

Dear Clients, Carers and Family Members,

Following on from my update to you in March, I write to keep you updated. Again, my thanks to those that provided feedback on recent updates and also for the compliments to team members. It has made such a positive difference to share what has impressed you recently, as well as thanking individual team members.

We have seen more of our clients, family and team members isolating since my last update. We are very thankful that we are seeing mild symptoms and a good recovery for most. For those currently isolating, our thoughts and best wishes are with you.

I thought you might be interested to know the numbers we are keeping to monitor the impact of COVID. As at last week we have had 30 clients isolate and a total of 50 team members. These isolations required over 1,000 hours of services to be rescheduled and this has caused significant changes for some clients.

Changes since the last update

With the opening of the WA State borders on the 3rd March, it was predicted that we would see peak numbers at the end of March. We have since had the reduced restrictions, including changes to the wearing of masks, in April and now in May, we are seeing daily numbers exceed 12,000. Whilst it is positive to see WA returning closer to a state of normal in many aspects, we are concerned about increasing numbers of infection rates and we continue to be cautious in our approach.

What impact will this have on my services?

All staff and volunteers continue to wear masks while providing your services. This is imperative, as along with regular hand washing and infection precautions, masks provide our strongest method to keep each other safe.

Masks remain mandatory for all clients travelling in Melville Cares' vehicles. This is a requirement under the current restrictions as we come under public transport provisions, and we strongly support this.

On a positive note, we have been able to welcome all volunteers back to the Friendship Club. We have truly missed our volunteers not only for the valuable assistance they provide, but also the warmth and sense of good spirit they add to the day. This has also enabled us to increase our client numbers at our Melville Friends group outings. They kicked off with a wonderful visit to the Zoo at the end of April, as well as a trip to the ballet which all enjoyed. If you would like to see what outings are on offer, please call us on 9319 0900 for the calendar.

Your coordinator will continue to support you and discuss any services or changes in your plan over the phone, or by Zoom, for those that use online services.

What steps are Melville Cares taking to ensure our safety?

We continue to implement our COVID-19 Plan which adheres to all government requirements. We have daily updates and work closely with Lauren, our COVID-19 Project Lead and Registered Nurse.

We appreciate that not everyone can have the COVID vaccinations due to underlying health reasons, or other reasons, as well as those who find wearing a mask difficult. Please be assured we will work with you to look at other options, with our main priority being continuity of your supports. While we can look at alternatives that still maintain your safety and that of our team members, we will consider them.

In addition, it is timely to consider the influenza vaccination. If you would like assistance with transport to your GP or local vaccination clinic, please speak with your coordinator.

What if I get COVID-19, or my carer does?

Please remember if you should feel unwell, or may be isolating with suspected COVID-19, or have tested positive, we have specialist trained staff who have volunteered to be part of our COVID-19 Response Team and they can continue to support you with services. Please be assured that we are here to support you and reassure you during this time, so please do not hesitate to contact us. You may need no more than some groceries dropped off, or a check-in to see how you are. Others may require more support, particularly if you have family and friends also isolating and your usual support group are restricted.

What about the safety of the staff?

Our team members have all received infection control training, as well as being provided with personal protective equipment. All staff have received their two vaccinations and are required to have a booster in line with the Department of Health's mandate. We have also provided specialist training to staff who have volunteered to be part of our COVID-19 Response Team, so as to continue delivering services to those who may be isolating with suspected COVID-19, or have tested positive.

We have split office staff into teams to limit personal contact and have moved from face to face catch ups, to online options.

Team members continue to be required to have regular Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) before commencing services and confirm that they do not have any symptoms before logging on for the day.

We hope that this gives you peace of mind that when we enter your home, we are as safe as possible.

We currently are offering all team members no cost influenza vaccinations at our local Terry White Pharmacy in Palmyra.

What do you require me to do?

Please continue to let us know if you have any cold like symptoms, are not feeling well, have been told you are a close contact, or advised to be tested for COVID-19 for any reason, so that we can work with you to provide the support you need in the safest way possible.

In my previous updates I have asked for your flexibility as we need to reschedule service times, or when your usual team member is unavailable. I would like to extend thanks and appreciation from us all to you for your patience. Your flexibility and feedback has been wonderful. We have had more compliments than ever being phoned in, or received by email and we have been sharing these with all team members. It gives them such a boost, so thank you.

In summary, please be assured that we are taking all steps to maximise the safety of our clients and team members, while continuing to provide your usual services. As always, should you have any other questions or comments, I welcome them.

My sincere appreciation to you for your ongoing flexibility and patience as we work together.

Maria

Maria Davison
Chief Executive Officer