26th June 2020

To our special Oakleaf family and friends

I would like to open this letter by extending my deepest and most sincere gratitude for your patience, support and messages of goodwill through this most challenging of difficult times. I can assure you it has been felt by the entire Oakleaf team and has served as a great source of comfort through the difficulties they have faced.

As I noted in my last letter, the Government’s advice and easing of ‘lockdown’ gave great cause for concern in terms of the continuing risks we were faced with and the possibility of further outbreaks in an environment such as ours could have catastrophic consequences, hence we remained cautious.

However, I also promised to review the arrangements we have in place here at Oakleaf with the Senior Management Team around issues concerning family contact and visitors.

I can only imagine how hard it has been for you all not being able to see your loved ones and I have seen it here how much the residents and we are missing you all.

So it is with great pleasure, but also a touch of caution, that I can announce to you that Oakleaf is currently in a position whereby we can welcome back visitors to our main site in Hartwell, The Cotswolds and the community houses, in a very controlled, safe and responsible manner.

These changes are coming as a result of all the hard work we have put in here to keep your loved ones safe and of the cautious but effective stance we have taken to combating this deadly virus.

I would like to lay out for your the organisation’s guidelines and rules around the way in which we are going to welcome visitors back so that these opportunities are taken in the most positive but safest way possible.

It is important to recognise that we cannot have large numbers of visitors all at once on site and this needs to be organised in a very controlled and limiting manner. Therefore we have identified 2 visitor areas at Hartwell (Cunningham House Pool Room and a marquee that will be placed on the gardens outside Orchard House) and one at The Cotswolds (marquee outside the front of the building).

Visitors will have to book an hour’s slot through a centrally based member of staff, Hayley Parkins (Family Social Work Assistant). Hayley will assign you to one of these areas and let you know which one it will be. NO VISITS WILL TAKE PLACE WITHOUT USING THIS BOOKING SYSTEM.

To ensure we are doing this in a graded manner we have decided on the following visiting times:

Monday to Friday Slot 1 1.30pm to 2.30pm

Slot 2 2.45pm to 3.45 pm

Slot 3 4.00pm to 5.00pm

Saturdays Slot 1 10.00am to 11.00am

Slot 2 1.30pm to 2.30pm

Slot 3 2.45pm to 3.45pm

Slot 4 4.00pm to 5.00pm

THERE WILL BE NO VISITS ON SUNDAYS

Visits will start from Wednesday 1st July 2020. Each visit will consist of no more than 2 adults and only children of the resident visiting. We are limiting the amount of people in one visit for reasons of safety, space and logistics.

In the spirit of fairness and so we can fit everyone in, especially with the initial rush we will get, each set of visitors can come once a week. However, residents can receive more than one set of visits each week. This means different members of the family/friends can come each week, just not together at the same time.

If children under the age of 18 are coming it is the responsibility of the family to supervise these and only stay in the area allocated for visiting. Again this is simply to ensure we are limiting the amount of areas on site that people outside of the organisation are accessing.

To ensure the high standards of infection control there will be NO TOILET facilities open to visitors. This is something that has been enforced in many areas of the community/towns/resorts and will be followed here. When you ring to book your visiting slot, Hayley will inform you of the closest toilets to the site dependent upon where you are coming from.

There will be NO refreshments or snacks provided by Oakleaf during the visits, however if you wish to bring some treats for your loved ones please feel free to do so. I recognise that this can be a very important part of any visit and must be something you have all missed doing so much. Please do not share food or drinks with anyone. Face mask must be worn by all visitors for the duration of the visit.

On arrival to Hartwell site please only park in the overflow car park at the bottom of the site, past Cunningham House. This will be signposted well for you. Once parked please go to your unit and ring the bell where staff will be waiting to greet you. You will be escorted by staff to your allocated visiting area and your loved one will be brought to meet you. If there should be any problems please ring the Oakleaf phone number.

Throughout the visit we have to insist that social distancing at 2 metres is adhered to at all times. Again, I understand that the temptation and desire to hug after all this time will be so strong BUT we have to work within the government advice and the boundaries set by our own medical and management teams. This is 100% purely about attempting to ensure the safety of all residents, who are an extremely vulnerable group of individuals.

Each visiting area will be organised so as to ensure social distance of 2 metres and will be set up for your comfort and safety. There will be hand sanitiser/wipes provided and masks can be requested should you choose to use them, but these are not compulsory.

At the end of the hour visiting slot, staff will come to escort the resident back to their unit and families/visitors will be expected to leave promptly. This then enables staff to wipe down, clean and sanitise the visiting area before the next group come. Again this is purely about the safety of others and conforming to the high standards of infection control we have adhered to during this crisis. Could I ask that visitors wash their hands before they come, use antibacterial gel on arrival and it is advisory to do this again before you leave.

To book, please call Hayley Parkins on 07970 820763 between the hours of 9am – 3.30pm, Monday to Friday. Hayley will book your visiting slot and give you reminders of the guidelines and visiting. She will also ask you to consider at the time of your visit whether you, members of your household or of your “bubble” are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.

Could you also inform Hayley if you intend to bring pets, just so that we are aware. Again we ask that you supervise these properly and they stay with you in the visiting areas at all times during the visit.

The thought of visitors coming back on site does give me great heart but at the same time gives me many reasons for trepidation. You have all been such a huge part of the Oakleaf family and I know the love, care and compassion you have for your individual resident has been a consistent and comforting factor that has always given such great warmth to what we try to do here.

I implore you to follow the guidelines we have set down and make your visits as enjoyable but as safe as possible.

These new visiting arrangements are also subject to units being free of COVID-19. Should any resident on a unit test positive for the virus we will lock that unit down as far as possible and cease visiting for that unit until it is safe to do so.

My cautious tone and the lengths we have gone to throughout this crisis have been the bedrock of keeping everyone as safe as possible and will remain high in our thoughts throughout our twice weekly COVID meetings. However, I did say 3 months ago that we would get through this by working together and pulling together to create an approach and team that all had the common goal of keeping everyone safe. I also said that we would all see each other again, and that time has come. I hope to personally see as many of you as possible and I know my team are thrilled at the potential of seeing you again.

Stay safe, take care of one another and we look forward to you coming to see us again.

Yours faithfully



Kathy Swannell

Clinical and Operations Director