.co.uk](mailto:ab@mhrv.co.uk) or speak to a Co-owner.

### Christmas Contributions

In normal times during December, families and residents are often generous in providing all sorts of Christmas offerings and donations to thank our Co-owners and some of you have already asked what would be appropriate. Given the state of the pandemic we would wish to be very careful about potential infection from

items brought in. That might appear churlish and frankly our Co-owners have been quite amazing during an extraordinarily difficult year, so if any residents or families would like to demonstrate their gratitude for our team, we would suggest that you make a financial donation to our Co-owners Fund that we then distribute to all our Co-owners (based on full or part time). Anyone who would like to make a donation this way should email Keeley Whittle in our accounts team ([klw@mhrv.co.uk](mailto:klw@mhrv.co.uk)) with a message that we will pass on and whether you would like the amount of the donation to be shown or not.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please let us know. We are very grateful for the support from residents and families – thank you.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **28. Care Services – Coronavirus update (28<sup>th</sup> November 2020)**

We appear to have a more settled week with no residents testing positive and all services back to “normal” Covid infection control for the early part of the week. We have had one asymptomatic Co-owner in Middleton Court test positive and, regrettably, while we wait for a further test result, we have asked residents to stay in their rooms as a precaution although we are continuing pod visits.

As expected, Tees Valley has been placed in Tier 3 following the end of national lockdown next week. Given high infection levels, in practice this is very similar to lockdown:

- No household mixing, apart from support bubbles (if you live on your own)
- You can meet outside in public parks in a group of up to 6
- Shops and hairdressing can re-open (we will confirm the hairdressing arrangements next week)
- Pubs and restaurants must stay closed apart from takeaways

As you will probably have seen, further good news this week is that the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is going through for emergency approval by MHRA in the UK. We await news on the timing, but there could be 2 million doses available by the end of December and care homes are first in line for vaccination. The significance of this vaccine, is that it does not need storing in special freezers so should make the roll out considerably easier.

The vaccine should provide the end of the pandemic, therefore it will be vital that all residents and Co-owners are vaccinated so that we can return to a real normal. If you would like information on the vaccines:- [Covid: How will I get a coronavirus vaccine? – BBC News](#)

### Visiting

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback about more flexible inside visiting in December. The majority felt that with the vaccine expected soon, it would make more sense to maintain the safe Visitor Pod visiting arrangements for the moment. There are a few residents for whom the pods are either not possible (being bed bound for example) or do not work, so we have extended the procedure that we have used for end of life circumstances to allow limited inside visiting with careful risk assessment and rapid testing for those few individual circumstances.

On Christmas Day and Christmas Eve, we are offering a greater number of shorter visits to ensure all residents have the opportunity of a Christmas visit.

### KOMP

One of our Middleton Oaks residents has been successfully trying out a device to make video calling easier called “KOMP”. It is a screen that once set up, only needs turning on to receive video calls and photographs as it is controlled by an app on family members’ phones. For further information:- [www.noisolation.com](http://www.noisolation.com). They are available for purchase or rent. If any families acquire one, we can help to get it set up from our end.

### Christmas Play

Finally, in a great initiative from our Hospitality and Living Well team, we are asking for volunteers to take part in a unique “virtual Christmas play”. Seems a tremendous idea for the community, so we are asking residents (families welcome too!) to take a small part (that is recorded on your phone or iPad from a script and send in). If not enough of the talented residents and Co-owners take part, I have threatened to take a part myself so be warned! Please email Alexis (Hospitality Manager) [ab@mhrv.co.uk](mailto:ab@mhrv.co.uk)

Thank you for all your feedback and positive messages over the last week.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **27. Care Services – Coronavirus update (5<sup>th</sup> November 2020)**

As a new lockdown starts today, we are probably at the highest level of risk since the beginning of the pandemic. However, unlike the time of the first lockdown in March, we now have greater ability to help keep everyone safe and we are going to use all the tools available over the next two weeks.

Currently we are taking precautions in Middleton Oaks due to an asymptomatic resident's positive test and Middleton Gardens (Supported Living) due to a Co-owner who has confirmed Covid-19.

### **Rapid Testing**

Since Wednesday, we have introduced rapid testing prior to starting work for all Co-owners working with residents in the Care Services for the next two weeks. This is an expensive precaution to put in place, so it is not sustainable for very long but given the levels of infection in the community and the number of asymptomatic cases, this gives us the best chance of keeping the virus out. It is inconvenient for our Co-owners, but everyone has embraced this step in a positive spirit. We are continuing the weekly laboratory based care home testing which should be more accurate and we now appear to be getting the results faster.

### **Visitors**

The government finally approved the use of Visitor Pods for care homes yesterday which is a huge relief as we all know how important visits from family and friends are for our residents. The Visitor Pod bookings in Middleton Oaks and Supported Living will resume as soon as tests indicate that it is safe.

Once we are clear of the current asymptomatic cases and are confident about rapid tests, we are hoping to introduce some additional risk assessed visiting using rapid testing. There will be further information next week on this, once there has been some clarification of the new government guidance on visiting.

### **Central Services**

Under the lockdown, we are no longer able to re-open hairdressing, the Orangery and swimming pool as we had hoped or to run trips. The Living Well team will be working in the services over the next four weeks to provide as much exercise and entertainment as possible and providing socially distanced outside exercise for Middleton Woods and the Waterside.

We appreciate that this has been a stressful time for residents and families, but we will continue to do the best that we can do.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **26. Care Services – Coronavirus update (30<sup>th</sup> October 2020)**

We have had a difficult and unsettling couple of weeks. It has however been a terrific demonstration of the commitment and teamwork of our Co-owners.

The testing situation continues to be very frustrating. After six days waiting, we finally received yesterday the Public Health England (PHE/NHS) Pillar 1 test results from last week. I am pleased to let you know that everyone tested negative (residents and Co-owners) in Middleton Court. We have relaxed the restrictions on residents in Middleton Court, although keeping one resident in self isolation as a precaution, and Visitor Pod bookings are available from today.

As a result of the recent situation, we do have some real concerns about the validity of the results that we have received from Pillar 2 tests (Care home testing). In theory, a true false positive is a rare occurrence as it broadly involves contamination of the sample either at point of taking the test or in the laboratory. But, we have had conflicting results from PHE tests and our standard Care Home tests taken around the same time. In addition, antibody tests for those who had tested positive earlier in the month have all been negative (it takes 2-3 weeks for antibodies to show in a test).

I have spoken in the last two days with an expert on testing who has explained there is a difference between how the Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 tests are carried out and although we should be able to rely on the accuracy of Pillar 1 (PHE/NHS) tests conducted in established NHS laboratories, there is a different testing system used in the private contract laboratories for Pillar 2 tests. None of the NHS tests have shown a positive result.

It is possible that we have not had any Covid-19 cases. Certainly no one has had any symptoms which is unexpected, particular for the residents. However, we will always assume that a positive test is correct and act accordingly – we cannot afford to be complacent with the level of risk locally.

### **Rapid Antigen Tests**

We have just received the first batch of the rapid antigen swab tests that we ordered. These will help in the event of further positive cases so that we can take faster action, given how long the laboratory PCR tests are currently taking (5-7 days). Although they are less accurate, we will use them in conjunction with lab tests to reduce the amount of restrictions we have to put in place. As we mentioned last week, when we receive the next batch, we would like to use them selectively with residents who are struggling mentally to allow more flexible visiting with a strict risk assessment in place. Given the cost of the tests, it is likely that we would be asking for a contribution if we are able to use rapid tests with visitors. We have asked for clarification of official guidance and regulations for “exceptional circumstances”, based on information from a local authority in another part of the country. Currently, under Tier 2 restrictions, care home visits are not permitted although we believe the regulations allow Visitor Pod visits. As you may be aware, there are reports that the Tees Valley may shortly move into Tier 3 which could make visiting an issue.

### **Maintenance**

While local infection levels are high, the maintenance team are only dealing with essential maintenance tasks to minimise risk, as we did during the early part of the pandemic.

### **Trips**

We have re-started some limited, carefully planned trips (risk assessment must include confirmation of available toilets, no indoor public spaces etc) in Middleton Grove this week and will be re-starting in other services when we are able.

### **Central Services**

We are hoping to re-open a revised hairdressing service from November 9<sup>th</sup>. We also hope to re-open the Orangery and swimming pool initially for independent residents at the same time. Michael is currently working on the details and we will share them shortly.

### **Visitor Pods**

Most hearing aids have a “T setting” on the controls at the back of the hearing aid. When residents are using the



Visitor Pods, their hearing aid(s) need to be set to the T position to activate the hearing loop system. The hearing aid needs to be switched back to the normal position afterwards.

#### Vaccine

There has been some encouraging news in the last week about the vaccine trials. Currently, it is becoming possible that a vaccine may be available for certain groups, potentially including care home residents by Christmas. If (and that is still a big IF as there are significant steps to overcome) this does prove to be the case, it would provide some light at the end of what has been a long tunnel.

Thank you to all the residents and families who have been so supportive during the last couple of weeks.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **25. Care Services – Coronavirus update (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020)**

The two asymptomatic residents being cared for as a precaution in the Rainbow Centre have remained symptom free and have now returned to their rooms in Middleton Court. There have been no other resident cases.

We have now had a total of four asymptomatic Co-owner positive tests over the last three weeks. None of them seem to be connected but it has served as a reminder that we have to be very vigilant with high levels of infection in the community around us.

Thankfully, I can share some positive news about our plans for the next few weeks.

### **Testing**

As you may have seen from the news, rapid testing is beginning to be used in various parts of Europe. Prior to the recent situation, Middleton Hall had pre-ordered some rapid antigen testing kits that are due for delivery in early November. Antigen tests should show someone who is infectious with the virus with or without symptoms. The rapid tests that we have ordered involve taking a throat or nasal swab and combining with a chemical placed in a cassette to give a result in 15 minutes. Although they are less accurate than the laboratory PCR tests and quite expensive, we believe that in conjunction with lab based PCR tests, they will help us manage any future infections more effectively and take quick decisions to keep everyone safe. We also intend to use them to help more flexible visiting over the winter.

We already have some rapid antibody tests ordered earlier in the summer (that show if someone has previously had Covid-19) that we are using as well.

### **Visiting**

With the Tees Valley in Tier 2, restrictions say that care home visiting should only be in exceptional circumstances. We are taking that to mean inside visiting (which we have always allowed at end of life) and we had asked, prior to Darlington becoming Tier 2, for confirmation from the local authority that it was safe to continue Visitor Pod visits if local restrictions came into force. We have not had any reply to date, so we are continuing Visitor Pod visits, as long as we have no Covid-19 cases and subject to our guidelines. We feel that it is important for residents to have family contact safely in a Visitors Pod.

We are hoping to use our rapid tests to provide more flexibility with limited, risk assessed visits once infection levels stabilise. We will update you with these possibilities (and any costs) once we have the tests on site and the restrictions in November are clear.

### **Vitamin D**

Medical research has indicated that Vitamin D can help reduce the effects of Covid-19. One of our GPs has approved and advised on the use of Vitamin D for residents so we have ordered privately (not on prescription) Vitamin D for every care service resident. For any residents without capacity, we will be asking for consent from families for Vitamin D to be taken as a supplement. I trust that all residents and families will be in agreement about this decision. Middleton Hall will bear the cost of the supplements.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54526652>

### **Infection Control**

As some of you will be aware, we purchased an electrostatic disinfection spray gun (“Victory Sprayer”) early in the pandemic to provide fast and effective cleaning. We have now purchased additional devices so that each care service has their own which housekeepers are used on a routine basis, on top of our rigorous cleaning schedules. They are also used to keep Visitor Pods safe.

### **Self-Isolation**

We continue to take a precautionary approach to asking Co-owners to self-isolate beyond government requirements where there may have been potential contacts. Although this does put pressure on our teams and can affect service levels, in two of the four asymptomatic positive cases we had already asked them to stay at home so there was no risk to others.

**PPE**

All Co-owners have been asked to use face coverings outside where there is any possibility of coming across a resident within 2m. We are also hoping to get some clear, reusable face masks for use with residents with hearing or communication difficulties that have recently been approved.

It has been a difficult week for our teams and we are very grateful for all our Co-owners that have stepped up – working extra shifts and particularly those who volunteered to work in the Rainbow Centre, including support team members. The level of commitment has been extraordinary.

If any residents or families have ideas or thoughts on anything that would help keep everyone safe or help resident “living well” at this time, please let us know.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

#### **24. Care Services – Coronavirus update (15<sup>th</sup> October 2020)**

Despite all the precautions put in place last week, unfortunately we have two residents in Middleton Court who have tested positive for Covid-19. Both are well and showing no signs of any symptoms. The tests were carried out on Sunday but the results only arrived in the early hours this morning – as you may be aware from media reports, care homes are being hampered by test results taking 4 days or longer to come back. We also have an additional member of the Middleton Court team who has had a positive test – again asymptomatic. The Co-owner had not had any contact with the Co-owner who tested positive last week, so may be unrelated.

We have put into place our contingency plan for the situation and the maintenance team have been setting up the Rainbow Centre in Middleton Spa today. We hope to move the two positive tested residents into the Rainbow Centre this evening. This will then be run by a separate team to reduce any chances of further spread.

There have been no other positive tests in any other service.

We are working with Public Health England (PHE) to access additional testing and should be re-testing all residents and Co-owners in Middleton Court during the next 24 hours. PHE should be able to ensure faster results which will help.

All residents in Middleton Court were already being cared for in their rooms as a precaution and this will remain the case for the next two weeks. We will be reviewing the situation each day and will let you know of any other precautions that we will be putting in place.

We are planning to continue Visitor Pod visits in Middleton Grove, Middleton Oaks and Middleton Gardens for the moment, but this may of course change.

This is going to put further pressure on our care teams who have already been working with tighter staffing levels due to the number of Co-owners self-isolating as a precaution from situations in schools and other workplaces locally. Please bear with our teams who will be stretched over the next few days – they are doing a fantastic job in very challenging circumstances.

We will keep you updated.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

### **23. Care Services – Coronavirus update (7<sup>th</sup> October 2020)**

We have had two Co-owners testing positive for Covid-19 in the last 48 hours. On Monday evening, we had news of a positive case for a Co-owner working in Middleton Gardens (Hotel Living). Fortunately, the Co-owner had previously let us know that one of her family who she had seen had subsequently tested positive so we had already kept her off work and based on the timelines of infection and careful use of PPE, we believe the risk of the virus being passed on is low.

This morning, an asymptomatic Co-owner in Middleton Court also received a positive Covid-19 test. That Co-owner had also previously been self-isolating on a precautionary basis due to a suspected school case and had only worked one shift since returning without delivering any personal care, so again we feel that the risk to residents should be low. We have however asked a number of members of the team to self-isolate as a precaution which is going to cause us some disruption to the level of service.

We have put into place immediate restrictions for the rest of this week in both Middleton Court and Middleton Gardens (Hotel Living) including residents staying in their rooms, suspending trips and visits to their Visitor Pods as well as additional testing for residents and Co-owners. We have telephoned the families of residents in both services immediately to let them know.

We continue to welcome visitors to Visitor Pods in other services, including Supported Living.

Given the high level of infection rates in the area (Darlington and Stockton both doubling again and now at higher levels than County Durham which is in local lockdown) it is not surprising that positive cases amongst our Co-owners have occurred.

We have also found two Co-owners from recent antibody tests have had Covid-19 earlier in the year before we had access to testing. In both cases, we had taken immediate action similar to the actions we have taken this week so that they and people they worked with self-isolated – this was extremely inconvenient at the time, but clearly the correct action as we had no cases with residents in the first wave of the pandemic.

As I suggested last week, it was clear that the next few weeks would be challenging with the high local infection levels. We will continue to be vigilant and ensure a safety first approach.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **22. Care Services – Coronavirus update (29<sup>th</sup> September 2020)**

It is clear that the next few weeks are going to be difficult and it is likely that the Tees Valley (including Darlington) will be joining County Durham and Tyneside in local lockdown – cases doubled for local statistics produced last week and today's figures for last week show another significant increase with Darlington doubling again (up to 81 cases per 100,000 population) which puts most of the Tees Valley on a par with Durham and Tyneside when restrictions were introduced.

We also learnt yesterday that one care home in Darlington that had 6 cases last week sadly now has 24 residents and 12 staff members with Covid. A terrible reminder of how quickly the disease can spread. Clearly this is the second wave of the pandemic. However, with our experience and knowledge of the measures we put in place during the first wave now with regular testing and PPE in place, this time we should be confident and well prepared.

Reluctantly, we have decided that now is the time to take precautionary action to keep residents safe before it is too late. We are very aware that this will be difficult for our residents who have just started to enjoy some greater freedom but our intention is to act quickly and hopefully for a limited period of two weeks, if infection levels stabilise.

The temporary restrictions will apply from Wednesday for the care services and Thursday for Independent Living.

### **Residents and Families**

We will continue to allow families and friends to visit but only in the Visitor Pods from tomorrow (Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup>). While we are happy for such visits as we know it is important for residents, we would not encourage families to break any regulations that restrict travel in their area (many areas are allowing essential travel only, but that can include support or care for others).

Trips will also continue with strict protocols to avoid contact with people outside Middleton Hall.

The use of Middleton Spa, Hairdressing, Therapies, Orangery and the shop is suspended for Care Services residents from Wednesday and for Independent Living residents from Thursday. Outside, socially distanced exercise classes will continue.

Routine hospital visits will continue for the moment, but only essential district nurse and health professionals visits will be allowed and with careful supervision to follow our procedures. District Nurses are currently visiting multiple care homes without any routine testing so their visits are of particular concern.

### **Co-owners**

We are providing further PPE and hand sanitiser for all Co-owners for their use outside to help keep everyone safe and encouraging vigilance at Middleton Hall and at home. This includes measures such as are co-owners changing into clean uniform on site, restricting anyone working in different services (maintenance, Spa team etc) as we did in the first wave of the pandemic.

Bringing in some restrictions again is a difficult step and not one that we have taken lightly. However we know that taking early action in the first part of the pandemic helped keep Covid out of Middleton Hall.

Please stay safe during this difficult time.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **21. Care Services – Coronavirus update (24<sup>th</sup> September 2020)**

It is now six months since the original national lockdown and it seems that we are entering the second wave of the pandemic – national infection levels are increasing sharply, parts of the north east are in local lockdowns. If the UK follows the experience of Spain and France hospital admissions and sadly deaths from Covid-19 are likely to follow. Although the team at Middleton Hall has done an amazing job since the beginning of the pandemic, it is not over. However, with the experience of the last six months, we should be able to manage considerably better over the next few months and balance safety and living well for our residents and Co-owners.

### **Coronavirus Regulations**

Following the stark warning from scientists on Monday and the government announcing increased restrictions we are being careful about any Co-owners who have got children who could either have the infection or have been in contact with children or staff at school who have been infected. This is making our staffing levels difficult to manage at present although we have been doing some recruiting. You will appreciate that it does take time to recruit the right people. If you know anyone who might be interested, please refer them to the recruitment section of our website: <https://www.middletonhallretirementvillage.co.uk/join-our-team/>

### **NHS Covid App**

The NHS contact tracing app has finally been launched today. It is a key part of the government's strategy to keep infection rates down and we would like to encourage everyone to support it. I have downloaded the app and it is easy to use and appears informative. Please encourage all your families, friends and social media contacts to use the app. If there is a good take up, it helps everyone keep safe and reduce the spread of the virus.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-54250736>

### **Visitors**

Given autumnal weather arriving, we will continue to encourage visitors to use Visitor Pods. The maintenance team have been upgrading them by adding blinds/curtains, hearing loops and more screening. Darlington Borough Council initially told all care homes to stop visits but has conceded that outside socially distanced visiting with PPE and Visitor Pods can continue. Should we be told to stop visitors at some point, we intend to maintain use of Visitor Pods as long as we can argue that they are "Covid-secure" and that we have strict infection control in place. This means we need to be rigorous in disinfecting the pods and booking arrangements. Reception are now managing all the bookings (bookings can be made between 9 and 5.30 Mon-Fri and 9-4 Saturday and Sunday) and ensuring we have contact details to conform with track and trace requirements. Under current regulations, people in local lockdown areas who are not allowed to travel outside that area will not be able to visit.

### **Flu Vaccinations**

The government is encouraging a high take up of flu injections amongst vulnerable groups and social care workers. Our residents are booked for flu vaccinations on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **Trips**

We are continuing with limited trips but with careful risk assessment to ensure they are safe given how well received they have been by residents. We are working to make sure that we can provide activities for residents during inclement weather when getting outside is less popular.

### **Cash-free Retirement Village**

Following feedback on our cash free plan Middleton Hall will not accept cash or hold cash from October 1<sup>st</sup>. There are a few issues (car parking, trips, buying items for residents, residents buying wood and eggs for example) that we have worked out solutions for from questions raised.

I appreciate that it is a worrying time with the pandemic evolving but we will aim to continue to work with residents and families to make it easier.

Thank you for all your support and encouragement for our Co-owners.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **20. Care Services – Coronavirus update (15<sup>th</sup> September 2020)**

As has been reported in the media there have been significant increases in local infection rates and sadly there have been, as highlighted last week, further Covid-19 related deaths in care homes. Some authorities in the North East have already contacted care providers to ask them to cease visits and enter another lockdown. Middleton Hall received correspondence from Darlington Borough Council today. On clarification the council confirmed that we are able to continue outside, socially distanced visits and pod visits for residents and their loved ones.

We will continue to allow visits, indoor or outdoor, as long as social distancing rules are adhered to and PPE is worn as per our previously issued guidance. This option of visiting will continually be reviewed and we may choose to allow pod visits only, if we feel that is in the best interest of all at Middleton Hall or are required to by government or local authority.

As it is likely that our visitor pods will be the prime form of family contact, we would welcome any feedback on how we can improve the experience of our pod visits, for residents and visitors so that we can make some changes. We are looking into improving the microphone/loudspeaker system.

As you will be aware the new “rule of 6” came into force on Monday 14 September. In England this means that there is a ban on meetings of groups, indoor or outdoor, of more than six people (unless everyone lives together or is in the same support bubble). There are certain exceptions to this rule. It does not apply to schools, workplaces, restaurants and gyms, to name a few.

Organised indoor and outdoor sports, physical activity and exercise classes are allowed to continue. This means that our Gym, Spa and Independent Resident exercise classes can continue.

### **Covid Testing**

All our Co-owners working on site have been undergoing weekly Covid-19 tests, whether they have symptoms or not, utilising external testing sites as we have found that the results for resident tests through the national care home testing scheme have been taking 4 days or more to arrive. Last week the Government changed the requirements for booking a test, reducing the availability of testing for non-symptomatic people, so we are now utilising the care home testing scheme for Co-owners on a weekly basis at Middleton Hall.

### **Trips/Living Well**

The Virtual Village Show has commenced and the calendar of events has been issued. If you haven't yet received a copy please contact our Reception team. We've already seen some great entries for the Allotment Week and we're looking forward to reviewing the submissions for this weeks' category, Flowers and Plants.

The trips that have been arranged by the Transport and Care teams have been received very well and the feedback from residents and families has been overwhelmingly positive.

Each trip is carefully reviewed for safety and we will endeavour to continue outings under our strict protocols for the time being. However, if infection rates continue to rise or we feel the risks to our residents are increasing we may need to revise or stop this service.

With the threat of a second wave, this continues to be a difficult time for all and we thank you for your understanding and continued support.

Suzanne Graham  
Finance Director



## **19. Care Services – Coronavirus update (4<sup>th</sup> September 2020)**

The news has provided a mixed picture this week with infection levels in the UK increasing but not as fast as those in Europe as additional countries are added to the quarantine list. Locally, there are some worrying signs as the number of infections in Darlington and Stockton have increased in the last week and Middlesbrough's infection rate (28 per 100,000) is getting close to a local lockdown rate.

On a more positive front, saliva tests are being trialled at present which if successful could allow results in 20 minutes. If this testing becomes available, it could make a considerable difference to how we can operate. This was the main priority that I asked for through involvement with the Social Care Task Force in early August, so I hope it comes to fruition.

### **Trips/Living Well**

We remain keen to help residents have as much access to visitors as possible at present while the weather allows outside visiting as an alternative to the Visitor Pods.

During the next week we are asking Care Managers to individually assess all the residents with their teams to work out what would help individual residents the most at this time.

Limited and careful trips out for all the care services will be available during September as long as Government Guidance and local infection rates do not prevent them. Similarly, we are increasing the Orangery service for residents.

The first events are taking place next week for the Virtual Village Show with "Allotment Week" to be followed by some sports events and flower arranging competitions. Michael and the Spa team will be providing further details.

### **Digital Care Planning**

We have ordered a digital care planning system from Access called "Care and Clinical" along with an electronic medication system. This is a significant step forward that will reduce paper (and hence infection risk) and make the demanding compliance requirements easier to manage. There is a "scoping day" next week and training with the Digital Champions in each service shortly afterwards. We should start putting care plans onto the system in October which will allow us to go live at the end of November and early December.

Lastly, I am having a two week break ("staycation") from next week. In my absence, Suzanne Graham (Finance Director) will be chairing our weekly Covid team meetings and issuing any updates and Lesley Henderson (Operations Director) will be supporting the care services.

Thank you for your continuing support as we endeavour to balance resident safety and wellbeing.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **18. Care Services – Coronavirus update (26<sup>th</sup> August 2020)**

Over the next few weeks, we are continuing to concentrate on social opportunities and “Living Well” for residents while maintaining safety. We will however maintain a cautious approach given the latest figures from the ONS (Office for National Statistics) that sadly show an increase in deaths in care homes from Covid-19 for the first time in four months.

### **Covid Testing**

The first of the monthly testing for residents was carried out last week. Results have been very slow to arrive, so we are reluctant to start testing Co-owners in-house yet until we know we have a similar turn around to the local test centre results. We will of course let residents and families know should we find a positive result.

### **Isolation Rooms**

During the first stage of the pandemic, we kept two rooms free as self-isolation rooms. With testing of residents now available, any resident with symptoms would now be quarantined in their own room while waiting for a test result and we will keep one room free for any resident who has a positive test. Currently, most cases in care homes are individual cases rather than outbreaks but if we have more than one positive test case, we would re-commission the Rainbow Centre in Middleton Spa immediately.

### **Visitors**

We will continue to offer outside Visitor Stations along with the Visitor Pods during September. As a reminder, in order to keep within government guidelines, visits must be booked at least 24 hours in advance and outside visits are for one family member only. We are looking into more flexibility around visiting and will let everyone know if we are able to extend visiting arrangements. We are initially trialling some careful socially distanced meet ups outside the Orangery for individual residents to meet with other residents who live in The Waterside or Middleton Woods on an appointment basis as long as the relevant residents are low risk.

### **Trips**

Following positive feedback from residents and families to the idea, from September 1<sup>st</sup> we are introducing a limited number of carefully planned short trips initially for Middleton Grove and Middleton Gardens. We should be able to offer some trips in Middleton Court and Middleton Oaks for less vulnerable residents to follow but the focus for those services at present is to utilise the grounds as much as possible while the weather remains reasonable.

The Spa team are also offering some assisted swims for the care services from this week. We are also reviewing the way hairdressing is working for the care services.

### **Cash**

To improve infection control, we are planning to become a cash-free retirement village. During the pandemic, we have generally avoided cash and before Coronavirus, I visited a retirement village in the south of England that was already cash free and it had worked well. We are proposing that there will only be card payment or resident accounts in the Orangery and shop in the future and we will no longer have petty cash available. If you can think of any issues this might create, please let reception know so that we can plan accordingly. We hope to be entirely cash-free by the end of September.

There has been much talk in the media about a second wave of the pandemic. During August we have put together a contingency plan for a second wave of Coronavirus so that we are prepared should the UK experience a second wave. Essentially the plan is doing the same again to keep everyone safe, however with testing available and our experience during the first wave, we should be better prepared now to manage an outbreak.

If you have any thoughts or ideas about how we should go forward, please let us know.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **17. Care Services – Coronavirus update (14<sup>th</sup> August 2020)**

While the community remains Covid free, our approach during August and hopefully September should be to focus on resident wellbeing. Infections in the UK have risen to above 1,000 per day for the first time since June (albeit with more testing taking place) so if that trend continues, it is more likely that we will face restrictions again in the autumn. Now is the time for residents to have a rather more social time than they have been able to since March, while balancing safety.

### **Visitors**

We are continuing outside visiting alongside the Pod visits. In order to meet government requirements, we are restricting outside visiting to one family member (but it can be different family members or friends for different booked visits). It is important that all visitors are booked in advance and not just turn up – this is particularly important to meet regulations and ensure that we are meeting Track and Trace requirements. For reference, I have included a link below to the official government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

### **Resident Living Well**

The kitchen team has planned barbeques for Middleton Woods and The Waterside and afternoon tea parties for each care service to take advantage of hopefully decent weather. We would encourage everyone to take up these and other social opportunities.

We have Tai Chi available but insufficient demand at present. If there are any residents who have attended in the past or would be interested, please let Michael know. We also have both therapists (Wendy and Sarah) starting services week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> August.

We are looking into the feasibility of introducing a limited number of carefully planned short trips out for small groups of less vulnerable residents to risk assessed locations. If anyone has particular opinions or ideas about this, please let us know next week.

We discussed re-introducing some of the community groups at our weekly meeting and concluded that mixing across services may be possible for some groups if socially distanced and outside, but we are proposing instead to have a “Virtual Village Show”. As we cancelled the Village Show normally held in September and put on hold celebrations for Middleton Hall’s 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary we would like to hold the usual classes at the show spread over September and October using a theme of 120 years history. More details will follow but we anticipate having art, crafts, cooking, vegetables, flowers and other events “virtually”. If you have some ideas for these or would like to volunteer to help organise with the Living Well team, please let Reception/Michael know.

Michael and the Spa team have done a great job to get the gym and pool ready for re-opening from this week and we will be offering assisted swims for the care services sessions from 24<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Resident Covid Testing**

We have received test kits under the new government testing system today. We will be testing residents in the next week as we have been unable to test them for some time, assuming the kits do indeed arrive. We would then hope to offer in house tests for Co-owners from week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> August to save them travelling to Test Centres for weekly tests.

If you have any thoughts or suggestions, please let us know.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **16. Care Services – Coronavirus update (31<sup>st</sup> July 2020)**

As we enter August, I am sure we are all hoping that the recent period of stability continues although having written the bulletins on Thursday evening this week there have been two changes announced by the government, so I fear the stable period we have been in may be short lived. . Middleton Hall has managed, so far, to navigate the very challenging first five months of the biggest global health crisis since 1918 without any cases of Covid-19. That is testament to the efforts of all our Co-owners (staff) and the support of our residents and families.

In addition to concerns over increasing infection levels in parts of Europe, there are also a number of local spikes in the UK and since last night new restrictions for the north west and West Yorkshire, so we have included those in our outside visiting guidelines along with anyone who has been abroad (see below). The figures for infections only include people being tested, so now it is clear that 70% of people (younger people especially) are asymptomatic, the actual levels are considerably higher.

Boris Johnson has also referred to the potential of a second wave in Europe. That would be particularly worrying – the second wave of Spanish Flu in 1919 was more lethal than the first wave in 1918. He also added yesterday that “it is absolutely vital as a country we don’t delude ourselves that somehow we’re out of the woods or this is all over, because it isn’t all over”. On this occasion I would agree with the Prime Minister.

The government has also announced this week that the self-isolation period for anyone with symptoms has been increased from 7 to 10 days. It has been suspected that the infectious period can be longer than 7 days for a while so for Middleton Hall we would still wait until a negative test for a Co-owner to return to work to be safe and 14 days isolation for residents or a negative test.

### **Testing**

As you may have heard in the news the testing of residents and staff through “Whole Home Testing” has been paused after a problem with the Randox test kits and although registering for the replacement system three weeks ago, we have heard nothing about when it will be available. Although we cannot get residents tested as a result, we are asking our Co-owners to continue to use local test centres to get weekly tests and are grateful for their adherence to the inconvenience of this key part of keeping residents safe.

### **Shielded Co-owners**

We have some team members who are coming back to work after being shielded next week following detailed risk assessments and the change in government guidance. Those returning are all keen to come back and we welcome their return, but we are putting in place some precautionary measures for them. Ensuring visitors are sticking to our guidelines is a key part of keeping them safe.

### **Resident Living Well**

All the way through the pandemic, we have tried to find the balance between safety and resident wellbeing. While we are in a steady phase with lower infection rates, our approach during August should be to safely find means of reducing restrictions for residents and giving greater opportunities for Living Well.

The first part of that is outside visiting. From today, we have introduced outside visitor stations – guidelines are attached to this email. It is important that we manage outside visits carefully as the government guidance that allowed visiting in care homes issued at the end of last week restricts visiting in care homes to one designated family member only for visits so we have used the official guidance in developing the guidelines for outside visiting. We will continue with multiple visits in the Visitor Pods and greater flexibility as we are confident that they are a safe environment. Outside visiting carries greater risk so far as social distancing. When you book a visit, you will be offered a choice of outside (if only one visitor) or the Visitor Pod as currently. We will keep the relevant Visitor Pod free for your appointment should the British summer makes outside visiting less desirable.

We are gradually stepping up the Orangery service to include the care services for a session each week. We will extend those sessions if there is demand and it is operating effectively. If outside visiting works safely, we will also introduce an outside Orangery service for residents to meet individual family members.

Following a telephone survey of the independent residents, the swimming pool has been filled this week and Michael and the spa team are preparing the gym for use from 10<sup>th</sup> August for independent residents and the pool from 17<sup>th</sup> August. We hope to announce plans for when the care services will be able to use Middleton Spa in the next week or so.

We are also arranging some small Independent Living gatherings outside the Orangery for new residents to meet some of their neighbours.

We will also be re-introducing some of community activity groups during August – more details next week.

Thank you for working with us during this difficult time for everyone's best interests.

If you have any ideas or questions, please let us know.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **15. Care Services – Coronavirus update (22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020)**

We are now in a new stage of emerging from lockdown and reopening services as infection levels plateau. As other countries are learning, local “spikes” keep recurring in countries that thought they had the pandemic under control – the Barcelona region of Spain is back in lockdown and France has several hundred clusters of where virus infections are increasing. Clearly the pandemic is a long way from being over. There has been some positive longer term news this week about vaccines and a treatment that appears to reduce the severity of Covid-19 for hospital patients. Hopefully the science is catching up.

At Middleton Hall we are in a steady state or perhaps a recovery phase from the first wave of Coronavirus in the UK. During this stage, we still need to be cautious. Our key defences remain weekly testing and PPE which are both vital to keeping residents and Co-owners safe. Statistics suggest that 70-80% of people testing positive are asymptomatic at the time of the test – this remains our main worry as we go forward.

We are now holding weekly rather than daily Covid Project Team meetings (Lesley, Suzanne, Debby, David, Julie and myself meet “virtually” every Monday). If you have any issues or ideas that you would like raised, please let one of us know.

### PPE

As you will be aware from this week it is compulsory to wear a face covering in shops as well as on public transport. This includes Middleton Hall’s shop (if you have forgotten, you can buy masks at cost price when you arrive – please ask). Evidence is growing that the virus can remain airborne for several hours so many countries are making face coverings compulsory in all public spaces. Face masks are likely to be routine for everyone working inside Middleton Hall or with residents for the rest of 2020 at least.

### Visitors

From July 31<sup>st</sup>, we are starting a trial for outside visiting for the care services. We will be setting up a visitors’ station outside each care service for pre-booked appointments as an alternative to a Visitors’ Pod session. Family or friends visiting will have to keep social distance, wear a face covering and use hand sanitiser.

### Re-opening Services

We now have a limited Orangery service operating as well as hairdressing, physio and chiropody. From next week, we will be operating the Orangery snack service and the revised shop five days a week and there will be “session times” for the care services introduced starting with Middleton Grove – details to follow. You will find lower prices on the new menu due to the reduction in VAT and we will also be participating in the government “Eat out to Help out Scheme” on Mondays and Tuesdays during August.

We are currently planning the re-opening the Spa during August, initially for independent residents, then the care services followed by external members later in the year. Michael has been speaking with residents this week to establish level of interest for both gym and pool which looks very positive. The Covid Project Team is also reviewing community resident groups (arts and crafts, Current Affairs etc) to see what we could safely introduce as well as rewriting our contingency plan for second wave preparations.

### Holidays

A few residents have asked for advice about holidays. We suggest careful thought about taking holiday with other people given the levels of asymptomatic transmission of the virus and any travel abroad. Please remember the key advice about washing hands or using hand sanitiser and face coverings on public transport while traveling. On return to Middleton Hall, we would ask you to self-isolate in your property for 7 days, only going out for a daily walk and then ensure that you social distance and follow government guidance carefully for a further 7 days. If you have any worries, please let reception know and we will try and advise further and if you have plans to go away, please let us know.

If you have any ideas or questions, please let us know. Stay safe

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

#### **14. Care Services – Coronavirus update (9<sup>th</sup> July 2020)**

Some of you will have finally had your hair cut since the last bulletin as the UK lifts its lockdown. It is tempting to think, or certainly hope, that this is the end of pandemic. Evidence from around the world (and Leicester) suggests that we are in a risky phase as the government eases lockdown – three pubs have already had to close after people developed symptoms, US infection rates are soaring since they lifted lockdown and Melbourne is back in complete lockdown after Australia appeared to have almost eliminated the virus.

The government has finally released some community testing information after pressure from Local Authorities and our trade bodies. Previously the local infection rates published were based on hospital tests only (Pillar 1 for those who have been studying the government data). The infection statistics appear to tell us that there are no immediate areas of high infection rates, although there has been an increase in Redcar and Cleveland. We are keeping an eye on this data to make sure that we are not sitting close to a Leicester situation as lockdown eases.

We are conscious that this stage is a worrying time for residents who remain very vulnerable to Covid-19.

The government has announced that there will now be formal weekly testing for all staff in all care homes as well as monthly tests for residents which we have registered for. This should mean that all Co-owners will be able to be tested at Middleton Hall in due course which will make it easier.

Government figures this week show that almost 80% of people testing positive have been asymptomatic. That is why regular testing is critical in trying to keep Middleton Hall safe and the importance of PPE, especially face masks.

We have been focussing on the importance of social distancing and trying to rearrange rotas to cope with the potential impact of the track and trace programme. Should a Co-owner test positive, it is likely that all members of the team who have worked with that team member in the previous 48 hours could be asked to self-isolate unless social distance has been maintained. As you will appreciate, this could have a huge impact on a team and leave a service very short staffed for 14 days. Maintaining 2m social distance whenever possible at work and “cohorting” teams to avoid too many people working together is vital to avoid a major disruption.

Middleton Hall’s guideline is that we will endeavour to maintain 2m distance inside where possible and especially when people are face to face. 1m social distance can be suitable for people meeting outside. When we are not able to achieve 2m, we should use the “1m plus” guide for people either back to back or side by side.

We remain cautious over visitors and for the moment we are continuing family and friends visits to the Visitor Pods. Later this month, we will trial some outdoor visiting as the next step. We are also continuing to be very careful about visiting Health Professionals – if consultations *can* be done by video, we will insist that they are. At the same time, where we do have visits from NHS staff, we will always prioritise safety first.

However, as set out in the last bulletin, we are carefully re-opening some of our central services, initially for Independent Living residents.

- Hairdressing has already started and chiropody/physiotherapy services are available for urgent appointments and will be increasing.
- The shop in the Orangery is reopening on Friday for Independent Living residents – the Orangery has even had a lick of paint in preparation! We will be opening it up for Care Services once we have established the precautions are working so information will follow.
- The Library will be open from Monday 13<sup>th</sup>
- The Orangery will start a limited drinks and snacks service on Tuesdays/Thursdays from 16<sup>th</sup> July initially for Independent Living residents.

We also have a project team working on how to improve our central services post pandemic, so you may find some changes when services fully re-open. If you have any ideas about the Orangery, Shop, Restaurant, Middleton Spa please let Lesley know, as she is working with the help of an experienced external hospitality

specialist as part of the project team. We are likely to ask a few residents to attend small groups to discuss services as part of the project in due course.

We are also entering the “usual” holiday season and travel is now permitted both in the UK and to certain countries abroad. Given how hard everyone has been working, we do wish Co-owners to have some well-deserved holiday but we are putting in some precautions before Co-owners return to work especially if they go abroad. I am having a week’s holiday myself from Thursday this week (at home being careful!) and this will include a break from emails. Lesley and Suzanne are in charge during my absence.

So far as next steps, we are “decommissioning” the Rainbow Centre for the moment, in preparation for a potential further re-opening of Middleton Spa later in the summer and maintaining two rooms for quarantining residents. More of the support services teams are returning to work on site in Covid-secure offices within the Admin Centre.

We would urge all residents to continue taking care how they act during the easing of lockdown and stay within government guidance at all times.

Thank you for your support and positive messages.

As ever, if you have any ideas or questions, please let us know.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director



### **13. Care Services – Coronavirus update (26<sup>th</sup> June 2020)**

On Tuesday, the government announced the latest easing of Coronavirus restrictions from July 4<sup>th</sup>. This will start to see the re-opening of restaurants, pubs, cafes and hairdressers as well as UK holiday accommodation and tourist attractions.

A key part of the relaxation of restrictions is a change to social distancing guidelines – where it is not possible to stay 2m apart, people should keep a distance of “one metre plus”. Scientists calculate that the risk of transmission is roughly doubled in reducing distance from 2m to 1m.

As everyone will appreciate, throughout the pandemic we have taken a cautious approach in order to ensure the safety of our residents and Co-owners is the highest priority.

The news this week has shown a significant upswing in cases in the US in response to their easing of lockdown and a surge in cases in Melbourne, Australia where they thought they had almost eliminated the virus and have now gone back to lockdown. A friend who lives in Melbourne tells me it has been caused by a small number of parties and family gatherings, larger than permitted.

Learning from this, we feel we need to maintain a cautious approach to relaxing restrictions at Middleton Hall at this stage.

*Middleton Hall's guidelines for the moment will be that 1m social distance can be suitable for people meeting outside but we will endeavour to maintain 2m distance inside where possible and especially when people are face to face. When we are not able to achieve 2m, we should use the “1m plus” guide for people either back to back or side by side.*

I am pleased that not only do we remain Covid-free, but we were able to accept our first new resident into the care services with a careful admissions policy this week. We are now in a position to offer places in the care services and have some capacity as we have deliberately kept rooms free to give flexibility in case of an outbreak. Although we are talking to people on the waiting lists, we are likely to have some availability so if you are aware of anyone who would benefit from Middleton Hall's care services, please let them know that now is a good time to be in touch.

We would urge all residents to continue to be very careful in how they act during the easing of lockdown and stay within government guidance at all times.

As we move forward, we are planning to start re-opening some of our services.

- Visitors – will continue to use the Visitor Pods for care services visitors and during July introduce a trial of outdoor visiting. We have fitted door bells for families to attract attention, following feedback
- Housekeeping for Middleton Woods and the Waterside is restarting from 2<sup>nd</sup> July
- Hairdressing will re-open on a limited scale during w/c 6<sup>th</sup> Sally has retired, but we are pleased that Sarah Olney has agreed to do a day's hairdressing in addition to the therapies she offers
- The shop in the Orangery will reopen with additional guidance to ensure the safety of all on Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 10<sup>th</sup> July for Independent Living and Co-owners only to start with.
- The Orangery will start a limited drinks and snacks service on Tuesdays/Thursdays from 13<sup>th</sup> July for independent residents only to start before opening to others
- Chiropody appointments will re-start (outdoors wherever possible) during July as well as essential Physiotherapy – dates and arrangements to be confirmed
- The Art Studio is already open for individual use and will be available for socially distanced groups in August

- Cross Community groups (Photography, Current Affairs, Bridge, Knitting and Sewing) will be reviewed in August
- Tai Chi is probably not going to re-start until September
- Swimming pool and gym will remain closed under government regulations
- The Admin Centre will start to re-open offices for Accounts, Co-owner Support and Managers from this week

Given the level of planning and organisation that would have start soon, we have taken the decision to cancel the Village Show for 2020.

Finally, we all appreciate the support and commitment of our community in working with us over the last four months. Please continue to be cautious.

As ever, if you have any ideas or questions, please let us know.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **12. Care Services – Coronavirus update (20<sup>th</sup> June 2020)**

With the government announcement about the Alert Level moving down from 4 to 3, it would be tempting to conclude that we are through the pandemic. However, infections of Covid-19 are still running at well over 1,000 new cases a day in the UK. Coronavirus remains a real threat and we need to keep our guard up.

Thankfully, we are still Covid free but with the easing of lockdown and shops reopening, the risk could of course increase in the next few weeks.

### Visitors Pods

We have had positive feedback from visitors and residents about the pods and as many of you will have seen, Middleton Hall was featured on BBC Look North on Tuesday for the innovation. We have had a few teething problems (we are waiting for a replacement part to reduce the occasional buzzing in the Supported Living pod), but the others are working as well as to be expected. It is important that we stick to the exact timings of the bookings as it ensures that we can disinfect the pods after use to keep everyone safe. We are grateful to the maintenance team for organising the pods so efficiently.

### Testing

We are continuing regular testing for all our teams working with residents. This is not an easy process for our Co-owners (staff) and we are grateful for their commitment in adhering to our requirement, but we all understand it is critical in helping to keep Covid-19 out of Middleton Hall.

Although the government programme is unwieldy and does not really allow for regular testing of residents as the sector needs, we are managing to keep testing residents.

### Social Distancing

Social distancing (keeping 2m apart) remains a key part of the strategy to reduce the risk of infections. Much of Middleton Hall's operations have been risk assessed as a "Covid-Secure workplace" apart from the kitchen and care services. In these services, we are making some changes to working arrangements to reduce the likelihood of losing a significant part of a team under the government track and trace system.

### Next Steps

This week we have planned our next steps as we approach July.

In the care services, meals arrangements and residents being more able to spend time in communal areas are being reviewed as well as activities that can be carried out with social distancing. We are also looking at some of the cross community activities (knitting group for example) that may be possible outdoors so as to allow residents from more than one service to take part. In July we will also look at introducing outside visiting by risk assessing individual residents (e.g. residents who have good hearing and can socially distance) and where a visitor is considered to be low risk as well.

We will be re-opening the shop in July, initially only for independent living residents with additional guidance to ensure the safety of all, and working out when it will be safe to re-introduce some hairdressing when this becomes allowed by government regulations. We appreciate all the families who have emailed supportive and such positive messages – we pass on feedback to our Co-owners and it is extremely helpful while they are working hard in a difficult environment.

As ever, if you have any ideas or questions, please let us know.

Please continue to stay vigilant.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **11. Care Services – Coronavirus update (5<sup>th</sup> June 2020)**

First of all, I am pleased to confirm that Middleton Hall remains Covid-free (residents and Co-owners). Although there appears to be a slight decrease in infections locally as well as nationally, we are remaining highly vigilant. The easing of lockdown will not yet have fed through into infections and the overall level of infection in the UK still remains high compared to other countries.

### Visitors Pods

We now have Visitors' Pods up and running in each care service. We have some queries about bookings, so in addition to the guidelines explained in last Sunday's bulletin, we have added some points to clarify:

- The Pods are now available seven days a week in each service and can be booked for up to one hour with a minimum of 24 hours' notice. Booking slots are available at 0900; 10.30; 1200; 1330; 1500 and 1630 (half an hour only).
- We would suggest booking regular visits if possible – we are now not restricting visits to only once a week (subject to availability) thus allowing residents with friends and family from more than one household to visit
- To book, please speak to a member of the care team who will either refer to an online shared booking diary or speak to reception. Some services may call you to book regular slots
- The timings above are important as we have a rigorous disinfection process to both sides of each pod and the external cleaning is carried out by our maintenance and estates team to avoid care teams having contact with the visitors' side
- For more distant visitors who are making a lengthy journey, we should be able to make more flexible arrangements
- For visitors travelling a distance (or if you get caught short), there is a WC available in the Pavilion – we are asking visitors to disinfect all contact points if they use it
- If there is a special event (birthdays etc), please let the care service know in case there is anything we can do to make it a special visit
- No visitors allowed where a household member has tested positive within 3 weeks or had any potential symptoms
- Please use your own hand sanitiser on arrival and re-sanitise your hands on entering the pod
- Any children must be carefully controlled to avoid any risk to other residents – no touching of any surfaces on the way to the pod and no running around the grounds
- Please disinfect any contact areas with the cleaning materials provided. We will also be spraying the pod after you leave for complete safety
- We reserve the right to withdraw the visiting process for any visitors who do not conform to our guidelines and may be putting residents or our Co-owners at risk

If you have any feedback about the experience of using a Visitors' Pod, please let us know. We have made some changes to arrangements and our trial pod as a result of feedback.

To reiterate the last bulletin, we are not allowing outdoor visiting at Middleton Hall at this stage.

Over the next few weeks, we will be reviewing the reintroduction of services (including hairdressing) from July if we feel that it is safe to do so. Should there be any Covid-19 cases, we will of course bring in strict lockdown arrangements to keep everyone safe.

Finally, a favour!

We are currently recruiting for a nurse in Middleton Court. If you know anyone who might be interested (or for that matter, anyone who might know someone) in what should be an exciting role as Middleton Court's service develops, could you drop us an email or send on the link to our recruitment page, please?

<https://www.middletonhallretirementvillage.co.uk/registered-general-nurse-rgn/>

As ever, if you have any ideas or questions, please let us know.

Please continue to stay safe.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **10. Care Services – Coronavirus update (31<sup>st</sup> May 2020)**

This is the thirteenth bulletin stretching back to the end of February when we wrote to all our residents, families and Co-owners to let them know that should the threat of Coronavirus become a pandemic we had been preparing since early February and had a staged contingency plan. I am not sure anyone could have predicted exactly what was going to take place over the following three months or if our contingency plan would even be needed. But three months on, we are entering a new stage when the peak of the UK epidemic has passed and restrictions are being lifted by the government, although infection levels remain far higher than in Europe.

For our residents, this could be a worrying time as the risk of infection may well increase – I read yesterday of the scientists saying that the relaxation of lock down is a political decision, not based on the science and that we risk a second wave as happened in the 1918 pandemic, particularly with a “test and trace” system not fully in place as other countries have. Similarly I spoke with a friend who is a consultant in a large hospital earlier in the week where they have had to close a large section of the hospital because of a surge in cases and found with testing that 40% of their staff were infected, despite most displaying no symptoms. There has also been another hospital in the news in a similar predicament this week.

The theme of our response as we enter June, is of caution.

On the good news front, I can confirm that we continue to have no cases of Covid-19 amongst our residents or Co-owners (staff). This places Middleton Hall in the minority of care homes locally – as a many of you have pointed out, our proactive response is a major factor in keeping residents safe.... so far.

### Visitors

The government guidelines change from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June to allow limited visits to household private gardens with social distancing, but there is no guidance yet about visiting care homes, so we have made our own plans. At this early stage, we are not going allow outdoor visiting at Middleton Hall as we feel it raises the risk of infection through asymptomatic visitors.

The trial Visitors’ Pod has been very well received and we are confident that it as safe as we can make visiting. Following the trial, our maintenance team are now installing a Visitors Pod into each care service. We are waiting for delivery of the microphone and speaker systems, but hope to have them all up and running by next weekend (6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> June). This should make visiting far more flexible for all residents. The order of opening is Acorn House for both houses in Middleton Oaks, Supported Living, Hotel Living and Middleton Court. Middleton Grove will continue to use the trial pod in the conservatory.

We are also happy to allow more than one visitor at a time – although the additional ones vary in size, we should be able to host several family members from the same household (arriving in one car only), including children (as long as they are able to avoid touching and do not run around outside!). You are welcome to bring your own drinks/glasses/mugs and we will endeavour to provide reciprocal drinks for the resident side (we are not able to provide them for visitors) once the new ones are working.

Visits must be booked through the individual care service and we will have greater flexibility with the length of time of visits and frequency. Please discuss this when booking.

As you will appreciate, an increase in visitors in a retirement village setting could bring an increase in risk, so we are proposing some clear guidelines for visitors:

1. All visits must be pre-booked with the relevant care service with a start and finish time (this is essential because of how we have organised our disinfection process)
2. No visitors who have had a household member test positive within the previous 3 weeks or had any potential symptoms
3. We would ask visitors to arrive in one car and walk straight from the visitors’ car park to the relevant pod and not to walk around the grounds (each service will provide directions). We ask visitors not to use any facilities on site, but there will be a WC available in the pavilion should you get caught short.

4. Please use your own hand sanitiser on arrival and re-sanitise your hands on entering the booth
5. Any children must be carefully controlled to avoid any risk to other residents – no touching of any surfaces on the way to the pod and no running around the grounds
6. Please disinfect any contact areas with the cleaning materials provided. We will also be spraying the pod after you leave for complete safety
7. We reserve the right to withdraw the visiting process for any visitors who do not conform to our guidelines and may be putting residents or our Co-owners at risk

If we feel confident that visitors are sticking to the guidelines and keeping the community safe, we will start to look at when we feel able to bring other facilities back in to use in due course.

Should there be any Covid-19 cases, we will of course bring in our own lockdown arrangements to keep other residents safe.

As ever, if you have any ideas or questions, please let us know.

Please continue to be cautious during this potentially tricky stage, as the government loosens lockdown.

Thank you for your continued support.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **9. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (20<sup>th</sup> May 2020)**

### ***Stay Safe***

I am pleased to confirm that we continue to have no cases of Covid-19 amongst our residents or Co-owners (staff). We do have one person waiting to join us who has had Covid-19 while working for another care provider who will not start until we are confident is clear from infection. We have one Co-owner self-isolating as a precaution despite testing negative as a household member had tested positive.

With the first steps towards easing of lockdown, there has been a lot of confusion about the new guidance and regulations. Figures released over the weekend indicate that the north east has the highest infection rate in the country at present so we need to continue to be vigilant.

As explained in last week's bulletin we are trialling a Visitor's Pod in the Conservatory from Friday this week. The maintenance team have done a great job in putting it together and faced with delays in delivery of the Perspex ordered last week have managed to create a temporary set up until we get that delivery. It includes a hands free communication system between the two sides. At this stage, the Visitors' Pod is available for Middleton Grove, Middleton Gardens and Middleton Court. If the trial proves successful and safe, we plan to introduce two others, including one in Middleton Oaks.

During the trial period, in order to give residents in the above services the opportunity, we will only be booking one 30 minute visit for one family member. We need to ensure it works safely and would hope to increase the availability and scope of visits once we have learnt from the trial.

Someone from the relevant care service will be in touch to make arrangements. You will find attached details of how this will work during the trial period but please bear with us should it not go smoothly! Provisionally, we will be offering times for Middleton Court on Friday/Sunday am/Tuesday; Middleton Gardens on Saturday/Wednesday; Middleton Grove Sunday pm/Monday/Thursday. The location of this first trial Visitors' Pod is not ideal for Middleton Oaks, so if the system works, we hope to provide one in Middleton Oaks for the week after next. In the meantime, the team will discuss with individual families using the trial pod where appropriate.

We have a system for disinfecting any post or deliveries for residents so if you have any cards or other items for a resident, please bring it with you and leave it in reception rather than try and deliver it directly.

Since the somewhat imprecise changes to the lockdown, we have had families arrive and attempt to speak to residents through windows. We must be clear that visitors cannot visit without making arrangements. Many families have applauded our focus on keeping residents safe at all times throughout the pandemic. The Visitors' Pod is the only safe way of visiting so we would urge people to remember what has happened in many care homes with Covid-19 outbreaks locally and only visit with prior booking through the care service.

Thank you for supporting Middleton Hall to Stay Safe.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director



## **8. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (13<sup>th</sup> May 2020)**

Last Friday marked 75 years since the end of six terrible years of war in Europe – VE Day. Over the last three months we have been fighting our own world war with a deadly, but very different enemy – Coronavirus. So far, thanks to the efforts of all our Co-owners and support of our residents and families, we have kept Covid-19 out of Middleton Hall, unlike many care homes and retirement villages throughout the country.

The good news is that we continue to have no cases of Covid-19 amongst our residents or Co-owners (staff). The majority of Co-owners and residents have been tested and results are all negative so far. We have had a number of “void” or “not clear” test results but we hope that will reduce as experience of using the kits improves. The two residents who we had moved into our isolation rooms as a precaution last week both tested negative to everyone’s great relief.

There is a new government portal for testing that has been announced which we are hoping will make testing easier and allow us to test residents and care teams regularly going forward.

Regular testing is one key part of reducing the risk of bringing Covid-19 into Middleton Hall, but it is not a guarantee. The easing of lockdown during May and June increases the risk as more people outside Middleton Hall are exposed to the infection.

We are therefore introducing a number of measures to alleviate that increased risk:

- Reassessment of each team member for risk (household situation)
- Providing each Co-owner a “Stay Safe” pack – a brief about maintaining our safety and a PPE pack (gloves and mask) for home
- Encouraging Co-owners to take online supermarket deliveries if possible and /or increase groceries shopping through MH. Iceland is now doing priority deliveries for care workers which will help.
- Maintaining social distancing for residents and Co-owners wherever possible and continuing use of face masks

We will remain cautious about residents with any symptoms but with testing available it does reduce the time that we may have to isolate residents and help protect our PPE stock.

We have also revised our admissions policy to carefully allow new residents to move in following testing and after meeting a set of requirements including a period of isolation before moving into their room or apartment.

For our care services one of the most difficult areas during the epidemic for residents and families has been not allowing visitors. As we mentioned in a previous bulletin, we have reviewed our “no visitors” policy and we believe we may be able to provide a solution that is within new government guidelines.

Some of you may have seen an article on the BBC website about a care home in Holland that had installed a visitors’ pod <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-52589041/coronavirus-dutch-care-home-reunites-families-in-a-glass-pod>. We are going to try a version of this in the conservatory next to the Restaurant as an experiment by installing a transparent screen across the conservatory that entirely separates the bay section by the external doors from the rest of the room with a microphone and speaker system for communication.

We would then allow a single visitor, strictly by appointment (30 minutes maximum) to arrive in the visitors’ car park and go directly through the conservatory doors where the visitor will be separated by the screen from the resident arriving from inside Middleton Hall to have a safe visit with their family. Both sides of the screen would have to be sanitised after each visit. There are some details to be worked out still and we hope to have this ready for the end of next week. This would initially be only for Middleton Grove, Middleton Gardens and Middleton Court. If it proves successful and safe, we will look at providing similar facilities in the following weeks including one in Middleton Oaks.

We will provide details of the arrangements next week once it is set up and working – please bear with us as there will only be a limited number of appointments initially. I should emphasise that this is a trial and we will not

continue it if we feel there is a risk to any residents from visitors coming on site. We have had one recent incident where a family member chose to ignore the “no visitors” policy which resulted in their relative having to be isolated as a precaution.

Having done well to avoid an outbreak of Covid-19 at Middleton Hall so far, we are now entering a key period of time when we need to keep our guard up to keep residents safe while at the same time trying to find ways of improving how they are living during the pandemic. Working with families will be key to achieving that balance.

Thank you all for your support and kind comments about the efforts of our committed and caring Co-owners (keep the comments coming – the team really appreciate them!).

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **7. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (6<sup>th</sup> May 2020)**

As you will be aware, since the last bulletin there has been a significant change in the availability of testing for Covid-19 in social care and for essential workers. Four residents in our care services were tested for Coronavirus last week where we had some concerns about symptoms through the District Nursing service which all came back negative.

At the end of last week, we were able to get home test kits for all remaining care service residents and over the weekend completed those tests as part of the roll out of general testing in social care. We have some initial test results back including a number where we have been asked to do a re-test because the test has not worked. There is also one received today, with a “borderline indication” where it was insufficient to confirm presence of Covid-19 which we are treating as a potential Coronavirus case until the re-test result is known. We understand from other care providers that these home tests are often coming back as needing a re-test.

In the event of any residents testing positive, we would obviously let the resident and family know immediately, followed by all our Co-owners, residents/families.

We have been told informally through NHS contacts, that there is now evidence that older people do not always show the “classic symptoms” of Covid-19 (high temperature and dry cough) but present with other symptoms (lethargy, loss of appetite or delirium for example). We have produced new symptoms guidance for all our care teams and are being cautious about any unexplained changes in a resident’s health, hence some of the tests last week.

Testing for social care staff is now available for anyone with or critically without symptoms. We are asking all our Co-owners (staff) to have a test and most have managed to get a test booked so far. As you will be aware from the media, availability is difficult. It is not currently clear how access to regular testing will work, but at least this is finally going in the right direction and should make managing the situation easier. One of our Co-owners who tested negative herself, has had a family member test positive (without any symptoms), so she is self-isolating as a precaution.

We now have anyone working in close proximity to residents wearing a face mask as the additional precaution mentioned in the last bulletin. Although this has presented some challenges for our care teams – comfort and dealing with residents with hearing difficulties for example – our Co-owners have embraced this as helping to protect residents. We will continue to review this based on our assessment of risk with regard to any easing in lockdown and availability of testing.

We are currently discussing our next steps in light of government announcements at the end of the week about lockdown. Our plan going forward will include what we can do to help any sense of isolation that residents are feeling and whether there is any way of having safe, carefully planned & socially distanced visiting in due course. We appreciate the support from families about no visitors but also recognise this is unlikely to be sustainable if the pandemic continues for months rather than weeks.

We are marking VE Day on Friday with social distanced music and an experimental YouTube quiz that Michael Hodgson, our Living Well Manager, is organising.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do let us know. In the meantime, thank you again for your forbearance at this time.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **6. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (26<sup>th</sup> April 2020)**

I am pleased that we are still able to confirm that we still have no cases of Covid-19 amongst any of our residents or Co-owners (staff) currently. As you will be aware from media coverage over the last two weeks, sadly there have been an increasing number of care homes with Covid-19 – we appreciate our residents and families respecting our no visitors policy in helping to keep the virus out of Middleton Hall. Our Co-owners are doing a fantastic job in working as a team through this situation.

The challenge for us going forward is getting the balance right between reducing the risk of infection and resident welfare. It is a difficult balance to achieve and having listened to the Care Managers and spoken with various Co-owners this week, our approach does need to be flexible – there are different situations in different services and within each service, different needs for different residents. Middleton Hall has always been strong in being resident focused and that should mean we continue apply flexibility to achieve that balance.

Over the last week we have introduced some further social distancing measures in the care services where we are able. The purpose of this is to reduce the numbers of residents who might be infected should the virus come into Middleton Hall.

In terms of further reducing risk, after discussion with Care Managers and the Care Teams in each service, we have decided from next week to bring in the wearing of face masks in the care services where people are delivering care or working closely with residents to reduce the chance of an asymptomatic Co-owner inadvertently bringing in the infection. This has not been an easy decision and we have consulted our teams first – we are concerned about how residents will react and how it will be for Co-owners to work in face masks, but feel it is the next level of risk reduction in keeping our residents safe.

There is concern that the virus may have been brought into some care homes by asymptomatic staff or health professionals and should lockdown be eased in the next few weeks, the risk of this will increase. In the coming weeks, we will start to prepare for any easing of lockdown and how it could impact on Middleton Hall.

We have been working hard on securing ongoing supplies of both face mask and other PPE (gloves, aprons and surgical gowns) over the last few weeks, primarily to manage should we have cases of Covid-19. We also have a good stock of visors including some donated by local companies.

So far as testing, we now have easier access to Covid-19 testing for all Co-owners and all residents. Co-owners with symptoms should now be able to attend a mobile test centre at Teesside Park, once booked through Co-owner Support.

Finally, we would appreciate your continuing help in dealing with this crisis – if you have some ideas that would either help reduce our risk of Covid-19 or that would help residents or Co-owners cope with the lockdown, please let us know.

With our continued thanks for your support during the last few weeks.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **5. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (18<sup>th</sup> April 2020)**

First of all – thank you. We appreciate the support we are getting from residents and families during this very challenging time.

We currently have no cases of Covid-19 amongst any of our residents or Co-owners (staff) and no one with likely symptoms. We do have some Co-owners self-isolating because of either symptoms or family members with symptoms but we are managing with staffing levels thanks to the dedication of our team of Co-owners.

During the last week we admitted two residents on a precautionary basis into our Rainbow Centre as they had shown some initial symptoms but I am pleased to report they are both well and moved back to their respective services after 7 days self-isolating. As this turned into a “dress rehearsal” it has allowed us to learn from using the new facility converted from Middleton Spa and adjust procedures. I worked a shift in the Rainbow Centre myself on Tuesday as one of our support team (assisting a qualified carer, Debby Lamont on this occasion). I can report that as well as being very well organised by the Rainbow Centre team, I found it a very safe working environment for Co-owners and comfortable for residents. It should provide us with the means to reduce spread in the case of an infection and care effectively for a resident with Covid-19.

There have been some developments at national level that are having impact on Middleton Hall. The good news is that we are now able to access testing for Coronavirus for our Co-owners and in due course residents, something that we have been asking for since the beginning of March. The less good news has been about the national PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) shortage and the constantly changing advice on use of PPE from Public Health England. We currently hold sufficient stock as we have been actively working on holding a buffer stock for the last month.

It is essential that we continue our “no visitors” policy. We realise that this is very difficult and we are very grateful for the understanding of families and friends about not visiting Middleton Hall.

We had a good response to our survey last week – thank you to everyone who contributed. Those who had specific queries and put their name should have had a response during the week.

There were some useful ideas that we are or hope to be implementing including:

1. Appointments for video calls
2. Proactive updates by telephone or email
3. More pictures on Facebook or sent to families
4. More outside walks/exercise or even afternoon tea
5. More quizzes
6. Gardening opportunities
7. Audio books on Kindles

The responses confirmed that although “frustrating/sad/difficult”, families feel “reassured/safe/have confidence” in Middleton Hall. There were high levels of satisfaction in the initiatives that we have taken so far – 92% “Very Satisfied” with the timeliness of the measures and 89% “Very Satisfied” with the information provided. You also provided some lovely comments about our teams that we have fed back to all our Co-owners.

Having put some changes in to further “socially distance” residents and Co-owners over the last two weeks, there are further steps that we could take going forward. The first would involve asking residents to stay in their rooms and apartments. At this stage we are only planning to introduce this if we have suspected cases as we continue to recognise the need to strike balance. The other, subject to PPE supply constraints, would be to have our care teams wearing face masks in close proximity to residents, or at least the more “at risk” residents. We will be making decisions on this taking account of availability of the different types of face masks and the frankly

conflicting government guidance in the next few days. Our concern is the danger of using up face masks when we have no infections and then not having sufficient if we have actual cases while the supply of PPE is so unreliable.

Thank you for all your words of encouragement to our team during the pandemic – keeping the morale of our team as high as possible is important and your comments really help.

If you have any queries or ideas, please let us know.

In the meantime, please stay safe at home.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

#### **4. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (9<sup>th</sup> April 2020)**

I am relieved to let you know that so far we have had no cases of Covid-19 amongst any of our residents or Co-owners (staff) and currently no one with likely symptoms. We do have some Co-owners self-isolating because they are in the vulnerable category or in some cases where they have had symptoms of a cold but we feel our cautious approach has worked so far.

During this week we have carried out a further analysis of risk and are tightening up on a few areas to further reduce risk of an infection coming into Middleton Hall. In effect, we are trying to maintain a shield around the whole community.

The main areas of risk for our care services are around deliveries without infection control measures, visitors, hospital appointments and any Community Nursing services coming in. We continue to minimise all those contacts. We have been assessing any risks that our Co-owners (staff) might have because of their own family situations. In the case of Middleton Court and Middleton Gardens we are also putting in some further separation between groups of residents so if there was an outbreak it should minimise the spread of the virus, without insisting that all residents have to stay in their rooms or apartments.

We are grateful for the understanding of families and friends about not visiting Middleton Hall. We are in regular contact with the other retirement communities in the UK to share information. Last Friday I learnt of a sobering situation in a retirement village in another part of the country where the daughter of a resident chose to ignore both government "stay at home" guidance and the retirement village's "no visitors" policy and visited her mother. It turned out that the daughter's husband had contracted Covid-19. Sadly, her mother died last week and that retirement village now has other cases.

We appreciate that Easter weekend is upon us and understand that it would be tempting to ignore the "stay at home" requirement. It is critical that we continue not to have visitors. It is not often I find myself quoting the Queen, but her point during her address to the nation about being "united and resolute" in order to overcome the disease seemed well made and applies to Middleton Hall as well as the rest of the nation. The scientific advice appears to be that even on paper or card, the virus can live for 24 hours, so please be mindful if you were considering dropping in a card.

As in previous bulletins, we would suggest that video calling is the best way to maintain contact. Using Zoom, Skype, Facetime, WhatsApp video calls does make a difference. We have arranged video calling "appointments" for many residents now and are keen to make sure we can do that for as many as possible. From my personal point of view, I have found numerous ways of keeping in touch with family and friends over video calls – I attended a "virtual drinks party" on Zoom last weekend, watched the Virtual Grand National with family and friends that I was due to be with at Aintree last Saturday and completed a families' quiz game over the weekend on Zoom. Where there is a will, there is a way. Please let us know what else we can do to help communication (see survey at the end).

You will be aware that there has been rather greater focus in the press about the pressures on social care in the last week and we are also aware of some very difficult and sad situations especially in care homes and with homecare at present. We continue to work hard to try and avoid the risks that could develop into those situations.

During this week, we have set up our "Rainbow Centre" (named by the Co-owners who would work there) in Middleton Spa in the event of an outbreak of Covid-19 within one of our care services. This provides a 3 bed and a 2 bed "ward" as well as a single room to allow us to look after confirmed cases and keep them separate from other residents. We asked our Co-owners for volunteers to work in the Rainbow Centre if necessary and impressively had more than we need volunteering. Those volunteers are undergoing training at present. In addition, there are two self-isolating rooms set up within the main building. Obviously, we are hoping to never use these facilities, but they are now there if needed. We are also at least adequately prepared with PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) as we acquired supplies some time ago.

We are delighted in how well the shop ordering service are being used by independent living residents. Families and friends can also order items to be delivered to any of our residents. Please email reception if you would like to use this service ([reception@mhrv.co.uk](mailto:reception@mhrv.co.uk)).

Finally, in order to plan ahead, we would like a little feedback on how we are responding to the Coronavirus crisis, how families and friends are coping and any thoughts you may have about how we can help. You will find a link below to a 5 minute survey to give us feedback and ask for ideas going forward.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/XRMZJHV>

Thank you very much for your support during this crisis.

If you have any queries or thoughts, please email or call reception for further information.

Please stay safe.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director



### **3. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020)**

Since our last update, as you are all aware the pandemic has escalated and the country is now on complete “lockdown”.

I am pleased to report that we are still managing to operate our care services with limited disruption thanks to the efforts of our Co-owners (staff). Thank you to those who have emailed their gratitude – it has been very good for our team morale (so please continue to let them know!).

Clearly we will be in a position of lockdown for some time, so we will continue to work with families to alleviate the difficulty this entails. The advice about visiting has been tightened so we can only allow visiting in exceptional circumstances for the moment. We are also restricting District Nurses and the Community Matron to essential visits only as part of our measures.

We have introduced additional digital tablets into all services this week to increase the opportunities for video calling – please make good use of the facility as it does make a difference to our residents.

As the pandemic continues, the NHS locally may struggle to cope. We wanted to let you know that this could mean that we have some difficult dilemmas in the coming weeks. GPs, Emergency Doctors and Paramedics may not be able to attend and there are hospitals in the south that are now refusing any admissions from care homes or applying age criteria. We may also need to consider situations where a resident would go to hospital as routine, that the risk of being exposed to Covid-19 infection in hospital may present greater risk than not going to hospital. Debby and the care managers are working on a protocol that would enable us to manage a higher proportion of falls or accidents by consultation with healthcare professionals and close monitoring. Our priority will always be to put the safety and best interests of residents first and risk assess each situation on an individual basis. In the event NHS resources are limited, we will manage difficult situations based on the support available and in a flexible way. We are raising this issue now before it becomes a problem so that you are aware of some potential challenges ahead so far as NHS care.

As the next stage in our planning, should we have an outbreak of Covid-19, we are setting up a “Covid Care Centre” in Middleton Spa to allow us to look after confirmed cases and keep them separate from the rest of the residents. Hopefully, we will never have to use it. We have also set aside two rooms in Middleton Hall as “self-isolating rooms”.

Thank you again for your support at this time. I can assure you that we will continue to try and keep the focus on reducing risk and acting pragmatically in taking a precautionary approach.

If you have any queries or ideas, please email or call reception for further information.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **2. Coronavirus – Update for all residents and families (24<sup>th</sup> March 2020)**

### **Government Measures**

The government announcement about the countrywide lockdown last night has instructed everyone to stay at home under strict controls for the next three weeks. (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51711227>)

During this period of “lockdown”, we will be following the government measures carefully and stopping all visits, unless in exceptional circumstances. This will help reduce the possibility of anyone bringing the virus into Middleton Hall. There is a local care home that now has two confirmed cases of Coronavirus, probably brought inadvertently by a visitor, so we will continue to be very careful to reduce any risks of potential infection.

Currently we believe that we are as well organised as we can be for the situation and although we have several Co-owners (staff) self-isolating as a precaution, we have no confirmed cases. Our Co-owners are doing a great job in frankly very difficult circumstances and I am extremely grateful for their hard work and dedication. Please feel free to let them know (by email or telephone) if you agree – feedback is a great morale boost!

There are a number of ways that we will try and make this easier (in addition to the measures that we have previously communicated over the last few weeks):

- We have extended the range of items available from Middleton Hall’s shop
- We have ordered 10 tablets, in addition to the iPads that we already have, to make video calling through Skype more accessible for residents and families – they are due to arrive this weekend, so should be set up ready by Monday in each service. We suggest that video calling is the best way for families to remain in touch and will try and make it as easy as possible for residents
- We have ordered some additional telephone handsets as we have found some of the telephones in rooms were missing

If you have any questions or ideas, please preferably email (as they are very busy) or telephone reception. As a reminder the direct dial numbers for our Care Services are:

Middleton Grove 01325 331443

Middleton Gardens 01325 331441

Middleton Court 01325 331442

Middleton Oaks 01325 331445

Thank you for your support and encouragement in dealing with the pandemic.

Please keep yourself and your family safe at this incredibly difficult time.

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director

## **1. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (7pm 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020).**

Following recent communications, we are writing to let you know that we are accelerating Middleton Hall's response to Coronavirus as part of our Contingency Plan.

Firstly, thank you to all the residents and families who have been positive and supportive of the difficult decisions that we are having to make at a time of a national crisis.

As the spread of the virus is continuing to escalate in the UK and there has been a case in Darlington, we are continuing to be proactive and focus on reducing risk for our community. We have a Co-owner who has been off sick since Wednesday with what appears to be conventional 'flu, but have treated it as if it is Coronavirus both as a precaution and to test our systems and response to a situation if we do have someone in the community with Coronavirus.

As a result, we have decided to take some further precautions around communal facilities and to reduce cross community contacts for the next few weeks – in effect some “social distancing” that some governments have talked about.

1. The **Orangery** will be closing at 6pm Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March for two weeks.
2. The Stables **shop** will also close, but we will be offering a delivery service for essential items in Middleton Grove, Middleton Woods and The Waterside
3. The **Restaurant** will also be closed from this evening. Anyone who has a booking will of course receive a refund of their deposit. This will include bookings for Sunday lunch and unfortunately Mother's Day. We will use the Vision Room as a dining room for Middleton Grove. We are looking into offering a “Deliveroo” style delivery service for hot meals for Middleton Woods and The Waterside and will let you know about that shortly.
4. **Middleton Spa** will close immediately for Middleton Grove, Middleton Gardens, Middleton Court and Middleton Oaks residents again for an initial period of two weeks. We will keep the swimming pool and gym open for Independent Living residents for now, but with separate sessions for Middleton Woods and The Waterside. We may close the gym if the situation develops further or probably all of Middleton Spa. A revised timetable will be published tomorrow for Saturday onwards, allowing time for deep cleaning. There will not be hairdressing or therapies for the next two weeks.
5. Members of the team from Middleton Spa will be allocated a particular care service to work in and will provide **exercises and Living Well** activities in those services so that residents have activities to choose from within their service.
6. The **library** will be closed for the next few weeks. If Middleton Woods or Waterside residents wish to use the art studio, pavilion or bowling green we would ask them to email reception and we will look at arranging times for small groups.
7. **Middleton Grove, Middleton Gardens, Middleton Oaks and Middleton Court** will maintain their existing teams working exclusively in that service and with dedicated housekeepers and nights to reduce contact between the services
8. All **activities** that operate with multiple services (crafts, art, current affairs etc) will be suspended for the next few weeks
9. We will continue some **outings** to areas that avoid shared public spaces for individual care services along with trips for essential hospital appointments. We are aiming to have a dedicated driver for each care service.
10. **Resident Volunteers** in Independent Living (leaseholders) have offered to help with shopping and keeping an eye out for residents living on their own – we are very grateful to residents for offering to help.

11. We are reviewing **private cleans** in Middleton Woods and The Waterside and will speak to residents individually about whether they wish to suspend those for a period of time. If we are hit by school closures or illness, we may need to withdraw the service in any case.
12. **Reception** will remain open but primarily for telephone contact. We may increase the telephone cover from Monday as we are having high levels of phone calls.

### **Visitors**

We would continue to ask families and friends to avoid or reduce visits to residents for the next two weeks unless essential, especially if they have been in areas where there is increased risk of Coronavirus – major conurbations like London, and not to visit at all if they have returned from abroad within the previous 14 days. All the care services can help residents with Skype or Facetime on the iPads that we have in each service – if you call the relevant care service, they should be able to arrange a video call.

This is obviously a fast-moving situation and we will react as it develops. If there are school closures next week that will provide us with some further challenges so we will keep you updated.

As you are aware, we have been organising for the last four weeks for this situation, so we believe that we are as prepared as we can be.

**The key advice remains vigilance about handwashing. Two useful sources of information are:**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51711227>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Thank you again to all the community for their support in dealing with an unprecedented and difficult situation. I can assure you that we will continue to try and keep the focus on reducing risk and acting pragmatically in taking a precautionary approach.

We will continue to keep everyone updated by email rather than post. As previously requested, please make sure that we have up to date email contact details for all family members or friends of residents who wish to be kept up to date. Email [reception@mhrv.co.uk](mailto:reception@mhrv.co.uk) with name of resident, name of family contact and relationship to resident. These details will only be used for communication about our contingency plan.

If you have any queries, please email or call reception for further information.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Walford  
Managing Director