



MIDDLETON HALL  
RETIREMENT VILLAGE

## **Covid-19 Updated Information for Middleton Hall Retirement Village Residents and Families 2021**

### **4. Covid update – 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

As we enter September when children, and young adults are returning back to schools and colleges and the main summer holidays have ended, I feel it is an appropriate time to set out how we are preparing Middleton Hall to manage the potential increase in positive Covid cases.

As we have seen from the statistics in Scotland, since pupils have returned to school, the number of positive cases has doubled in just over a week, mainly in the under 19 age group. Experts are predicting that with schools in England returning this week, we can expect to see a similar trend with increasing numbers during September. The majority of schoolchildren have not been vaccinated and while it is known that most children will only have mild symptoms and make a full recovery, the real risk is that the virus can be passed on to parents and others, particularly those who have not been vaccinated.

The main message that we wish to put out to all, is that during September in particular, we will need to proceed with caution. There are several actions that we are continuing to maintain, which are additional to the government guidelines, so we can keep everyone as safe as possible. We will continue to complete daily Lateral Flow Tests for all our Co-owners when at work, as well as the usual weekly PCR tests. Where we have Co-owners returning from annual leave or being off work for longer than 1 week, we will request a PCR test be completed prior to returning to work. Although the latest guidelines advise that people who have had both vaccines and been a close contact of a positive case, no longer need to self-isolate; should this situation arise, we will still risk assess before any Co-owner will return to work. We are also reinstating our weekly Contingency Team Meeting from 6<sup>th</sup> September to deal with any matters arising from a potential rise in infection levels.

In the last bulletin we advised how we could safely integrate further time spent between our independent residents and their relatives and friends living in the care services – this appears to have been well received and working well. Our plans to further re-open some of the services and facilities will continue to be reviewed, through our Contingency Team Meeting and we will communicate any developments to all. We anticipate that there may be challenges to some services, should a significant number of co-owners need to self-isolate, or be off work to look after children who are unable to attend school.

We will continue to make available all the different visiting options during September and I would request that everyone reads the summary and requirements, for these to take place safely. As previously advised, we are still not at the point where we can facilitate ad-hoc visits under government guidance, so these visits need to be arranged via reception or where agreed, the individual Care Service.

There has been little new information regarding the roll out of “booster vaccines”, other than to advise that a third Covid vaccine will be offered to people with a severe weakened immune system. These people will be contacted by the NHS and arrangements made directly with them. It is still planned that a booster programme will be in place in September with priority given to those most at risk.

As before, we continue to urge Co-owners, residents and visitors to remain vigilant when out in the community. Our Co-owners will continue to wear face masks at all times when on duty, usual PPE when delivering personal care, as well as practicing strict infection control measures.

We will continue to keep you informed of any new developments, but should you have any further questions, please let me know.



Colin Inglis - Care Director

### **3. Covid update (20th August 2021)**

Since our last Bulletin there has been a couple of further Government announcements which have mainly been in relation to the easing of self-isolation guidance and about vaccinations for those working in Care Homes.

Firstly, people who have had both vaccines and those under 18 who have been identified as close contacts of someone who has tested positive for Covid will no longer be legally required to self-isolate. Instead, they will be advised to have a PCR test as soon as possible. This latest step has been taken, as now 3 out of every 4 adults in the UK have had both vaccines. Although having 2 doses of the vaccine will reduce the risk of the individual becoming unwell with Covid, it is still possible to contract the virus and pass it to others.

Secondly, from 11<sup>th</sup> November, all care home workers, as well as anyone entering a care home will need to provide evidence that have both vaccines, unless they are exempt under the regulations.

As we have advised before, the announcements for the general public do not fully apply to our Care Services, where we still need to follow the guidelines in place for Care Homes, particularly in relation to visiting. Where any visitor has been identified as a close contact of a positive case, we would advise against visiting the care service and the visitor to complete a PCR test as soon as possible.

We will further review our current visiting options, as we have seen a greater uptake of visits within the Care Services, therefore the use of the visiting pods, designated visiting rooms and outdoor visits has decreased significantly. We are also considering how we can safely integrate some of our independent residents with their relatives and friends living in the care services. Step 1 of this process will be to allow independent residents, to have a meal/snack inside the Orangery between 2.15 – 4pm, which would need to be booked via the Orangery.

We are still not at the point where we can facilitate ad-hoc visits, so these still need to be arranged via reception or where agreed, the individual Care Service. Each visitor would need to meet the current criteria set out within our revised visiting procedures.

Over the past couple of weeks, we have seen the local infection rates fall below the UK average, however number of daily cases in the area continues to fluctuate and we are aware of other care homes within Co Durham still managing Covid outbreaks.

There has also been quite a bit of debate lately about the roll out of “booster vaccines”. At present there has been no definite decision about how and when this will take place. It is approximately 9 months since the first vaccines were administered and the government are waiting on further information from the medical advisers before making final decisions. Indications would suggest that a booster scheme would be in place in September for those most vulnerable and those over the age of 50 – we will have to wait and see!

The guidance on wearing face masks remains unchanged, so in public areas this remains down to “personal responsibility”. We would continue to urge Co-owners, residents and visitors to remain vigilant when out in the community. Our Co-owners will continue to wear face masks at all times when on duty, usual PPE when delivering personal care, as well as practicing strict infection control measures.

We will continue to keep you informed of any further developments, but should you have any further questions, please let me know.

On behalf of all the directors, thank you for your continued co-operation and support as we edge closer out of this pandemic.



Colin Inglis - Care Director

## **2. Covid update (2<sup>nd</sup> August 2021)**

On 19<sup>th</sup> July most legal restrictions in England were lifted in relation to Covid. The vaccine programme has been highly successful in breaking the link between infection and serious illness with the UK having the highest proportion of vaccinated adults in the world. Although this is encouraging news, we are still seeing reported outbreaks of the virus in other care service providers, with some residents becoming seriously ill.

The easing of restrictions in many areas for the public, unfortunately, do not fully apply to the care services, and we need to continue to follow current protocols in keeping our residents, visitors and Co-owners as safe as possible.

The only significant change to the care services from 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 was that restrictions were lifted on the number of visitors that will be able to visit care homes. Previously this was restricted to 5 designated visitors for each resident. We have further updated our visiting options to reflect this change and eased some of the PPE restrictions on the wearing of gloves and aprons. Each visitor would need to meet the current criteria set out within our revised visiting procedures on 29<sup>th</sup> July.

Despite a spike in both national and local infection rates 2 weeks ago, we have now seen these fall back quickly; however, the North East still has the highest number of cases per 100,000 in England.

We will have to wait and see what the Government decides to do from 16<sup>th</sup> August, which is the date they are proposing to lift Covid restrictions for those fully vaccinated, as well as those unvaccinated under 18's, as they will not have to self-isolate if they are in contact with someone who tests positive. Anyone who tests positive or develops symptoms from 16<sup>th</sup> August will still need to self-isolate, regardless of their vaccination status.

The guidance on wearing face masks in public areas is now down to "personal responsibility". We would urge Co-owners, residents and visitors to remain careful with the high local infection levels, when in out in the community. We ask that all independent residents and visitors also continue to wear face masks whilst they are inside the building. Our Co-owners will continue to wear face masks at all times, when on duty and usual PPE when delivering personal care, as well as practice strict infection control measures.

We will continue to monitor the statistics and maintain regular contact with the local Public Health Dept, as the virus is still present in high numbers locally and continues to present a significant risk. We will continue to keep you informed of any further developments over the next couple of weeks, but should you have any further questions, please let me know.

On behalf of all the directors, thank you for your understanding and patience.



Colin Inglis - Care Director

## **1. Covid update (7<sup>th</sup> July 2021)**

I hope this will be one of the last bulletins, as we continue to ease slowly out of the pandemic. Our intention is that from now on we will only produce a bulletin when there is significant information or changes to guidance. From July, Colin Inglis (Care Director) is in charge of our response to Covid and the contingency team will meet when required – I will help out as the need arises.

There is a mixed picture of news currently. Local infection rates have increased very significantly in the last two weeks (County Durham is now over three times the national average and Darlington two and half times with rates not seen since January) but the cases are primarily in the younger age groups. Although hospital admissions are going up, it is not at the levels seen earlier in the year and most people are recovering. This pattern may become the norm as the country learns to live with Covid.

The only real cause for alarm is an outbreak in a retirement village in an area of high Delta variant cases. 30 fully vaccinated independent residents were involved in a get together which resulted in 15 residents testing positive with 3 of them in hospital last week.

This should serve as a reminder that we still need to be careful.

We have had some instances of Co-owner contact with someone testing positive – it remains essential that no one takes any unnecessary risks and if they have any concerns about contacts to let their manager know before coming into work. We will continue daily rapid testing and weekly PCR testing to ensure that we are able to keep everyone safe. The instructions for the lateral flow tests have changed – please make sure you swab both sides of the throat and one nostril.

The Prime Minister announced on Monday the plan for further easing of restrictions from July 19<sup>th</sup>. This is due to include ending the restrictions on the number of designated visitors able to visit care homes. We are waiting for the guidance on this but would expect that it will still require testing and PPE. In August the government is planning to change the rules for self-isolation where people have had both vaccines, but again we do not know if this will apply to the social care sector.

We expect that many of the restrictions that care homes have to operate under will continue beyond July 19<sup>th</sup> – these are very different from the current restrictions for the general public. It is likely that the use of PPE and testing will be a requirement for some time yet.

The government has talked about “personal responsibility” so far as face masks from July 19<sup>th</sup> – we would urge Co-owners, residents and visitors to remain careful with high local infection levels. People who are double vaccinated will always be safer company than those who are unvaccinated or have only had one vaccine, so we would suggest that should be part of us all being “personally responsible”.

If you have any questions, please let Colin or a member of the contingency team know.

The pandemic has been a long and tough ordeal for many people. Our Co-owners have been incredibly dedicated and selfless during the crisis and our residents and families shown great fortitude to help the community get through the last 17 months.

On behalf of all the directors, thank you.



Jeremy Walford  
Executive Chairman