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15th October 2021

You can read a summary of this letter in bullet points on page 3.

Dear family member,

I wonder if, like me, you're wondering where this year has gone? How can we already be into mid-October, with the weather positively autumnal and the nights drawing in? At least things feel much more hopeful this autumn than they did last year. This time last year Covid-19 cases were rising rapidly, whether we'd have a vaccine solution was unclear and we still had two more national lockdowns ahead of us. To me it feels very different now, thanks in large part to the vaccine roll-out.

On the topic of vaccines, in my last letter to you I wrote briefly about the preparations we were making to implement the government's decision to make vaccination mandatory for staff in Registered Care Homes in England from 11th November. The rules are different in Wales but, in any case, **as your loved one does not live in a Registered Care Home, these rules do not apply to your family member.**

The government is now consulting on whether this rule should be extended to all health and social care workers in England. I personally believe this is unnecessary and we have responded to the consultation to make this point. At a time when recruitment is a considerable challenge in the social care sector, bringing in mandatory vaccination will simply make matters even harder. However, this is the direction of travel and the government seems very keen to implement it. There is currently no such consultation underway in Wales, but if that changes I will, of course, keep you informed.

Whatever the situation is regarding vaccinations, I would like to reassure you again that we are determined not to let any complacency creep in so that you can be sure the safety and wellbeing of your loved one remains our number one priority. Infection control measures such as the use of PPE and temperature checks on entry remain in place and we are well aware that Covid-19 continues to pose a risk.

PTO

I would also like to share with you the news that Liz Wilson, one of our original family consultants whom many of you will know, has retired. Liz joined us in January 2012 and her departure has made me reflect on the journey we've been on since then. The way in which we involve family members of people we support and embrace your perspective feels much stronger now than when we appointed Liz, and I hope you agree. Families are now rightly regarded as a key part of what Dimensions is about and this will always be the case. However, whilst I believe things may have improved a lot, I also know as do my colleagues we are far from perfect. Frankly speaking there will always be room for improvement.

Liz may have left, but our family consultants Rosie Mockford and Kate Chate are ready and able to give you any advice or information you need and they are ably assisted by our great team of associate family consultants. Remember you can contact them if you have any general questions about how we support your loved one and keep them safe on our helpline for families. It's open from 9.30am to 1.30pm, Monday to Friday, and the number is 0300 303 9161. You can also contact our family consultants by email at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org. I'd also like to mention again the monthly Zoom meetings for families – contact the helpline to book a place.

Thank you again for your understanding and support. We may be in an easier phase of the pandemic now, with our cherished freedoms back, but the virus hasn't gone away and challenges certainly remain. We won't take our eyes off the ball, though, and we remain firmly committed to keeping your loved one safe and supporting them to flourish.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Scown
Chief Executive
Dimensions Group (including Dimensions Cymru)

Key points from the letter

- While the government in England is currently consulting on making vaccination compulsory for all health and social care workers, there is no such consultation underway in Wales.
- Our infection control measures remain in place.
- Liz Wilson, one of our original family consultants, has retired.
- Family consultants Rosie Mockford and Kate Chate are ready and able to give you any advice or information you need.
- For more information, you can contact our helpline for families on 0300 303 9161 or by email at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org.
- You can also book a place on our monthly Zoom meetings for families by phoning 0300 303 9161 or emailing family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org