

25th February 2022

You can read a summary of this letter in bullet points on page 4.

Dear family member,

I hope you received the letter I shared earlier this month providing details of the government's U-turn on mandatory vaccinations in the health and social care sector in England and also launching our survey of family and friends. I wanted to write to you again today because I know that many of you have questions about our ongoing infection control measures in the light of the government's decision to lift all remaining legal restrictions to combat Covid-19, and also because this will be my last opportunity to write to you before I leave the Dimensions Group next week.

So firstly, about the pandemic. I expect you will have seen in the news that the government has lifted the last legally enforceable rules intended to combat Covid-19 in England this week, including the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test result. This has been replaced by guidance to do so and, as we have experienced many times during the pandemic, we await the government's guidance on the implications for our services. The fact is that Covid is still very much with us, and while Omicron is undoubtedly milder than previous variants, we know people will continue to catch it and become ill. So we cannot say it's now all over.

So while some of you will be pleased that restrictions have been lifted, many others will be anxious, and this has certainly been reflected in calls to our helpline for families. What I will say is that even though the restrictions have been lifted for the general public, I don't expect they will be lifted any time soon for the health and care sector. I think we will need to get used to one set of rules for the general public and different rules for our services and our colleagues at work. I think we will have to continue with infection control measures and testing for some time yet. So while we will keep all our rules and procedures under review, now is not the time to drop any of our current infection control measures – including the use of PPE, regular testing and temperature checks for visitors.

If you would like to talk through any aspect of our current policies and rules, or if you have any other concerns or questions, please feel free to speak to your loved one's locality manager or contact our helpline for families from 9.30am to 1.30pm, Monday to Friday, on 0300 303 9161 or by email at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org.

This brings me on to the second main thing I wanted to write about today. I have worked for

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Dimensions since the early 1990s in a wide variety of roles, and it has been an absolute honour and an immense privilege to have served as the CEO for just over 11 years. Next week I am retiring and our current Managing Director, Rachael Dodgson, will take my place as CEO.

A lot has changed since I joined Dimensions, and since I became CEO. When I first joined the team, we supported fewer than 300 people, but now we support more than 3000. We have helped countless people leave institutions and I am very proud of what we have achieved together as a team – and when I say a team, I include you as the family members and friends of the people we support.

Since before I became CEO, Dimensions has been trying to find better ways of working with and communicating with families. We certainly aren't a perfect provider and we don't get everything right all the time. However, I genuinely believe family members are rightly and appropriately much more involved in the life of our organisation now than they once were. In 2010 we appointed our first two family consultants, Liz Wilson and Gail Hanrahan, and between them they built up the involvement of families and ensured that families and friends are recognised as key members of our wider team. I would like to pay tribute to both of them, whom I asked to be 'stones in my shoe'. I asked them this as I believe leaders wanting a better future must be willing to be made to feel uncomfortable with how things are in the here and now. Today their roles have been taken on by our current family consultants Kate Chate, Rosie Mockford, Nic Middlehurst and Jess Heslop (Jess has a particular focus on Discovery), and they are supported by our great group of associate family consultants who have added so much valuable extra capacity.

There have been many developments over the last few years in the ways in which we communicate with family members, and the ways in which you engage with us. Indeed, this wretched pandemic necessitated more regular communication from me directly with you through these letters. Another major step forward, and one which I am particularly proud of, is the new family portal which allows family members who wish to be more connected to the support their loved one receives to access our iplanit reporting platform. Offering family members easier access to finding out what's happening in your loved ones' lives was a long-standing ambition of mine. I feel very confident that, moving forward, we will see even greater involvement of family members and friends in the life of Dimensions and in the support we provide.

I'd like to say a few words about Rachael, who joined us in July 2019 as Managing Director of Dimensions UK. She brought with her a wealth of experience in the social care sector, including as Head of Adult Social Care Policy at the Care Quality Commission, and she also has direct experience of having a loved one being cared for as her mother has dementia and lives in care home. Rachael is a tireless advocate for the people we support and anyone who knows her will understand how important our values are to her. Of course Rachael will bring a new perspective on how we move forward as an organisation and as a sector, but I know for a fact that

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collaboration with families is a key priority for her and she will continue writing to you directly as I have done.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of you who have taken part in our current survey of family members and friends. The deadline to take part in the survey has now been extended by three weeks to Friday 18th March, so if you haven't yet taken part, I do ask you to help us by completing it. The survey takes place once every two years and the results help us make sure we are working with you as effectively as possible to provide your loved one with the best possible support. You can take part online here: <https://dimensionssurveys.survey.fm/discovery>

And so that's it from me apart from thanking all of you for your collaboration, support and understanding over the years, and particularly through the pandemic. You have helped all of us at Dimensions remember what really matters, and that's supporting your loved ones to stay safe and to flourish as the unique individuals they are.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Scown
Chief Executive
Dimensions Group, including Discovery

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Key points from the letter

- The government has lifted all legal restrictions aimed at combatting Covid-19 in England.
- However, Covid-19 is still dangerous for vulnerable and unvaccinated people
- Therefore we will continue to implement all of our infection control measures to keep people safe.
- For more information, you can contact our helpline for families from 9.30am to 1.30pm, Monday to Friday, on 0300 303 9161 or by email at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org.
- This is Steve Scown's last letter to families as he is leaving next week. Steve has been chief executive of Dimensions since 2010. Since then, families have become much more involved in the life of Dimensions.
- Today we have four family consultants – Kate Chate, Rosie Mockford, Nic Middlehurst and Jess Heslop – and also a team of associate family consultants.
- We also have the new family portal which allows family members to know more about the support their loved one is receiving if they wish.
- The new chief executive will be Rachael Dodgson and she is very committed to continue involving family members and will continue writing to you.
- You have three more weeks to take part in our survey of family members and friends, so please do so. You can take part here:
<https://dimensionssurveys.survey.fm/discovery>

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