3rd March 2021

Dear Families & Friends

I hope this letter finds you all as well as can be and that with the roadmap presented to us last week you are starting to see some light at the end of what has been a very long tunnel. I believe the dates and markers laid out for us give rise for hope and the promise of better days ahead. Even with these targets it continues to be a challenge to keep everyone safe and we consistently remind ourselves that this virus is never really that far from us at any given time. This promise of hope will **not** result in complacency and the utmost efforts will continue to ensure we do all we can to keep all our sites as safe as possible.

It does however give me great joy to be writing this letter to inform you that as from Monday 8th March 2021 we will be accepting visitors back on all of our sites. This will be done with great caution and planning that has gone before and will be heavily managed to ensure safety for all and fairness of accessibility to all families/friends. I will set out below the guidelines, conditions and rules so that they are very clear and should give all the information you will require.

As from Monday 8th March 2021:

* Each resident will be allowed 2 visitors from 1 household as a maximum. Each resident will only be allowed visits from these 2 nominated people and they **must** be from the same household, until reviewed. **You must not come with more than 2 people in the car.**
* For friends/family that are outside of these 2 nominations we will continue to endeavour to communicate using video calls and phone calls.
* No visitors under the age of 18 are allowed at this stage.

This may well be difficult for some families to determine who will be the nominated visitor/s but let me please reassure you that this is phase 1 of our plan to reintegrate visitors and will be reviewed again in April. We **have** to be cautious in these early days and need to manage this carefully and with cautious across all sites.

* Prior to any visit, each visitor **must** take a Lateral Flow Device Test (LFD). These will be carried out by Oakleaf staff in a designated testing area. After the test you **must return to your car** until you are given the result, this takes approximately 20 minutes. Only if you have a negative result will you be able to carry on with your visit. A positive result will mean having to leave the site immediate and then go home to follow government guidelines (i.e. obtain a further test, isolate etc). You will be given a time to arrive for your test that is approximately 30 minutes prior to your visiting slot. Please note that once you have had your test, you are not allowed to leave the site to visit another area or place. You must return to your car and wait there. Each visit will be for a 1 hour time slot and will be at the following times:

Monday – Friday: 1.30pm, 2.45pm, 4.00pm

Saturday: 11am, 1.30pm, 2.45pm, 4.00pm

Sunday: No visits

* During the visit the rules of social distancing (2 metres) will remain in place. Although you may have seen on the news that some care homes may be allowing visitors to hold hands, at this stage this will not be the case at any of our Oakleaf sites. Again, I understand that this may be disappointing but we are going to tread cautiously in these early stages of visitors coming back on site, therefore no physical contact will be allowed.
* Visitors will be expected to wear clinical surgical masks and aprons, which will be provided. This applies to all visitors. Medical exemptions do not stand in this environment. During our last set of visiting there were a few cases of refusals to wear masks or taking them off during the visit. Please can I ask that we all stick to these rules to aid our best efforts at keeping everyone safe.
* Please feel free to bring some treats for your loved one should you want to.
* Visitors will not be allowed to use any Oakleaf on site toilet facilities due to obvious risks of contamination and potential hot spots for cross infection. The closest toilets to the main site are on the M1 Junction 15a services.
* **All** visits must be booked through Oakleaf so that we can keep track of who is on the site at any one time and that there is fairness of accessibility for all. To book a visiting time slot please call our main reception on 01604 864466 and speak to Kathlyn Donohue (Receptionist) or Hayley Parkins (Social Work Assistant). They will then do their utmost to find you a visiting slot that best suits your needs. Please be patient and understanding, as you can imagine they will be trying to manage a lot of hopes and expectations.
* Visits will take place in designated areas of each site. You will be allocated one of these when your visit is booked. You will be taken to this area and your loved one will be brought to you. Just prior to the end of your visit staff from the unit will return to pick up your loved one and then we can get the rooms cleaned down prior to the next visit.

I would ask, if there are any positive cases within your household that you take the obvious steps and refrain from visiting. Similarly, if there are any positive cases on units, we will be halting visits for these units to give a chance for isolation periods to take effect.

Although this seems a highly cautious, prescriptive and rigid set of guidelines I make no apologies for this. We have worked so hard at protecting your loved ones and our staff throughout this last year that to take our foot off the pedal at this stage would be foolish. We want these guidelines to be followed and visits to go well without seeking an increase or sudden spike in positive cases across our sites. As I have noted, the success of these visits will very much determine the changes we can make in phase 2 in our April review.

You are a huge part of the Oakleaf family. Some newer families will be receiving this letter having never been able to visit yet. I promise you that my staff and I cannot wait to meet you but nowhere near as much as your loved ones will be looking forward to it.

The past year has been a challenge. Along the way we have taken many steps forward, and at times, some have had to go backwards. In the fullness of time I hope to be able to reflect with you on how these steps have contributed to a remarkable journey, one where we have managed to keep your loved ones as safe, healthy and happy as possible. I would like to thank you for your patience, perseverance, and continued support. I have received many cards, emails and lovely messages commenting on how we are managing this horrible situation and I can assure you they play a huge part in keeping up our spirits.

Keep well, keep safe and take care of one another.

Kindest regards



Kathy Swannell

Clinical and Operations Director