

Covid-19 Updated Information for Independent Residents and Families

50. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Covid update (17th June 2021)

As expected, the government has pushed back the date for further relaxation of restrictions to July 19th, to give more time for the vaccine roll out amidst increasing infection levels. Although the Tees Valley has lower infection levels than most parts of the north, they are increasing so we can expect that to continue over the next few weeks. It is not all bad news though. The increase is primarily in the under 60s as the vaccine reduces transmission and serious illness for Delta variant, when people have had both jabs.

We have the first Co-owner for some time self-isolating after contact with someone testing positive. Although this should be very low risk for our vaccinated residents, we have put in a few precautions to avoid disruption to staffing if someone does test positive – daily testing for example.

The government has also announced that they are going to make it compulsory for all staff working in care homes to be vaccinated, unless they have a medical exemption.

Delta Variant

The Delta (Indian) variant is far more transmissible (60% more than the Alpha or Kent variant) and more severe - without vaccination, people are twice as likely to be admitted to hospital. Research published from the “Zoe” app this week has also indicated that the Delta variant has different symptoms – more like a cold and generally without the loss of taste or smell. The three key signs now are headache, sore throat and runny nose:

[What are the Delta variant symptoms? - BBC News](#)

Orangery

You will see that the maintenance team have made some changes to the seating area outside the Orangery which should make it a more hospitable environment. The Orangery will be open 7 days a week again from Monday 21st.

National Garden Open Scheme

We are taking part in the NGS (National Garden Open Scheme) which raises money for charity on July 24th. This is being carefully controlled with visitor numbers to ensure that it is Covid-safe, but we would advise residents and families to avoid outside visiting on that day as there will be external people on tours around the grounds.

Thank you for your patience in helping Middleton Hall get through what should be the last part of the pandemic.
Stay safe

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

49. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Covid update (3rd June 2021)

The sun has been shining, residents have been getting outside with visitors and infection levels locally remain low. Although nationally infection levels continue to rise owing to the “delta” variant (Indian variant) this appears to be primarily in the under 60s who have not received both doses of the vaccine.

Outside coffee mornings start next week. Although nearly all residents have had both vaccines, there are a few for various reasons who have only had one vaccine so far. For those residents, we would suggest they remain cautious so they may wish to consider waiting to attend coffee mornings until their second vaccine is complete.

There is new government guidance for retirement communities that allows communal spaces (ie Garden Room in Middleton Woods) for gatherings of up to six residents or two households. Please leave a door open for ventilation if you are using the Garden Room in this way and clean tables after use (we have provided some “Safezone” spray that is to be kept in the kitchen cupboards).

If you have any other ideas where you would like us to help as we move forward or any questions, please let reception or Lesley know.

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

48. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Covid update (26th May 2021)

The pandemic news over the weekend confirmed that both Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines appear to be working against the Indian variant after two doses (but are not very effective after one dose). The variant is now spreading rapidly in a number of areas of the UK including Bolton, Blackburn, Kirkless, Bedford, Burnley, Leicester, Hounslow and North Tyneside. The vaccine effectiveness would suggest that the UK should avoid a third wave, unless another variant comes along that is resistant to the vaccines.

At this stage, we would ask residents not to receive any visitors from the eight areas above where the Indian variant is spreading.

Locally, infection levels are reasonably low, apart from Middlesbrough where the levels have increased again. Most encouraging is the number of Covid deaths in care homes nationally that has fallen to the lowest level since the beginning of the pandemic.

Orangery

Independent residents (Middleton Woods and the Waterside) can now use the Orangery inside and outside between 10am and 2pm Tuesday to Sunday (bookings only). You can also book the Orangery outside with guests or inside if your guests have had both vaccines (7 days after their second vaccine) from 1st June. The care services are continuing to have access to the Orangery in the afternoons. We are planning to make some changes to the area outside the Orangery so it works better for outside eating and drinking.

We are continuing with meals deliveries for the moment. We are also arranging for outside coffee mornings following discussion at the Independent Residents’ Committee last week.

If you have any questions, please let reception or Lesley know.

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

47. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Covid update (19th May 2021)

While Monday has seen the latest step in the government's road map with further easing of restrictions, the news over the last week of the Indian variant is clearly causing concern. Although this variant appears to be far more transmissible, the evidence so far suggests that the vaccine is effective against this strain of the virus.

In terms of the lockdown easing, this week has seen significant changes:

- Groups of six people or two households can meet inside
- Outside groups of 30 can meet up
- Pubs, restaurants, hotels, theatres, museums can re-open
- Inside exercise classes and sports stadium crowds
- Greater personal judgement about social distancing
- People are able to go on holiday to a few "Green" list countries

[Covid: What's the roadmap for lifting lockdown? - BBC News](#)

At Middleton Hall, this means that the Orangery is now open inside for groups of 6 or 2 households, inside exercise classes can re-start, table tennis resuming and we are going to try outside coffee mornings for Middleton Wood and The Waterside.

During June we are planning to restart shopping trips in the minibus as well as re-introducing various clubs and activities.

The Orangery is now open inside as well as on the terrace outside (Tuesday to Sunday). This will include Sunday lunch this week for the first time this year.

We hope to continue moving forward with less restrictions during May and June.

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

46. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Covid update (7th May 2021)

Since February 2020, Middleton Hall has taken a cautious, safety first approach, aiming to prioritise looking after our residents and our Co-owners. Given many of the uncertainties and dangers of Covid-19, this has meant that we have managed to navigate an often twisting and difficult path around the worst of the pandemic. It has been challenging for our Co-owners and especially our residents and families as well as being costly for our business.

Having discussed the pandemic with a scientist at Imperial College at the weekend and listened to Professor Neil Ferguson's Radio 4 interview on Tuesday, both spoke with a considerably more hopeful tone. My scientist friend that works at Imperial told me last summer what he expected to happen with a second wave in the winter. Sadly, he was proved correct about the winter, so I found his new sense of optimism very encouraging.

As a result, we have discussed at this week's contingency meeting that our strategy moving forward should reflect a more positive approach. Obviously, we will continue to work within government guidance and react quickly to any local or national concerns, but our focus now should be to gradually return to the core strengths of Middleton Hall Retirement Village as a thriving community.

We must still maintain precautions and safety but focus equally on resident lifestyle again.

Vaccination

Please let reception know when you have received your second vaccine.

Central Facilities

Currently, we are operating a food and drink service outside the Orangery.

We are expecting to re-open the Orangery for inside hospitality after the next government announcement on 17th May. This will include a Sunday lunch service for Independent residents.

We are now entering a positive period of re-opening services and facilities. In doing so, we will play our part with the government restrictions and applying common sense about risk to ensure we keep Middleton Hall safe.

Thank you for your continued patience.

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

45. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Covid update (29th April 2021)

You may have noticed that there was no update last week. Essentially we decided that, as there was little to update, that we would not take up your time reading a bulletin without much in it. Indeed, this week there is also little to add on the overall situation. Infections locally remain low, particularly in the over 60s age groups which is increasingly hopeful for the summer.

If this situation remains, we will continue to open up facilities, visiting and resident activities with care and in line with government guidance. Our focus will be around improving the community experience for our residents after a very difficult winter.

The next stage of the government's roadmap is due to start from May 17th. One of the key areas will be around foreign travel. With the dreadful situation with variants in India and South America, we should hope the government are cautious about travel to avoid importing a variant that the vaccines are less effective against.

Independent residents continue to receive their second vaccinations which will help us to open up our central facilities.

Picnic area

Inside the grounds, the estates team have organised some picnic areas with tables and seating for the care services – as the weather gets warmer, independent residents are also welcome to use them. There are maps in reception showing the locations of the picnic areas.

Events

During June and July, we are hoping to be able to have some outside events. These may be small events for residents only but we could also consider some bigger events where residents will be able to invite some family or friends of residents as restrictions ease.

We are seeking ideas for events such as BBQs, afternoon teas or sports days. If you have some ideas please feedback to Michael Hodgson or reception by the end of next week so that we can start planning.

Tyne Tees

ITV have asked to film at Middleton Hall about our gardens and National Garden Scheme open days so are due to be on site at the end of the week.

Middleton Spa

We have been pleased to welcome back some residents for gym and pool sessions. If you have not been back yet, please get in touch with the Michael about what you would like to do. All government guidelines on exercise apply.

If you have any ideas about how we can help improve the situation during the summer, please let us know.

I hope you will continue to receive fewer updates during the summer, as a positive sign of an easier situation.

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

44. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (16 April 2021)

On Monday 12 April restrictions in England were eased, and it has been wonderful to see our facilities re-opening, with residents and Co-owners making good use of our amenities.

Whilst there have been some encouraging statistics on infection rates we remain, as ever, slightly cautious. The impact of restrictions easing will be seen over the next few weeks, and it will be interesting to see the vaccine's effectiveness as more social mixing takes place. We have also received news of another local care home experiencing a covid outbreak at the end of last week. So, we will continue to proceed with care, to ensure the safety of our residents and Co-owners.

Visiting

We have received requests for our care residents to meet on The Terrace outside the Orangery with some of our Middleton Woods and Waterside residents. We have had to postpone these meetings as the easing of restrictions does not apply to care home residents. We do very much hope that if infection levels in the community remain low there will be lots of opportunities for friends and family to meet up in the coming weeks.

From Monday 19 April, as we have been re-opening carefully, we are welcoming residents and one other external household, from outside Middleton Hall, on the Terrace at the rear of the Orangery. Please book via the Orangery to ensure that we can accommodate you and your visitors. If you would feel more comfortable if visitors have been tested then rapid test kits (LFTs) can be delivered to those without covid symptoms via the government website, the link can be found below:

<https://test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/order-lateral-flow-kits/condition>.

Welcoming new residents

In line with government guidance we are now able, in certain circumstances, to allow some isolation time to commence in another setting (hospital, care provider, own home) and end at Middleton Hall. This means that we may have new residents who complete only the last part of their isolation with us, allowing them to mix more quickly with other residents and make use of our facilities more swiftly.

Picnic Areas

For those not wishing to venture too far at the moment our Estates team are busy creating areas and placing benches for picnics throughout the grounds. Maps will be available at Reception from Tuesday showing locations. Hopefully the bright weather will continue and you will be able to enjoy some time outside.

As always, a huge thank you for your support.

Suzanne Graham
Managing Director

43. Middleton Woods and The Waterside - Coronavirus update (8th April 2021)

Local infection levels, although still well above national levels, are coming down (Darlington at 68 cases/100,000 and Stockton 89 against a national average of 28). Hopefully if this trend continues, it should allow a considerably easier summer. The concern now is what happens during the summer in Europe where infection levels are very high and longer term in Brazil where the P1 variant spread is particularly worrying as the current vaccines do not appear to be effective against it.

For Middleton Hall, our focus should now be to make the best of the relatively calm situation and safely improve the situation for our residents and families wherever we can.

Residents are beginning to be notified by text about appointments for their second vaccination. Rapid tests are now available for home use, so we are advising any residents who might have concerns about household mixing outside, that they or families can order tests:

[Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

From next week, we are asking Royal Mail to resume post deliveries directly to the Waterside, rather than reception disinfecting post and volunteers delivering. We are very grateful to all the residents who have helped out with deliveries – thank you.

Re-opening of central facilities

The Orangery is open Monday to Saturday for outside drinks and meals as well as the shop from Monday April 12th. Middleton Woods and The Waterside from 10-2. For the first week, this will be residents only and we will look to open it for visitors in due course.

Middleton Spa re-opens for single household bookings in the pool and gym from April 12th along with hairdressing. Karen is arranging appointments individually for her clients in Middleton Woods and The Waterside and Michael is also looking for a further hairdresser. If you have any questions, please contact either reception or the Spa team.

If you have any general thoughts or feedback, please let Suzanne or me know.

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

42. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (1st April 2021)

Locally, infection levels in Darlington, although well above national levels, are finally coming down. Further afield France has just entered a new national lockdown and infection levels in Europe are continuing to increase significantly. Previously, UK infection rates have followed high levels in Europe but with only essential international travel permitted, hotel quarantine and the UK's vaccination rate, we have to hope that we will not follow Europe into a third wave.

New residents

We are beginning to welcome new residents into Middleton Hall. There are a number of steps we are taking to make sure that moving into Middleton Hall feels easy and welcoming as well as safe for our existing residents. In the care services, these include Room Service during their first 14 days, use of Visitor Pods and additional support for family communication and Living Well during the first two weeks.

Vaccination

The remaining residents in Middleton Oaks waiting for their second vaccine have received it today. During April some of our independent residents should receive their second vaccine. We suggest that once you are 10 or 11 weeks after your first vaccine, you start to try the booking website if you have not already got a date booked:

[Book a coronavirus vaccination – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

PPE

We will no longer be requiring Co-owners to wear face masks outside unless they are going to be in close proximity to residents (2m).

Sport

We are delighted to have some of our outside sports facilities operating again. Bookings can be made through reception for the bowling green, boules and golf as well as outdoor exercise classes. We are asking residents to use their own equipment where possible but there is also selection of golf equipment available outside the pavilion with a sanitisation system in place and bowls are also available to borrow on request. Toilet facilities are not available in the Pavilion at present.

Re-opening of central facilities

We will be re-opening Middleton Spa for single household bookings in the pool and gym from April 12th, subject to government guidance. We will also be re-opening hairdressing during that week. Further information will follow once we have received confirmation that Step 2 of the government road map is being put in place on April 12th.

Should anyone be wondering, there are no April Fools' Day elements in this week's bulletin. I gather that the news report that a Japanese airline is offering meals in grounded planes (at £392 per meal) is actually true, although the BBC report of the bronzed statue of Dominic Cummings in Barnard Castle would appear to be less than factual!

I know many residents are feeling pretty weary after a year of major restrictions on all our lives. It does appear we are near the end of a very difficult year, but we will maintain caution as we gradually open up services.

With best wishes for a Happy Easter.

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

41. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (24th March 2021)

Yesterday marked the anniversary of the first lockdown. Not many of us would have predicted that one year on, we would be in the third national lockdown. Although Middleton Hall has fared better than most social care providers during the pandemic, it has stretched us as individuals, families and as an organisation. 12 months ago we had limited & expensive PPE, no testing, no vaccine and little idea of how the virus was even spread so we are far better set up to deal with Covid-19 now and there is room for optimism looking forward.

Although Darlington has the highest infection rate in the north east by some margin, we understand that there were no cases among Darlington care home residents in the last week, so it would appear that vaccines really are working.

Visiting in the Care Services

We are introducing the option of inside visiting for all care service residents (apart from Catkin House) from this Friday (26th March) to supplement Visitor Pods and outside visiting. This gives residents and families three levels of visiting – Visitor Pods for multiple visitors without PPE, Outside Visiting with social distance and PPE and Inside Visiting with strict procedures including PPE and rapid testing.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is now recommended as a supplement to reduce the impact of Covid-19. We have plenty of Vitamin D available in the shop for Independent Residents (having purchased Vitamin D privately for residents and obtained GP consent, they have now been provided by the Department of Health so we have plenty in stock!).

Sport

On Monday the bowling green, boules and golf are re-opening. Independent residents can book through reception and there is updated guidance to make sure it is safe. There is no general access inside the pavilion as the WC is being used for visitors and the pavilion for occasional meetings. It will be great to see residents out enjoying some gentle sport as part of the easing of restrictions and returning to community activities. If you have any questions, please ask Michael or a member of the Spa team.

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

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

40. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (19th March 2021)

We appear to be over the outbreak in Middleton Oaks with all the Acorn residents testing negative this week and no further cases amongst Co-owners.

With schools re-opening and increased testing of children, the national reduction in infection rates has plateaued, although worryingly Darlington infection rates for both over 60s and under 60s have increased in the last week to well over twice the national average (and the ninth highest in the UK). Stockton also remains double the national average, so we would urge everyone to remain cautious. The situation in Europe with rising infection levels, lower vaccination levels and further lockdowns is of course concerning for this summer and raises the prospect of further variants.

Our care service residents (apart from those in Catkin House) received their second vaccine today. We are extending inside visiting in the care services from next Friday 26th March.

If we have any information about second vaccines for independent residents, we will let everyone know. Once you are about 10 weeks after your first vaccine, if you do not have an appointment, we would suggest trying the website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination>

Central Services

We will be re-opening the bowling green, golf and boules on March 29th in line with government guidance and we will issue some guidance on their use before then. We are currently planning re-opening other facilities as soon as we are able to, including hairdressing in April. We will keep you updated on these plans in the next few weeks.

If there is anything else that would help at present, please let us know.

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

39. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (12th March 2021)

We appear to be over the Catkin outbreak in Middleton Oaks although we have had two further Co-owners test positive this week with laboratory PCR tests. The first of these results unfortunately took four days and consequently the second case meant there could have been contact with Acorn House (but not the residents) and although this is low risk, we have put some precautions into place in Acorn until next week. While not confirmed by Public Health England at this stage, it is likely that we have had the misfortune to have a “variant of concern” that has been very infectious, as there is increasing scientific evidence that the vaccine reduces transmission as well as illness for the other strains.

The Tees Valley continues to have a slower drop in cases for reasons that are not clear and infections still remain twice the national average. The map in the following article illustrates how the area stands out (Darlington, Stockton, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool are all currently in the highest 25 case rates in the UK):

[Covid-19 in the UK: How many coronavirus cases are there in your area? – BBC News](#)

With the South African variant being found locally, it is clearly important that we all remain cautious.

Our care service residents (apart from those in Catkin House) are due to have their second vaccine next Thursday. This will add a further level of comfort and help our plans going forward so far as visiting and re-opening facilities. We are continuing with daily rapid testing for all teams in the care services while case numbers remain high in the area.

Central Services

The Estates team have been working on the bowling green this week in preparation for re-opening at the end of March along with golf and boules. Weather permitting of course.

The shop is open Monday to Friday for Middleton Woods and the Waterside between 1000 and 1230.

If you have any thoughts, feedback or questions please let us know. For the moment, please stay safe.

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

38. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (5th March 2021)

We have had a difficult week in Middleton Oaks with what is believed to be an outbreak from the South African variant of Covid-19. Thankfully, it has been confined to just one household and we have not had any infections in Acorn House, so once we receive results from PCR tests today, we will be relaxing the restrictions for the residents in Acorn. We hope that we are now through the worst of the outbreak.

The Darlington infection rate remains high and along with Stockton, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool remains in the highest category in the UK, roughly double the national average, so we need to remain careful, particularly until everyone has received their second vaccine. We also understand that there has been an increase in outbreaks in care homes locally the last week.

Visiting in the Care Services

One of the visitors in a Visitors' Pod this week subsequently tested positive and is likely to have been infectious at the time of the visit. Had this been an inside visit we would have had a significant risk of another outbreak. The team had followed all our usual procedures in terms of disinfection, so there should have been no risk to anyone.

With the high local infection levels and the outbreak in Middleton Oaks we will not yet be introducing widescale inside visiting. We will re-introduce outside visiting next week, as we offered last summer. These will be at designated visitor stations with social distance, booked through reception. We would ask all independent residents to be mindful of social distance around any outside visitors.

Central Facilities

We expect to be reintroducing services as explained in last week's update unless there are significant changes in local infection rates. There will be more information in the next few weeks. From next week, the government's road map allows two people to meet outside for a walk, drink or a picnic (assuming it will be rather warmer). If anyone has any particular requests from the shop, please let reception know.

I appreciate this has been a somewhat sombre update amongst all the positive news of the national vaccination programme. We should remain optimistic about progress towards the end of the pandemic, but it is clear we are not there yet so should remain cautious.

Please keep safe.

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

37. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (19th February 2021)

Unfortunately, we had a Co-owner in the care services testing positive for Covid-19 with very mild symptoms yesterday. Given infection levels remaining high locally and still above national average, even with vaccination it is not surprising that someone has tested positive. In this case, the Co-owner had received the first vaccination more than 21 days before picking up the virus, so thankfully for her it should mean a mild illness only.

Although we feel the risk is low, we have put some precautions into Middleton Oaks as a result.

Given the efficacy of the first vaccine shot (89% with Pfizer which nearly all Co-owners have had) there will be at least 11% of our Co-owners who could still have asymptomatic or mild Covid following first vaccination. This is why we are maintaining a cautious approach even as, hopefully, the end is in sight.

It is a reminder for all our residents to stay safe at this stage, so please remain vigilant until local infection levels reduce significantly.

Central Services

The “Workout Walk” is in place. Hopefully, the government announcement next Monday should allow us to plan for any re-opening of our facilities.

For the moment, the shop remains open Monday, Wednesday and Friday with the new range of meat and fish.

Vaccination

We would ask the remaining residents now eligible for vaccination let reception know when they have received their first vaccine, please.

Government Policy

We have asked through industry bodies and the Primary Care Network that the interval between vaccinations is reviewed for care home residents. Given the lower risk in retirement villages, it is unlikely that we will get any concession for Middleton Woods and the Waterside but if we get some progress around care service residents, we will of course be asking.

We are also asking for future guidance on central facilities to reflect the vaccination position for retirement villages as restrictions begin to lift in due course.

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

Best wishes

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

36. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (12th February 2021)

Again, I am pleased to report there have been no infections or concerns about residents or Co-owners over the last week. The national vaccination roll out continues at pace so that we only have some of our younger Independent Living residents waiting for vaccination at present.

One note of caution about vaccination. I am aware personally of two older people who have had their first vaccine and subsequently tested positive at least four weeks after their first vaccine. In both cases they have been unwell with Covid-19, although not seriously ill. Although this may be coincidence, it is worth us all being aware that caution is still needed after vaccination – particularly for our residents and Co-owners who have only had the first jab.

On a more optimistic note, the news from Israel this week was very encouraging – around 30% of the population has had at least one vaccination and they are now seeing infection levels coming down significantly. With the current lockdown and vaccine progress, we should remain hopeful about the UK in the spring.

Exercise

With the weather this week, the planned “Workout Walk” has not been started. Hopefully it will be in place next week, lack of snow and ice permitting.

Shop

We are now offering a greater range of meat and fish in the shop with fresh, locally reared butchery including, on Fridays, legs of lamb, beef joints and free range chickens for a weekend roast. Also, every Friday, we will have a delivery of fresh fish from our local fishmonger, Hodgson’s, for sale in the shop as well – Haddock, Salmon fillets and Smoked Salmon.

We are also supplying everything you need to make your pancakes for Shrove Tuesday next week.

When we announced about our new Managing Director, Suzanne Graham, we did confirm that I will continue to lead Middleton Hall’s efforts through what we hope will be the last stages of the pandemic.

Thank you for your continued support and positive feedback for our Co-owners.

Jeremy Walford
Executive Chairman

35. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (5th February 2021)

As a sign of progress, there was insufficient news for an update last week. This last week has seen significant progress with the UK vaccination programme (and some mixed messages over intervals between vaccines and the suitability of different vaccines for over 65s from Europe). I am sure you will have read the news about the various variants, so I am not going to try and explain the science or the implications for Middleton Hall. There are some questions over the efficacy of the vaccine for these new variants, but we should remain optimistic about vaccines eventually bringing the pandemic to a close.

Outbreaks in care homes appear to have reduced since vaccination, so there are hopeful signs. The most significant news of the last few days has been a study suggesting that the Oxford vaccine does reduce transmission. This is potentially very good news, albeit expected.

We have continued to have a calm period with no infections among Co-owners or residents. All but one of our care service residents are over 21 days from their first vaccine shot and over 160 of our Co-owners have had at least their first jab. Our younger independent living residents in their 70s are now being vaccinated, so we are in sight of the whole retirement village being protected by at least the first inoculation.

We are aiming to have all our teams dealing with residents vaccinated. Anyone applying for a job at Middleton Hall now will have to commit to being vaccinated before starting, in the same way everyone has a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check.

Testing

Given our very high uptake of vaccination, we have stopped rapid testing for all Co-owners who are vaccinated except for Acorn House in Middleton Oaks, where there is one resident under 21 days since vaccination. All Co-owners must continue their weekly PCR care home test.

Exercise

There will be balcony and patio exercise classes for Middleton Woods residents every Tuesday and Friday starting on 9th February, weather permitting as before. Classes will be split into two again so that people don't have to leave their properties. Courtyard 10:00-10:20, Driveway 10:25-10:45.

For The Waterside, the Spa team have devised a "Workout Walk" that will also be in place from Tuesday 9th February for any independent residents. Exercise stations will be situated along the woodland walk for residents to do at their leisure. A map will also be sent out and available at reception.

We will also be increasing our exercise classes on our YouTube channel as requested by a number of residents. Although the uptake was low when we tried it last year, based on feedback we are trying it again as people do now seem a bit more comfortable using YouTube.

Thank you for your continued patience. In the meantime, please stay safe.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

34. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (22nd January 2021)

Despite vaccine progress, this feels like a time for continued caution during what we all hope should be the last stage of the pandemic. There has been sobering news from other retirement villages and care homes in the last week as well as some terrible national figures. You may have seen the number of deaths in care homes doubled in early January to the highest level since last May and has risen since. This is partly due to the “new” strain of Coronavirus that is far more infectious. I have been told by a number of people in both retirement villages and care homes who experienced outbreaks in the first wave and again recently with the new strain, that if the new strain gets in, it is very hard to control despite best practice with PPE and infection control.

There has also been a report from Israel (where there has been the fastest roll out of the vaccine in the world) questioning the UK decision to delay the second dose from their own study that suggests people are not safe until they receive the second dose.

As evidence of this, I have also been in touch with a care home in the Midlands who has had a major outbreak since vaccination – 50% of their residents affected and sadly with fatalities. It appears to have started about 7 days after vaccination and they believe that some residents developed Covid well after 14 days from the first vaccine. If this is the case, it is especially worrying.

It is clear that we cannot relax yet. Although local infection levels have stabilised, we have had one unvaccinated Co-owner test positive this week who is now unwell with Covid-19 resulting in some precautionary restrictions on one floor of Middleton Court. We also have some Co-owners self-isolating as a precaution, due to family contacts with positive cases, even when they are vaccinated. Until we know about transmission after vaccination, we will maintain our safety first approach.

Our older residents (over 80) have mostly had their first vaccine now and we are waiting for news about the over 75s who are next in the queue. We are not sure how the government decision about reallocating vaccine to the regions with less vaccine penetration will affect us, as Darlington appears to be behind the north east region overall at present. We will let you know as soon as we hear more. You can also keep an eye on the Primary Care Network website.

At the moment we are keeping the shop open and the Art Studio is available for individual household booking. We are looking into what we can do about outside exercise under National Lockdown to help and will let you know about that next week.

Finally, if any residents would like help and advice with social media, please let reception know. Oli Welham, our new Marketing Assistant, is available to help with digital issues.

Thank you to all our residents and families for their patience during this phase of the pandemic. If you have any thoughts or ideas about how we can make any improvements, please let us know.

In the meantime, please stay safe.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

33. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (15th January 2021)

Despite the infection levels around us, we appear to have had a relatively quiet week with no infections amongst residents or Co-owners. As you will be aware from the media, the last week has seen hospital admissions with Covid-19 across the country at the highest levels since the beginning of the pandemic and sadly the highest number of deaths. Infection levels locally remain very high but seem to have plateaued, so we should hope that the grim news will start to improve soon.

The resident in Middleton Woods with Covid appears to be over the worst of the illness and there have been no other infections so there are no restrictions (apart from national lockdown) in Middleton Woods apart from that one resident who is staying in her apartment until she well enough and safe to move into Middleton Grove to recuperate.

Vaccine News

As you should be aware from various emails and update from reception over the last few days, vaccinations are being carried out at Feethams in Darlington. Despite our efforts to get on site vaccination, it is clear that Middleton Woods and The Waterside residents will have to travel to the vaccination centre to be vaccinated.

There has been some confusion about postcodes, as it appears that Middleton Woods and The Waterside have been registered by the NHS as DL2 1HA (Middleton Hall's main postcode), so when you book an appointment you will need to use that postcode. It seems our residents over 80 (and potentially over 70 soon) can use the link below to register:

[Register for your NHS COVID-19 vaccination now – Primary Healthcare Darlington \(nhsvaccinations.co.uk\)](https://nhs.uk/vaccinations)

For all residents, we suggest you keep trying until you get an appointment rather than waiting for a call.

When you go for your vaccine, it is recommended that you either wait for 15 minutes after the inoculation to make sure you have no reaction or someone else drives you. If you are not able to drive yourself or get a lift or need any assistance in booking, please let reception know and we will see what we can do to help.

Please let reception know once you have an appointment or have received your vaccine.

The science suggests that 14 to 21 days after one dose of vaccine, you be reasonably well protected from being ill with Covid. It is not yet known what impact the vaccine has on transmission so, although vaccinated residents should be safe from serious illness, we are not able to reduce precautions yet particularly while there are residents waiting for vaccination who remain at risk.

Looking further ahead, we have asked at national level through ARCO for updated government guidance post vaccination with regard to re-opening facilities. It does feel as if we are getting closer and can start to plan for the end of the pandemic so far as Middleton Hall is concerned.

If you have any questions, please let us know.

In the meantime, please stay safe.

Jeremy Walford
Managing Director

32. Middleton Woods and The Waterside – Coronavirus update (8th January 2021)

Vaccine News

I was very pleased to welcome the vaccination team back this morning to deliver the Pfizer vaccine to the remaining residents in Middleton Gardens and Middleton Oaks. Having read the JCVI (Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation) report on their decision to lengthen the interval between doses to 12 weeks for both Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines, it is clear that one dose of the vaccine offers good protection but *only after two to three weeks*.

The other good news is that the advice around allergies has been changed for both the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines so that people who have been turned down for a vaccine should now be vaccinated, unless they have had an anaphylactic response to medication. Independent residents are more likely to be offered the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine.

We are waiting news on vaccinations for Middleton Woods and The Waterside and have asked at national level as well as offering to organise an on-site vaccination programme through the local Primary Care Network. It is possible that you may hear independently from GPs in the meantime, so if anyone has heard, please let reception know.

Infections

The resident in Middleton Oaks who has been self-isolating after a positive Covid test has had no symptoms and tested negative from a PHE test, so we believe the original test was a false positive. There are no other care service residents currently with either positive tests or symptoms.

The resident in Middleton Woods who has been ill with Covid-19, is being cared for through the GP and home care in her apartment. Although there are still two households self-isolating in Middleton Woods there is no sign of any spread as they have tested negative. As an additional precaution, we have also increased the amount of corridor cleaning from 2 to 4 times a day on one floor.

We would ask residents who are self-isolating to stay entirely in their property for 10 days (the legal requirement) and to only go out wearing face masks and carrying hand sanitiser for a further 4 days. Given how infectious the new strains of Covid are, we would ask all residents to take no risks. Although we are not mentioning anyone by name for obvious reasons, we would ask anyone self-isolating to make sure that anyone who knocks on their door is clearly told that they are self-isolating and that they wear a mask and keep social distance.

It is clear how much the national lockdown was needed in seeing the local infection rates doubling in the last week and continue to increase, so we all need to maintain great caution until the end of lockdown. For clarity, the government instruction and law during lockdown is to stay at home apart from going to work, essential shopping and exercise once a day:

[National lockdown: Stay at Home – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Central Services

During lockdown, we are continuing to offer a hot meals service, grocery shopping and are reintroducing the takeaway service on Saturday nights. If there are no other infections, we plan to re-open the shop from Monday 18th January. We are grateful for a number of residents who have volunteered to help out and will be offering a brief session on PPE for those making deliveries. This should include library deliveries in due course.

If you have any ideas at this stage to make lockdown any easier, please let us know.

In the meantime, please stay safe.

Jeremy Walford

Managing Director