

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19 update – 9 October 2020

Dear staff members

One Site One Worker

We know that you are all feeling pressure that has arisen out of the SA Emergency Direction's requirement for carers to only work at one site. The Board and Executive team thank you for the extra shifts and overtime that many of you have been working to fill gaps. You will be paid the appropriate overtime rate if you do overtime. If you have any questions about your pay rate, please speak with our payroll team.

We have been regularly providing SA Health with information about the impacts of the Emergency Direction on our staff and residents. As the COVID situation eases in South Australia it is making it more challenging to explain why we are wearing masks in our aged care homes and why our carers can only work at one site. Eldercare is required to follow the SA Emergency Direction under law and there are significant penalties that can be applied to Eldercare and to the individuals concerned if we breach the Direction. So, until the Direction changes, we are required to adhere to the Direction. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you when the Directions may ease for Aged Care. We could be working under these conditions for a few more months. We have applied for and received exemptions for certain situations and will continue to do so as the need arises.

South Australia is being very cautious and until now it has paid off with very low numbers of COVID-19 entering the state.

Recruitment of new carers is well underway, and you will see lots of new staff commencing over the next few weeks. These new starters will ease some of the pressure and will reduce the need for overtime. I am sure that you will all give our new staff members a very warm welcome to Eldercare.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment – Exemption for our Memory Support Units

As you would have been aware, from the 27 August 2020, all all PCAs, Nurses, Doctors and Allied Health staff must wear a surgical mask whenever a distance of 1.5m between themselves and the resident cannot be maintained.



Relatives and visitors are not required to wear masks when visiting a loved one, unless they are coming out of quarantine for the visit.

Many of our residents in our Memory Support Units were showing signs of distress when our staff were attending to them wearing masks, so we applied for and received an exemption. Our staff working in our Memory Support Units across Eldercare are no longer required to wear masks when providing care to our residents in those units.

SA Health COVID-19 Training

Thank you to all our carers and nurses who have completed the online training. Over 1,000 of our staff have now completed this training. The few staff members who have not completed the training will not be rostered until they do so. The individuals concerned have been contacted by our Learning & Development and Rostering teams.

There will be a requirement for all carers and nurses to complete refresher training every 2 months. The details of this training are not known yet, but we understand it will be a very short (up to 10 minutes) refresher covering hand hygiene, PPE, and monitoring residents for COVID signs and symptoms.

As soon as we have the details of this training confirmed we will communicate with all of you about what you will need to do regarding this refresher training.

Visits from Quality & Safety Commission re Infection Control and COVID-19 outbreak preparedness.

The Commission will be visiting every residential aged care home in Australia over the next few months to conduct a short audit (up to 4-hour visits) on Infection Control and COVID-19 outbreak preparations. Sash Ferguson and Trowbridge House have already been audited and did very well. We can expect visits to every site soon.

The Assessors will be talking to staff about infection control so please ensure that you are up to date with your training and you are aware of your role and responsibilities in relation to infection control. If you are unclear about your role, please speak with your Clinical Leader or Clinical Care Manager.

COVID-9 Hotline

Our hotline is still working. If you have any questions or concerns about how we are handling the COVID situation, please call the hotline on 0477 995 542. The hotline is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 4.00pm.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

We understand significant changes to your working arrangements may be stressful, remember you can access our Employee Assistance Program at any time. They can provide free confidential counselling. The contact number is 1300 66 77 00.

Thank you again for your continued dedication and commitment to Eldercare, to our residents and to each other. We are all working together to keep everyone safe.

Kind regards

Jane Pickering
Chief Executive

