



Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup> 2020

### **Update Regarding Festive Visiting Arrangements**

Dear Family Member,

I am writing to you today with an important update regarding Inspire's festive arrangements in relation to both the people we support visiting their family homes, and families visiting their loved ones in our services, over the Christmas period.

We began our planning for the festive period back in October with our primary focus being on risk management and enabling safe contact for the people we support with their loved ones. **Uppermost in our strategy at all times has been keeping the people we support safe and preserving life.** As you will be aware, the UK Government, and indeed the individual governments of the four home nations, subsequently announced their intention to relax restrictions over the festive period provided the populations were stringent in adhering to the guidance.

To gain information as to how many families intended to meet with their loved ones, either at the family home or within the person we support's service over the festive period, our Support Managers made contact with all families to establish their wishes. These requests were evaluated this week in relation to both the current Scottish Government guidance and Inspire's own framework.

The Scottish Government's initial festive guidance was published on November 24<sup>th</sup> and we based our decision making process upon this and sector specific guidance. However, on December 16<sup>th</sup> the UK and Scottish and Welsh Governments made it clear to the population that this "cannot be a normal Christmas" and that they "strongly" recommended people stayed at home. They also advised people not to stay away from home overnight.

In recent weeks we have seen a number of high profile Coronavirus outbreaks in various local communities and, tragically, a significant number of Covid-related deaths at Care Homes in the North-east. Additionally, both Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Local Authorities will enter Level Three of restrictions from today (Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup>).

Against this backdrop and aligned to the most recent UK and Scottish Government advice, **Inspire strongly advises that the people we support should remain within**

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**their own service and should not visit the households of family members during the festive period.** This advice applies across all of our services, irrespective of the particular levels of local authority restrictions. Should you decide to go against Inspire's advice this will increase the Covid-19 infection risks for your loved one and indeed for other people within their service.

**We continue to be supportive of meetings with families taking place outdoors in a public place, such as a park and indoor café visits where suitable** over the festive period. We request, however, that you do not arrive at your loved one's service unannounced as we will not be able to accommodate visiting requests at short notice.

Christmas gifts can be given and received but again there are extra precautions required in comparison to in 'normal' years. Items such as books and magazines or helium balloons require to be wiped clean by staff before they are passed on to the people we support. Any gifts that cannot be wiped clean (which would include the likes of cuddly toys or wrapped Christmas presents) require to be placed in a sealed plastic bag for 72 hours by staff at the service, to quarantine the items, before they can be passed on to the intended recipient.

Home baking can be supported to be brought in, but must only be consumed by the individual who receives it as the sharing of food and utensils can be a source of transmission and must be avoided.

**If you do decide to go ahead with a visit to your home for your relative/family member, contrary to the Scottish Government's and Inspire's advice, you will be required to obtain a Coronavirus test for your loved one prior to their intended return to the service and provide written evidence of a negative test result.** We may also require your loved one to take a lateral flow test when they return, even if their previous test result is negative. If the result of either a PCR or lateral flow test is positive then a further 10 day isolation period will apply where the person we support will be required to continue to reside in your home. These visits would also be subject to external authorisation from appropriate professional bodies.

**Inspire also reserves the right to reconsider providing support for any people we support for whom a negative test is not confirmed.**

As an organisation we will do all we can to provide an enjoyable Christmas for your loved one. We have already committed additional funding to all of our accommodation-based services to allow them to make a positive difference to the lives of the people we support though the provision of extra food, games, arts and crafts materials, baking ingredients, DVDs etc.

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Our programme of virtual activities will also continue throughout the festive period, including on Christmas Day itself when a chair-based exercise class and screening of Inspire's 2020 Pantomime will be available for those who wish to participate. We will also facilitate the people we support to engage with their loved ones via technological solutions such as Zoom and Facetime, or by telephone, wherever possible.

We appreciate that this is an extremely difficult time for you but hope that you can understand the considered reasoning behind our position and look forward to working with you collaboratively to agree solutions that allow safe contact for the people we support with their loved ones.

Please be aware that the guidance relating to visiting is always subject to change and that we will continue to align our position - and update you - accordingly.

Thank you again for your continued co-operation and understanding during this extremely challenging time for everyone concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Gray

**CEO, Inspire PTL (Partnership Through Life)**

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