

9th October 2020

Dear family member,

My latest letter to you comes at a difficult and anxious time for all of us as coronavirus infection rates rise and local restrictions and lockdowns become more commonplace. At the time of writing, every service we have in Wales and many of our services in England, especially in the north of the country, are in lockdown areas. Unfortunately this means that yet again many of you will be unable to visit your loved one, a situation which I well know is painful and upsetting.

We have been living with this horrible pandemic now for over six months. Back in March when it started to have a significant impact on all of us, I was hoping it would all be over by the summer. Few of us could have predicted that in October we'd be facing a second wave and living with these increasing restrictions.

And yet six months in, things are in some ways even more difficult now than they were in March. We've lived with the virus for months and there continues to be so much uncertainty. Every new day seems to bring new announcements, and more twists and turns, which inevitably is causing a lot of anxiety. As we all learn to cope with this uncertainty, I would like to reassure you that our overriding priority continues to be keeping your loved one safe and well. Every decision we take is judged against this priority. And so, if it means that, due to local restrictions, you are currently unable to visit your loved one, then I'm really sorry about that but we cannot and will not compromise on keeping people safe and well.

As we face the second wave I'd like to assure you that we are well placed and prepared for whatever the pandemic is going to throw at us. We have months of supplies of PPE stored nationally and locally. We have effective infection control measures in place, including checking the temperature of anyone who steps inside a service. As a result of all the work we have put in, and the professionalism of our support teams up and down the country, I am happy to tell you we haven't had a single positive Covid-19 test result for anyone we support since June.

Our teams will do all they can to keep you in contact with your loved one, and will facilitate visits (including indoors) wherever possible. If things change nationally (such as the 'rule of six') or closer to home with local lockdowns, we will respond and change how we work. So I do

**PTO**

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ask for your patience, forbearance and understanding over the coming weeks and months as we try to do what's right and best for your loved one.

We don't know what the next few months will bring, including what the situation will be at Christmas for those of you who celebrate it. We'll update you as soon as possible about that, but we won't know until nearer the time. I'm sure we'd all like this pandemic to be a thing of the past by then, but I suspect it won't be and we'll all need to adapt as well as we can.

Please remember, if you have any questions about the way we're keeping everyone safe, you can call our helpline for families (open from 9.30am to 1.30pm, Monday to Friday) on 0300 303 9161 or email the team at [family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org](mailto:family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org). I would also like to encourage you to take part in the 'Time to talk' sessions being planned by our Family Consultants – further information on these is attached to this letter.

Finally, I just want to say again that we will get through this and please take heart from the fact that your loved one is as safe as possible with us.

Regards,



Steve Scown  
Chief Executive  
Dimensions

PS – I know that some family members prefer bullet points to letters, so attached to this is a simple rundown of the key points.

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## Key points from the letter

- Our priority is to prevent people we support from getting Covid-19
- We have had no Covid-19 cases among people we support since June
- We have a good supply of masks, gloves and other Personal Protective Equipment to keep people virus free through the second wave of the pandemic
- We want to support your relative to stay in touch with you and see you safely:
  - Outdoor visits are best whenever possible
  - Visits will not be possible where there are local lockdown restrictions
  - We will update our visiting guidelines every time the rules change
  - We understand this is very difficult for everyone
- We want people to have good celebrations with their family at Christmas but we don't know what the rules will be at that point
- If you want to talk to our families team, you can ring the helpline 9.30am – 1.30pm, Monday – Friday on 0300 303 9161
  - The families team members are all parents or siblings of people with learning disabilities

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# Time to Talk

Would you like the opportunity to meet and talk with other families whose loved ones are supported by the Dimensions group? Would you like the chance to chat with our Family Consultants team and hear about how we work to make sure that, as an organisation, we 'think family' in all our work?

If so, please sign up to join us at the sessions we have planned. As much as we would love to see you in person, in the current circumstances these will be taking place online.

**Thursday 22nd October, 6.00pm – 7.30pm: gather and chat**

**Tuesday 27th October, 3.00pm – 4.30pm: gather and chat**

An opportunity to sit at your computer screen with a cuppa and meet other families. We can also tell you about our updated family charter and our pledge to families.

**Wednesday 11th November, 3.00 pm – 4.30pm: lets talk about visiting**

We can share with you the guidance that the team supporting your loved one works with around visiting. We can talk about how the team can work with you to help you to see your loved one, and we can share ideas to make it a nice experience for everyone.

**Tuesday 17th November, 6.00pm – 7.30pm: theme to be decided**

We think as we chat you will probably come up with ideas of things you would like to talk about and we can add this to our plans.

To book your place, please email [family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org](mailto:family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org) or telephone our helpline number on **0300 303 9161** (open Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 1.30pm).

If you are unsure about how to log on to a video meeting, don't worry – we can send you some easy to follow instructions.

We are planning to hold more of these virtual sessions so, if you have an idea for a topic of discussion or something you would like to know more about, please do let us know.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Warmest regards,

**The Family Consultants team**