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29th April 2020

Dear Families and Friends

Firstly can I send you all our kindest regards from the Oakleaf team and hope that you are keeping safe and well. These are incredibly difficult times and we can only imagine how frustrating it must be not being able to visit and have the previous amount of contact you are usually afforded.

I wanted to write and give you an update on how the Oakleaf sites are coping with the challenges that COVID 19 poses and the things we are putting into place to combat these and to keep our residents and staff safe. The Management Team have been working tirelessly to ensure the safety of residents and staff - we meet twice weekly to discuss the issues that are prevalent and to ensure we are well resourced, well prepared and meeting the demands reactively when sudden issues arise.

A great area of concern within the media has been access to PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). Oakleaf have been very proactive in this area and were fairly well stocked even prior to the changes we have all encountered. Extra ordering started in mid February and we have managed to stay ahead of the game in terms of supplies. Staff are provided with coveralls, masks, goggles, face shields, gloves, aprons and anti-bacterial wipes. We are sourcing these from as many different places as possible and currently sit in a very health position. We are well stocked with oxygen supplies and even travelled to Norfolk and Wales to purchase oxygen concentrators, which have been used successfully. Extra SATS monitors, peak flow and suction machines have also been purchased.

We have worked closely with all regulatory and supervisory bodies such as Public Health England, The Care Quality Commission, Northampton Healthcare and Northampton General Hospital and are following all Government guidance and directives.

One of the other main challenges has been staffing the units consistently and adequately due to the number of staff who were isolating/unwell and absent at any given time, particularly in the early weeks. Clare Bentley (Nurse Manager) has performed minor miracles to cover the units as best as possible and a great message of thanks has been sent out to our teams thanking them for their flexibility and willingness to work extra hours or in roles they are not familiar with. Staff have worked weekends, evenings and nights when ordinarily they would not and this has allowed the units to run as successfully as they have.

Of course social distancing has meant that we have had to make changes to the way in which we operate on site as a staff team. For example meetings are held using telephone conference facilities to reduce the number of people in a room; staff going between units is kept to a minimum and staff have been allocated to certain parts of the site to ensure we minimise the risk of potentially spreading the virus.

Of major importance is the upkeep of cleaning/cleanliness around the site, on the units and on a personal level. The domestic services team have been hugely successful in maintaining the cleanliness around the units and we have adapted all cleaning schedules to ensure an increased focus on communal and high risk areas. Our stocks of cleaning materials, hand sanitisers and soaps are good and we are working hard to ensure staff and residents have access to these at all times.

Government advice around lockdown has affected our ability to carry out community rehabilitation and many of the activities we would usually do. To counteract this the therapy and nursing staff are being as creative as possible in providing meaningful, imaginative and fun activities as possible. Extra funds have been made available to buy resources and provide activities for each unit/site. As the weeks have gone on there have been BBQ’s, Tea Parties, Fund Raisers, a newly created 3 hole pitch and putt golf course, woodworking projects, as well as a continuation of the usual rehabilitation activities we would normally provide. Our goal is to keep the residents as focused, engaged and motivated as possible whilst at the same time keeping them safe.

We have also tried to make communication between families, loved ones and us as regular as possible. We have been using Facebook, Skype, Whats App Video Calls and any medium possible. The feedback from many families has been very positive and appreciative of the efforts staff have gone to.

It would just not be possible to document all the efforts, planning, strategies and equipment procurement the Oakleaf team have implemented to cope with this crisis. The essential goal of all of these has been to maintain the health and safety of our residents and staff group. I very much appreciate the opportunity to share some of these with you in an attempt to reassure you that we are maximising all efforts to manage this as successfully as possible whilst trying to minimise the effect on the residents.

I am also very pleased to inform you that we now have full access to testing for all our residents and staff if symptomatic, and have been carrying this out as required.

I want to thank you for all your support in these testing times; we have received many emails, cards and letters thanking us for our efforts. I can assure you these are very much appreciated and serve as a massive boost to the staff group.

If you have any questions relating to this crisis and the way in which we are managing it please do not hesitate to contact myself or Dan Gordon and we will do our utmost to answer these and reassure you the best we can.

I’d like to end by once again extending my thanks to you all and hope that you manage to stay healthy, safe and well. We will come through this difficult time and we cannot wait to see you on the other side of this.

Kindest regards



Kathy Swannell

Clinical and Operations Director