

Covid-19 Updated Information for Independent Residents and Families

31. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – 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 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 4th 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 now. 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 as a precaution.

We have asked the PCN and CCG if Independent Living residents can be vaccinated at the same time as the care services but had no decision on that yet and I suspect it will not be agreed. It is logical, but that does not mean it will happen! If they do agree by chance, we may need residents to fill in consent forms quickly – it would help if everyone has their NHS number ready.

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).

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

30. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (18th 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 Hospital 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 care service 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.

We hope to hear if it will be possible to have on site vaccinations for Middleton Woods and the Waterside, but there is no further news on that at this stage.

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 from last time.

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. Please admire in the evening!

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.

We have a busy schedule of deliveries of Christmas lunch and for Boxing Day planned, but please let reception know if you have any other requests. There are still some potential Christmas presents available in the shop for last minute shopping.

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

Thank you for your support.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

29. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (11th December 2020)

Although local infection levels have reduced, they remain well above national average so we would urge residents to maintain caution. Prior to Christmas we would suggest that those people living on their own stick with an exclusive social bubble and apart from those bubbles, do not meet inside each other's properties. This reduces the possibility of residents have to self-isolate over Christmas.

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 care service residents may get vaccinated as early as next week. This 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.

We are waiting for further news about the vaccine for Middleton Woods and The Waterside. At the moment, that is likely to come through GP surgeries although we have requested who scheme vaccination as a retirement village. I have been told there should be news on the Oxford vaccine before Christmas which will rapidly speed up the vaccination programme.

For obvious reasons, we will remain very cautious into January, given high local infections levels and the expectation that there will be a rise in cases after Christmas as has happened in the US following Thanksgiving. As some of you 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 for 2021 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

28. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (4th 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 there appears to be a low risk of any further infection 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 would urge residents to remain very careful. The vaccine news is very welcome, but it is not clear how the Pfizer vaccine is going to be distributed 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.

Middleton Spa/Hospitality

Thank you for your feedback about Middleton Spa. Most residents have either said they would prefer to wait for the vaccine before using the gym and swimming pool or not responded, but there are a small number who would like to use the pool before Christmas. On this basis, we are going to introduce limited swimming sessions for individual households for a few hours a day from next week. Details to follow. Hairdressing and physiotherapy is being planned for re-opening next week and podiatry the week after.

We will let everyone know about the food service over Christmas. As a minimum, there will be a delivery of Christmas lunches and Boxing Day food. There should be more information on this next week.

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 virtual religious service close to Christmas, if there is demand for it. Could any residents who would be interested let us know? For those residents and Co-owners who 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 distance or single household).

Christmas Play

Thank you to those who have volunteered to take part in the virtual Christmas play – we are still looking for a few more volunteers (residents especially) so any shy thespians please come forward! 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 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) with a message that we will pass on to Co-owners 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 the residents – thank you.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

27. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (28th November 2020)

We appear to have a more settled week in the care services with no residents testing positive and all services back to “normal” Covid infection control for the early part of the week.

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
- 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. Through ARCO, we have asked the government that independent living residents (who are later in the priorities) get on site vaccination at the same time, regardless of age to avoid a situation where some residents are vaccinated and some are not.

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](#)

The government have announced greater household mixing for five days at Christmas. Please plan carefully and stay safe – we are close to the vaccine so, as tempting as it is after a long year, we would urge everyone not to put themselves at risk near to the end.

“KOMP”

If any residents find video calling on tablets difficult, one of our care service residents has been trying 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

Middleton Spa/Hospitality

We will be letting everyone know about hairdressing arrangements and other services next week. It would be useful to know what residents in the Waterside and Middleton Woods feel about the merit of opening the gym and swimming pool before Christmas or whether to wait until infection levels reduce in the New Year or indeed the vaccine is available. Could the gym and pool users email back to let Lesley know, please?

Lesley and Alexis are working out plans for what we can offer the independent living residents in terms of Christmas hospitality, depending on the situation with Tiers.

Christmas Play

Finally, in a great initiative from our Hospitality and Living Well team, Alexis is asking for volunteers to take part in a unique “virtual Christmas play”. Seems a tremendous idea for the community, so we are asking residents to take a small part (that is recorded on a phone or tablet 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 to volunteer.

Thank you and please continue to stay safe.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

26. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (5th 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 all do at least have a greater understanding of the virus and associated risks.

It is clearly important that residents do follow the rules – stay at home and avoid contact with others outside any support bubble. Face, space and hands – wear a face covering when out, keep social distance (2m or 6 feet) and wash your hands regularly (and carry hand sanitiser).

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. 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. This is in addition to weekly laboratory based care home testing which should be more accurate and we now appear to be getting the results faster.

Central Services

Under the lockdown, we are no longer able to re-open hairdressing, the Orangery and swimming pool as we had hoped. The Living Well team will be providing socially distanced outside exercise classes for Middleton Woods and the Waterside.

From next week, the mobile shop will run Tuesdays and Saturdays and we will also open the shop in the Orangery on Thursdays as a trial. Times to be confirmed. Residents can also order shop supplies from the list sent a few weeks ago for delivery via orders@mhrv.co.uk or call reception.

Meals

Hot meals are available for delivery at lunchtime (including Sunday lunch) and early evening – a new menu will be available from 9th November and will be sent separately. From 20th November the kitchen team will be offering take away meals on Friday evenings each week (details to follow). All orders should be emailed to orders@mhrv.co.uk or via reception.

Please let us know if there is anything else that we can offer at this stage to help during lockdown.

In the meantime, please stay safe.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

25. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (30th October 2020)

We have had a difficult and unsettling couple of weeks at Middleton Hall with some asymptomatic Co-owners testing positive, all unconnected. You may also have seen the news that the Tees Valley may move into Tier 3 restrictions next week.

The testing situation continues to be very frustrating. After six days waiting, we finally received yesterday the “priority” 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 in Middleton Court as a result.

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 have all been negative (it takes 2-3 weeks for antibodies to show in a test, so we are not yet able to test everyone yet).

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.

We suspect that we may not have had any actual 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 that we have to put in place. We would like to use them selectively to allow more flexible visiting in the care services, subject to clarification of official guidance and regulations that we have asked for.

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.

Central Services

We are hoping to re-open a revised hairdressing service from November 9th. 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.

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. We are asking for all retirement village residents (ie including Middleton Woods and The Waterside) to be prioritised if the vaccine does become available.

Please let us know if there is anything else that would help at this time.

We will keep you updated.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

24. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (22nd October 2020)

We have had no further cases of Covid-19, following the two asymptomatic residents being cared for in the Rainbow Centre. They have remained symptom free and are moving back to Middleton Court today.

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.

It has been a difficult week 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.

Tier Two

With the Tees Valley in Tier 2 and potentially rising to Tier 3, non-essential travel and visits are discouraged. Please continue to be cautious about going out and any visitors coming on site – although there is no means of comparing, the infection levels locally may well be similar to how they were during lockdown earlier in the year, prior to community testing.

For clarity, Tier Two means:

- You must not mix socially with people you don't live with indoors, at home or in a restaurant or cafe – unless you are in a support bubble with them. This would include meeting up in the Garden Room or Orangery when it reopens
- You may mix with social distancing with no more than six people outdoors
- Face coverings should be worn in shops or restaurants/cafes
- Avoid travelling in car with someone outside your household or support bubble

Any residents who wanted to meet up inside, can book the Visitor Pod in Middleton Grove if they are not able to meet outside.

I am pleased to share some positive news about our plans for the next few weeks.

Orangery and Middleton Spa

We will provisionally plan for the re-opening of Middleton Spa and the Orangery soon. If the rate of local infection becomes stable in the next two weeks, we hope to have the swimming pool (but probably not the gym) back up and running by November 11th. More details to follow in the next bulletin.

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 official lab based tests, they will help us manage any future infections more effectively and take quick decisions to keep everyone safe.

We may be able to use them to enhance our services for independent residents in due course.

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 with our Co-owners.

PPE

All Co-owners have been asked to use face coverings outside where there is any possibility of coming across a resident within 2m.

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 care service residents so we have ordered privately Vitamin D for every care service resident. We have also some available in the shop for Middleton Woods and The Waterside should any residents wish to take Vitamin D as a supplement.

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

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

We will keep you updated.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

23. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (15th 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.

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 week or so – they are doing a fantastic job in very challenging circumstances.

Unfortunately, this will also impact on our plans to re-open Middleton Spa and the Orangery for Middleton Woods and the Waterside. I trust all our residents will understand where our priorities will need to lie for the next week or more. The shop delivery service will continue in the meantime.

We will keep you updated.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

22. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (7th 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 been previously 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 respective teams to self-isolate as a precaution which is going to cause us some disruption to the level of service and put appropriate restrictions into each service.

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 that 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 actual cases in the first wave of the pandemic.

We are currently working on plans for our central facilities in light of the second wave of the pandemic and expect to update you early next week.

There appears to be increasing evidence of the benefits of Vitamin D reducing the impact of Covid-19:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-vitamin-d-reduce-risk-research-b624413.html>

Although I am obviously not qualified to offer medical advice, I thought it would be useful information now that there is less sunshine available during the winter months.

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

Please keep safe.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

21. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (30th 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 – local statistics show that cases have doubled twice in the last two weeks with a very significant increase in Darlington (up to 88 cases per 100,000 population compared to the UK average of 28). The rapid increase in positive tests now puts most of the Tees Valley above areas of Durham and Tyneside when restrictions were introduced. Any restrictions introduced will be in addition to the existing “Rule of 6” which makes gatherings of more than 6 people unlawful.

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-19. A terrible reminder of how quickly the disease can spread. Clearly we are facing the second wave of the pandemic. However, with our experience and knowledge of the measures that we put in place during the first wave, this time we should be better prepared to avoid an outbreak in the retirement village by taking action at the right time and working with residents and families.

Reluctantly, we have decided that now is the time to take precautionary action to keep residents safe in a rapidly developing situation. We are putting a hold on a number of services that we have re-introduced for a two week period while we re-plan how to provide these services with considerably higher infection levels in the community around us. For example, we are looking into the feasibility of air purification systems for places like the Orangery and gym.

The temporary “pause” will apply from Thursday for Middleton Woods and The Waterside.

Facilities

Middleton Spa, Hairdressing, Therapies, Orangery and the shop are suspended for Independent Living residents from Thursday. The Sunday lunch planned for this weekend will be offered as a delivery service – we will contact residents who have booked this and other events to offer alternatives. We will keep the Art Studio and Library available for individual household use.

Outside, socially distanced exercise classes will continue and we will be improving availability of shop orders for delivery. You may receive a call from Alexis Boyle, our recently appointed Hospitality Manager, to discuss what you would like to see stocked in the shop and available for delivery.

If you have not already signed up for a supermarket delivery, I would strongly advise that you do so straightaway if you intend to use supermarkets in case there are shortages again and to avoid having to go into shops as much as possible. We would again recommend that you disinfect any deliveries carefully.

For the next two weeks, we will ask that the post is delivered to reception again and disinfected before being delivered to properties in the Waterside. If any Waterside residents would like to volunteer again for postal duties, their help would be appreciated – please let reception know. Given the level of precautions in place, pharmacy deliveries will continue.

We would advise that routine hospital visits should continue for the moment, but only essential district nurse and health professional visits. District Nurses are currently visiting multiple community settings, including care homes, without any routine testing so their visits are of particular concern. Anyone receiving care in your property, please make sure that PPE is being carefully used including a new face mask and gloves put on before a carer enters the property.

Visitors

We would advise caution about families and friends visiting and keep any visits outside – it is likely that household mixing will be stopped in the area along with County Durham and Tyneside at some point in the next week. We should also be mindful that that some families and friends may already be under restricted travel in their area (many areas are allowing essential travel only).

NHS Covid App

If you have not already downloaded the NHS contact tracing app we would suggest that you do (assuming you have a smart phone) and 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>

Putting a pause on services is not a step that we have taken lightly. However, we know that taking early action in the first part of the pandemic helped keep Covid-19 out of Middleton Hall so we hope residents will agree that we should act quickly in the current situation while re-planning how to operate during the second wave.

Please stay safe during this difficult time and thank you for your support.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

20. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (24th 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. If you have a smart phone, we would recommend you to use it and 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

Under current regulations, people in local lockdown areas who are not allowed to travel outside that area will not be able to visit. Please be mindful of visitors as infection levels increase and continue to apply common sense and wherever possible have visitors outside.

Flu Vaccinations

The government is encouraging a high take up of flu injections amongst vulnerable groups and social care workers. Please get in touch with the surgery if you have not already done so to book your flu vaccination.

Events

Alexis Boyle, our new Hospitality Manager is working with Michael and Ryan to plan various functions and events for the autumn. These include a trial Sunday lunch on 4th October, Wine Tasting on 1st October, recipe boxes during October as well as some small group classes in the Art Studio from 2nd October and the Virtual Village Show. There will be more information on these to follow.

Even in the event of further restrictions, we are aiming to try and maintain carefully planned events during the winter.

Cash-free Retirement Village

Following feedback on our cash free plan Middleton Hall will not accept cash or hold cash from October 1st. There are a few issues (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

19. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (15th 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.

Authorities in the North East have issued correspondence to all care providers in their regions, advising that all non-essential visits be cancelled. 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 therefore 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 need 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 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.

As always, our vigilance is a key part in keeping Covid-19 at bay. The Government’s new campaign reiterates what we’ve all been practising:

- Hands – wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and use sanitiser regularly throughout the day
- Face – wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet.
- Space – stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions (outdoors, face coverings and increasing ventilation if indoors)

Packs of PPE including face coverings and gloves, plus hand sanitiser, can still be purchased from our shop.

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.

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

Suzanne Graham
Finance Director

18. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (26th August 2020)

I witnessed last night the first hospitality inside the Orangery for over five months, courtesy of the British weather for one of our barbeques. A cautious step, but a very welcome one.

We will carefully extend the Orangery service over the next few weeks with social distanced dining opportunities inside as well as outside as we move forward.

The tables outside the Orangery will be available for residents from different services to meet up (with social distancing) – for example, Waterside residents to meet with friends from Middleton Woods or even a care service resident. This should *be outside only* and booked in advance so that we can arrange the tables accordingly. For any care service residents it would need to be within their care service session time for the Orangery, for residents who are low risk and by prior arrangement with the care service only. We will monitor this carefully to ensure it is safe and not hesitate to withdraw elements if we feel anyone is being put at risk.

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 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. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (14th August 2020)

While our community remains Covid free, our approach during August and hopefully September should be about increased social opportunities while balancing safety. 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.

The kitchen team has planned barbeques for Middleton Woods and The Waterside in small groups to take advantage of hopefully decent weather. The ones during August will benefit from the government's "Eat out to help out" scheme where upon you get 50% off up to £10, so book early!

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 from 24th August.

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 24th August.

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 have put on hold celebrations for Middleton Hall's 120th 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 Michael know.

We have received test kits under the new care home testing system today, which will allow us to test residents in our care services and save Co-owners having to go to test centres. I have had a meeting and input through ARCO (Retirement Communities Association) with someone from the Social Care Taskforce and we have asked for regular testing to follow for independent residents.

For information, we have discussed and agreed a safe procedure (involving testing and self-isolation) for a family member to stay with a resident in the Waterside later in August. The family consulted with Lesley well in advance and has worked with us to find a safe way. We are willing to discuss similar proposals to ensure it is safe for all residents and within government guidelines. This includes the agreement to be able to walk in the grounds during the stay.

Finally, now is a good time to set up an account for online supermarket deliveries as the local supermarkets are open for new customers again. I am registering myself as I suspect that if we do have a second wave or restrictions, it will be difficult to get deliveries again.

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

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

16. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (31st July 2020)

As we enter August, I am sure we are all hoping that the recent period of stability continues although having drafted 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.

I hope none of you had booked a holiday to Spain or Luxembourg with the quarantine restrictions put back in place last weekend. There are concerns that France and Germany may also join the list of European countries with quarantine restrictions on return. There are also a number of local spikes in the UK and since last night new restrictions for the north west and West Yorkshire. 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 for a while that the infectious period can be longer than 7 days. 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 Radox 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.

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. From today, we have introduced outside visitor stations for the care services with careful guidelines that fit the government guidance for care home visiting.

We are gradually stepping up the Orangery service. We will extend those sessions if there is demand and it is operating effectively. We are also arranging some small Independent Living gatherings outside the Orangery for new residents to meet some of their neighbours. 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 10th August for independent residents and the pool from 17th August. 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. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (22nd 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 31st, 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, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 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. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (9th 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 local areas with 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.

However, as set out in the last bulletin, we are carefully re-opening some services:

- Housekeeping and hairdressing have already started and physiotherapy services are available for urgent appointments and will be increasing.
- The shop in the Orangery is reopening on Friday – Steve has even given the Orangery a lick of paint in preparation!
- The Library will be open from Monday 13th July
- The Orangery will start a limited drinks and snacks service on Tuesdays/Thursdays from 16th July

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 focussing on the importance of social distance and trying to rearrange rotas to cope with the potential impact of the track and trace programme within Middleton Hall to avoid 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 are also entering the "usual" holiday season and travel is now permitted both in the UK and 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. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (26th June 2020)

On Tuesday, the government announced the latest easing of Coronavirus restrictions from July 4th. 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 2nd July
- Hairdressing will re-open on a limited scale during w/c 6th 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 10th 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 13th 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.

Shielding

As you may be aware, the government has announced that changes to guidance on shielding:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51997151>

Particularly for those living on their own, this may offer some helpful changes if you feel comfortable with forming a support bubble.

During the pandemic, Gail and more recently Eileen from our reception team have been regularly telephoning residents. If any residents on their own would like to book an appointment to meet in a Visitors' Pod for a chat with Eileen, she would be happy to arrange it.

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. Middleton Woods and The Waterside Coronavirus update (13th June 2020)

Since the bulletin a few days ago, there have been further government announcements about “Support Bubbles” to come into effect this weekend, the opening of retail shops and face coverings that we would like to provide some guidance on.

Support Bubbles

The announcement about “Support Bubbles” was of course not designed with retirement villages in mind, but for the general public. Support Bubbles allow people living entirely on their own to spend time with one other household indoors and without social distancing. The government guidance is clear in two respects:

- This applies only to people living on their own in a single household
- It is not for people who are shielding (clinically vulnerable). There is due to be a government update next week on shielding

For residents at Middleton Hall living on their own who are not being shielded, our reading of the guidance means there are three exclusive options (you can only pick one of them):

1. Forming a support bubble with another household in Middleton Woods or The Waterside
2. Forming a support bubble with an external household and a member or members of that household visiting the resident at Middleton Hall
3. Forming a support bubble with an external household and visiting them

At this stage, we feel that the Option 1 is a sensible option, for anyone not shielding, as long as you are confident that the household at Middleton Hall that you are forming a support bubble with has been taking care to reduce any risk of picking up the virus. It would provide some social comfort after spending three months being on your own which we imagine could be very welcome for some residents.

Given the level of infection in the north is still high compared to other parts of the country and the number of clinically vulnerable residents we have at Middleton Hall, we are however concerned about options 2 or 3 at this stage. We recommend that anyone living on their own waits a little longer, until the end of June, before planning to form a support bubble with Option 2 or 3 when, hopefully, the local infection rate has come down further. Bear in mind that once you have chosen a support bubble, you are not able to change to another bubble at present. During the next few days, we will contact all residents living on their own to discuss support bubbles.

Retail Shops

From Monday, shops are re-opening with social distancing measures in place. We would suggest residents remain very careful if they do choose to visit shops and follow government advice about using face coverings as well as gloves or hand sanitiser to reduce the risk. You can order a new PPE pack from Middleton Hall’s shop.

Face Coverings

Face coverings (non-surgical masks) are mandatory on all forms of public transport and for outpatients at hospitals from 15th June. We anticipate that Doctors’ Surgeries will also require face coverings and we would strongly advise that anyone attending any NHS setting wears a surgical face mask and carries hand sanitiser to use after any contact points (door handles etc). Please let us know if you are going for an NHS appointment and we will supply you with the right PPE, if you have used the pack we provided recently. We appreciate that there is a lot of change going on with the easing of lockdown – if you have any questions, please let us know and we will attempt to answer them.

Finally, Handelsbanken, Middleton Hall’s bank, has let us know that the level of fraudulent behaviour has significantly increased during lockdown. We have attached with this bulletin a guide from Handelsbanken about avoiding scams. Although specific to Handelsbanken customers, the advice is useful for all banks.

Please continue to stay vigilant during the pandemic in playing your part to keep Covid-19 out of Middleton Hall.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

11. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (9th 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.

At this stage with the easing of lockdown, we would ask all residents and families to continue to ensure they are maintaining social distancing – 2 metres (or 6'6"), which is further than many people realise. We introduced some social distancing poles (2m measures or, as someone nicknamed them, "Gandalf staffs"*) into the care services to illustrate the recommended social distance – this resulted in some adjustments. There is also one attached to the visitors' table outside Middleton Woods as a reminder.

We would reiterate the message about visitors staying away from the main gardens (including the allotments) and sticking to outside residents' properties and the main woodland walk only. Please make sure your visitors do observe the 2 metres social distance.

On a cautionary note, I spoke to a friend of mine two weeks ago who told me his asthma was particularly bad and he had seen a doctor twice about it. He and his wife have been very careful (due to his asthma) throughout lockdown, however his wife called me this week to say that he has Covid-19 and has been unwell for the last two weeks. With hindsight she thinks she may have had some very mild symptoms as well. They have no idea how he could have picked up the virus but seems most likely to have been a contact point somewhere – delivery or out walking.

It is a reminder about how virulent Covid-19 is and the importance of handwashing especially. Please also be very wary about any deliveries where drivers are not using PPE properly or maintaining social distance.

On a more optimistic note, over the next few weeks, if the regional rates of infection decrease and we feel the risk is reduced, we are looking to carefully reintroduce some services. We hope to offer a limited housekeeping service from the beginning of July, to reopen the shop on a one person at a time basis and work out how hairdressing could work safely. Weather permitting, we are also looking at introducing some occasional socially distanced food and beverage services outside the Orangery, for residents only.

We now have Visitors' Pods up and running in each care service which have been well received and allow for longer visits of up to an hour. This also means that we do have greater capacity and are able to extend the service to Independent Living residents utilising the one installed in the conservatory next to the restaurant if any Middleton Woods or Waterside residents would like to use it, subject to availability. There is a booking process to ensure that we can fully disinfect the Pod and we would need to make arrangements for Independent Living residents well in advance. If any residents would be interested, please call reception to discuss.

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

* Reference to Lord of the Rings for those (like me) not familiar with Tolkien novels and films!

10. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (31st 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 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 this bulletin 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).

Visitors

The government guidelines change from Monday 1st June to allow limited visits to household private gardens with social distancing. 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 Middleton Woods and The Waterside:

1. Continue to avoid visiting any areas of risk outside Middleton Hall – supermarkets, shops – and if you do, please use PPE provided to stay safe (you can order more through your weekly order from the shop)
2. Stick strictly to the government regulations if you visit any family or friends’ properties – outside only with careful social distancing (2m apart) and use hand sanitiser to keep safe
3. We would ask all visitors to properties not to walk round the grounds except the woodland walk and in particular to keep away from the care service areas
4. We would ask that only children who are able to maintain social distance and are well supervised to be included in visits
5. We ask that people do not to bring in any food or drink to share with residents – if people come for a drink, please ask them to bring their own glasses
6. The Waterside – visitors should be restricted to outside of individual properties only. Please ask visitors to use hand sanitiser on arrival and disinfect any surfaces touched by visitors after they leave
7. Middleton Woods (Ground floor apartments) – visitors should be restricted to outside your property and only use the Middleton Woods car park (please arrange with apartments not using their parking space themselves where appropriate). Please ask visitors to use hand sanitiser on arrival and disinfect any surfaces touched by visitors after they leave
8. Middleton Woods (First floor apartments) – please meet any visitors outside either by the socially distanced table and chairs and use only Middleton Woods car park as above. Please ask visitors to use hand sanitiser on arrival and use the disinfectant provided to clean any surfaces touched by visitors after they leave
9. Do not allow visitors inside your property except with prior agreement of Middleton Hall (ie specific cleaning or care). Should a visitor get caught short, there will be a WC available near the Art Studio

(please clean all surfaces after using, including door handles) for Middleton Woods residents or the Pavilion for others.

Shielded Residents

One of our reasons for caution with the guidelines above is that we have people throughout all our services (independent and care) who are “clinically vulnerable” under the NHS shielding policy. Other residents and visitors must appreciate that visitors provide a general risk of passing on the virus not just to the person they are visiting but other residents as well.

The trial Visitors’ Pod for the care services has been very well received and we are currently installing further pods into each care service. Anyone who is being shielded as “clinically vulnerable” is welcome to book a half hour session in our Visitors’ Pod through reception as availability increases. We are confident that this is a safe visiting opportunity.

We are aware that there have been some unauthorised traders trying to sell door to door to residents without any precautions – please do not use them and tell them they should not be on site as Middleton Hall is a shielded community.

As I mentioned last week, if we are confident that visitors are keeping the community safe, we will start to look at when we could bring some limited services back in.

Should there be any Covid-19 cases within Independent Living services, we bring back 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 (21st 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.

There have been more visitors to the retirement village over the last week which does increase risk. Our own guidelines through the e-bulletins have aimed to discourage visitors during lockdown, apart from dropping in essential supplies in line with government regulations. However, under the revision to The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) Regulations 2020 last week, we have now been advised that it is actually likely to be an offence for people to visit a retirement community like Middleton Hall as they are private grounds rather than a defined public space. However, we will continue to take balanced view and not be as rigid as many other retirement villages where visitors have been entirely stopped, but we do need to urge caution – this means observing social distance, not going inside Middleton Woods (except where prior arrangements have been agreed) and keeping visits brief. The table and chairs outside of Middleton Woods should be used with social distance for up to 15 minutes and we would ask that they are disinfected after use (suitable wipes are being provided).

We do insist that people do not to bring in any food or drink to share with residents (some sort of a socially distanced picnic) as it significantly increases the risk of someone asymptomatic passing on the infection. I hope everyone will appreciate that our first duty is to keep our community safe. As other retirement villages have sadly found, Covid-19 rarely is confined to one person when the virus has entered a community.

You will find attached to this email our “Stay Safe” guide to accompany the Stay Safe pack of PPE that we will be providing for your use if you go out to any shops. Further packs are available at £3. Some of our more theatrical Co-owners have kindly produced a short video explaining how to safely put on PPE when going to a shop:

[Stay safe using your Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)

A query was raised about emergencies during the pandemic. Should any resident be in a situation necessitating the use of the emergency call system, we would expect the procedure to work in a relatively normal way – whoever you speak with would make an assessment of the situation and decide whether to call 999 for an ambulance. Should a member of our team need to attend your property, they would be using PPE including a face mask to ensure safety.

During the next few weeks, if government lockdown is further relaxed and we feel that the community is being kept safe we will start to look at when we could bring some limited services back in – housekeeping, further exercise opportunities or even some socially distanced outside coffee and snacks. We may only be able to offer this to residents who are able to declare they have been genuinely keeping safe in line with government guidance.

We are trialling a Visitor’s Pod in the Conservatory from this weekend for the care services. If the trial proves successful and safe, we would be open to making a version available for Middleton Woods and the Waterside.

If you have any ideas or thoughts about other initiatives during this difficult time, please let us know.

Thank you for working with us in helping Middleton Hall to Stay Safe.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

8. Coronavirus (Covid-19) update (13th 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.

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 weekly going forward. We have asked for Independent Living residents to be included in the testing programme.

Regular testing is one key part of reducing the risk of one of us 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 for our Co-owners. There are also some cautionary measures that we would like to introduce for Middleton Woods and The Waterside:

- Encourage residents to avoid going out from Middleton Hall as much as possible, particularly to go to supermarkets but use online deliveries if possible and /or increase groceries shopping through MH.
- Provide each property a “Stay Safe” pack – a brief about maintaining safety and a PPE pack (gloves and mask) if residents are going to go out of the retirement village to go to any shops – supermarkets especially. We will provide a starter pack free but there will then be a small cost of further packs
- Greater vigilance about social distancing at all times

The government have relaxed moving house restrictions this week and we will allow new residents to move in following testing, suitable precautions about moving and a period of self-isolation.

We are concerned about the risks from visitors during the epidemic to the Waterside and Middleton Woods that are outside the government guidance. Several retirement villages have enforced a far stricter “no visitors” policy having had the unfortunate experience of residents contracting Covid-19 through visitors. As we have remained Covid-free, it would be easy for us to become complacent at this time of increasing risk.

Going forward we would like to have some flexibility around visitors but would like to be crystal clear that if family members are going to visit they must maintain social distance (two metres) and stay outside properties at all times. We realise this is more difficult for first floor properties in Middleton Woods so are planning to put some socially distanced seating outside by the end of this week.

For our care services this has also been a difficult challenge. We are looking into a solution that we believe is within government guidelines by installing an experimental safe visitors’ booth in the conservatory next to the restaurant.

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>.

There are some details to be worked out still and we hope to have this ready for a trial at the end of next week. If it proves successful and safe, we will look at providing similar facilities in the care services in the following weeks. If there are residents who are strictly shielding (i.e. have an NHS letter instructing them not to go out) or uncomfortable about outside, socially distanced visiting we could look at the feasibility and costing of providing an equivalent safe visiting area for independent living. Please let us know if this is something that would be of interest.

Next week, we will be opening the Art Studio for individual use (a resident or household) by appointment. Sessions will need to be booked through reception.

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 residents and 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 (6th 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.

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 introduced face masks for teams in our care services last week as an additional precaution mentioned in the last bulletins. Although this has presented some challenges for our care teams, our Co-owners have embraced this as helping to protect residents.

We have asked the government through ARCO (Retirement Village Association) for access to testing for our independent living residents. I am also involved with an ARCO working party liaising with the Department of Health and Social Care about how lockdown is eased and the implications for our sector.

We are currently discussing our next steps, in light of government announcements due 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 safe, socially distanced visiting in due course. We appreciate the support from residents and families about visitors but also recognise this is unlikely to be sustainable if the pandemic continues for months rather than weeks.

Our newly introduced outdoor exercise classes have proved popular and we will continue to look at how exercise can be safely encouraged. Many residents enjoyed the Sri Lankan night on Saturday and Ryan and his team are looking at repeating themed takeaways on a fortnightly basis.

Following suggestions in our recent survey, Michael Hodgson, our Living Well Manager, is organising an experimental YouTube quiz on Friday in the evening. More details on that to follow.

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 (27th 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.

The challenge for all of us going forward is about getting the balance right between reducing the risk of infection and resident welfare. With this in mind, Michael and the Middleton Spa team are trying out some socially distanced exercise classes this week to try and help residents keep fit and active during the pandemic.

For the Waterside, they will take place on the bowling green and for Middleton Woods on the patios and balconies – do let us have some feedback on the classes and any other ideas you have for exercise. As you know, the bowling green and golf is already available on a booking basis for limited numbers.

Our catering team are also trying a different type of meal service at the weekend with a Sri Lankan takeaway delivery. If this proves popular and we get it to work, we will try other versions of the service to add variety to the hot meals available.

There has been a lot of media coverage about the UK's problems with PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). We have been working hard on securing ongoing supplies of PPE (face masks, gloves, aprons and surgical gowns) over the last month and have a reasonable stock situation, primarily in the event that we have cases of Covid-19. We also have a good stock of visors including some donated by local companies.

Having consulted our care teams over the last week, we are introducing the wearing of face masks for anyone working in close proximity to residents in our care services this week as an added precaution. This does not apply to our Co-owners working in reception, catering or any of our support services at this stage.

So far as testing, we now have easier access to Covid-19 testing for all Co-owners and at least care service residents in the event of anyone showing symptoms.

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 (18th 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 currently 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 from our care services 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 (initially in care services), 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 for immediate needs as we have been actively working on holding a buffer stock for the last month.

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.

The responses confirmed that although “frustrating/sad/difficult”, residents feel “reassured/safe/fortunate” to be at Middleton Hall. There were high levels of satisfaction in the initiatives that we have taken so far including information provided, hot meals and shop delivery service. You also provided some lovely comments that we have fed back to all our Co-owners.

There were some useful ideas that we would like to share or are implementing including:

1. Create a “Covid Corner” where post/deliveries stay in quarantine for 72 hours (good idea)
2. Disinfecting bins/shopping (please action as per last bulletin)
3. Concern over trespassers in the grounds (notices are up)
4. Concern over visitors in Middleton Woods (see below)
5. Exercise on site only (would be sensible)
6. Quizzes (digitally)/pub style quiz (we will try and provide some)
7. Facetime or Zoom between residents (good idea)
8. Spa organised exercise classes (being introduced)
9. Middleton Woods – MH housekeeper (in place)
10. Proactive phone calls to residents (in place)

In response to specific questions raised:

1. Residents should *not* use the Garden Room to meet up
2. We have gone back to “Safe Zone” corridor disinfection liquid in Middleton Woods which is anti-viral

3. Yes, we will look to add to the shop items mentioned

4. Yes, we can collect milk bottles – please put them out when deliveries are being made

There is concern raised about visitors in Middleton Woods. We need to be clear about government and Middleton Hall policy on this. All residents over 70 should be shielded and that means self-isolating and not having any visitors in their property except for essential care. Government requirements about essential travel do allow families to drop off food and essential deliveries – for residents with ground floor access this should be outside their property and for the first floor in Middleton Woods it should be outside the main entrance. We realise that this is difficult and we are very grateful for the understanding of families and friends about not visiting Middleton Hall.

In our last bulletin, we shared the sad situation in another retirement village where the daughter of a resident chose to ignore both government guidance and the retirement village's "no visitors" policy and visited her mother. It turned out that the daughter was infectious with Covid-19 and her mother died as a result. We all know the virus is spread very easily and one visitor could inadvertently infect multiple residents.

We also advise strongly against residents going out of Middleton Hall wherever possible. Certain supermarkets are now prioritising over 70s and we will be contacting them in the next few days to try and increase the delivery services. If there are additional items you would like us to stock through the Middleton Hall shop we are happy to add to the range if we can.

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 (9th 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 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 independent living residents are around visiting shops or supermarkets, deliveries without infection control measures, visitors, hospital appointments and any homecare/District Nurse services coming in. There is also one specific risk that we have identified for The Waterside – **bins**. We already have measures in place to disinfect the Middleton Woods bins however we are concerned that refuse collectors may not be able to use infection control measures with their gloves and handling of bins around The Waterside. They will have handled many bins around Darlington by the time they reach Middleton Hall and could transfer infection in this way.

Please make sure that you have either disinfected the bin handle and lid or used disposable gloves to bring your bin/box in and washed your hands thoroughly afterwards.

One additional request – if you use disposable wipes of any kind, please put in the normal rubbish, not down WCs (we have had our main drain badly blocked this week with wipes).

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 visit her mother. It turned out that the daughter’s husband had contracted Covid-19. Sadly, her mother died at the retirement village last week and they now have other cases.

We appreciate that Easter weekend is upon us and understand that it would be tempting to ignore the “stay at home” government requirement. It is critical that we continue to avoid 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 certainly applies to the team spirit at Middleton Hall.

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. I mentioned last week that I was attending a “virtual drinks party” on Zoom. I can report that it worked well and I also 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.

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. The 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.

Our plan for leaseholders who fall ill remains for residents to stay in their properties, inform us and use external care. However, if someone is seriously ill with Covid-19, we may be able to care for them in the Rainbow Centre.

We are delighted in how well the shop ordering service and hot meal delivery service are being used. As explained last week, from this Friday 10th April we are moving to a new weekly shop ordering and delivery service to better manage demand. There will be essential top ups in between.

Finally, in order to plan ahead, we would like a little feedback on how you are coping and how we are responding to the Coronavirus crisis as well as any thoughts on how we can help. You will find a link below to a 5 minute survey to give us some 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 (2nd 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 services with limited disruption thanks to the efforts of our Co-owners. 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 residents and families to alleviate the difficulty this entails. We would continue to suggest avoiding any visitors, in line with government requirements for “shielding”.

We have revised the shop ordering and delivery service to better manage demand so that from Friday 9th April, we will be moving towards a weekly main order with essential top ups in between.

Please be wary about any deliveries to ensure that social distancing and infection control measures are in place. So far as newspapers, we would recommend (with apologies to newsagents) digital papers. I can personally report that I have subscribed to a digital version of a newspaper on my iPad and to my surprise, actually prefer it to a physical paper. We continue to encourage video calling with friends and families through iPads, smart phones and tablets. We have bought Kindle Fires for residents in our care services which are inexpensive (£60 from Amazon) and easy to use. If you want help in setting them up, we can get someone to call you to advise.

Internally, we have been using “Zoom” for meetings, available on PCs or as an app on tablets or smart phones. They can also be used to host social events – I am attending a “virtual drinks party” at the weekend and a family team game of “Linkee” (no idea how that will work!). Residents might like to try that out this sort of technology between themselves. If you would like any advice, please let reception know.

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 from the care services and keep them separate from the rest of the residents. Hopefully, we will never have to use it. Our plan for leaseholders would be for residents to stay in their properties, inform us and use external care. However, if someone is seriously ill with Covid-19, we may be able to care for them in our Covid Care Centre.

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 (24th 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 12th 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 12th 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 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