

# Update for families

## Protecting our care residents from COVID-19: best practice procedures in place at Selwyn

15 April 2020

In the last few days, there's been considerable focus at Government level on the aged care sector and providers' ability to protect residents from potentially contracting COVID-19. I'd like to reassure you that, at The Selwyn Foundation, we've taken – and continue to take – every possible precaution to protect the health of our vulnerable residents.

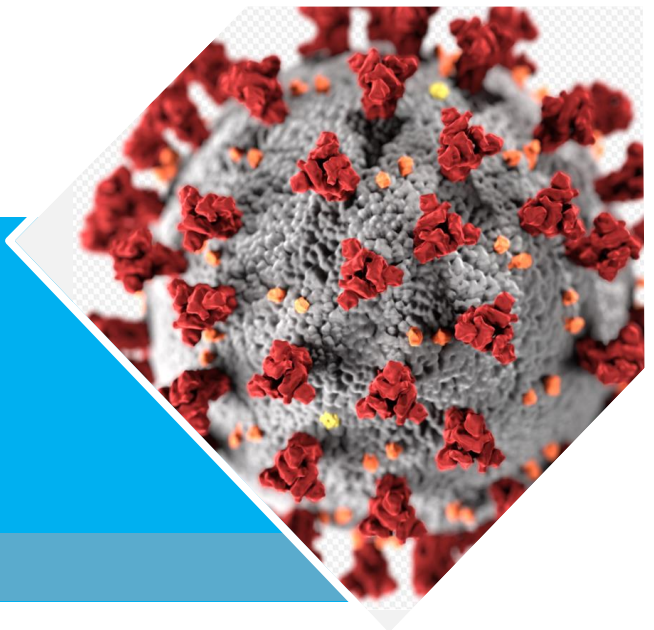
From the outset, we responded quickly to the emerging health risk, closely monitoring the pandemic as it unfolded, and adapting our practices and strengthening our procedures accordingly. Having closed our care homes to all but essential workers in the early stages of the crisis, our care homes have been clear of the virus to date. Our Emergency Management teams across the organisation continue to work to ensure that our infection prevention control measures, staffing and resources are robust and effective in managing our response across our care home and retirement village sites.

Our teams are working to the Foundation's pandemic management plan, and our primary goal at all times is to provide a safe, healthy and risk-free environment for those we care for. The measures we've put in place to achieve that include:

- Strengthening our workforce, to establish an additional contingent of nurses, caregivers and other essential workers who are available and at the ready. We've employed 77 extra care staff from our Bureau on permanent contracts for a fixed term, so that our existing staff are fully supported to continue their amazing work. This additional cohort will also be on hand to provide ongoing cover, should any staff member need to temporarily stand down. We're also retaining our wider staff body on full pay throughout the lockdown, ensuring that our 'back office' support and administrative functions similarly continue to run smoothly.
- Increasing our supply of personal protection equipment (PPE) across all our sites, so that our staff have the

appropriate safeguards and resources available to them, as and when they may be required. We've also reinforced our PPE processes and training for staff, including on the appropriate use of all equipment, and the correct 'donning and doffing' of the protective gear to reduce the risk of potential contamination.

- Complying with the advice provided by the Ministry of Health (MOH) around the use of PPE; until a resident is suspected of, or confirmed as having, COVID-19, our standard infection control precautions are considered to be sufficient by the MOH (ie, good handwashing and the use of disposable gloves and aprons). If a resident is confirmed as having the infection, then the full PPE will apply (including the use of masks). Until then, our staff do not need to wear masks or eye protection. Please find attached, a helpful MOH fact sheet outlining the current guidelines.
- Introducing an increased cleaning schedule within the care homes, including thorough surface cleaning with bleach-based disinfectant.
- Continuing to be particularly vigilant of residents' health, taking temperatures and other observations twice daily (three times daily for those cared for in isolation) and closely monitoring for any changes. We're also taking great care of our dedicated staff, who are health screened each day and have their temperatures checked to ensure they're healthy and free of any symptoms.
- Instituting additional staff training on best practice infection control procedures – for work and at home; our caregiving and nursing staff are already highly trained in infection control, and we're continuing to expand our education and learning initiatives in this area. Whilst our staff may be moving from the Selwyn 'bubble' to their home 'bubble', families should be reassured by the stringent infection control measures within our workplaces, namely: our staff are well informed and up-to-date with the latest training and



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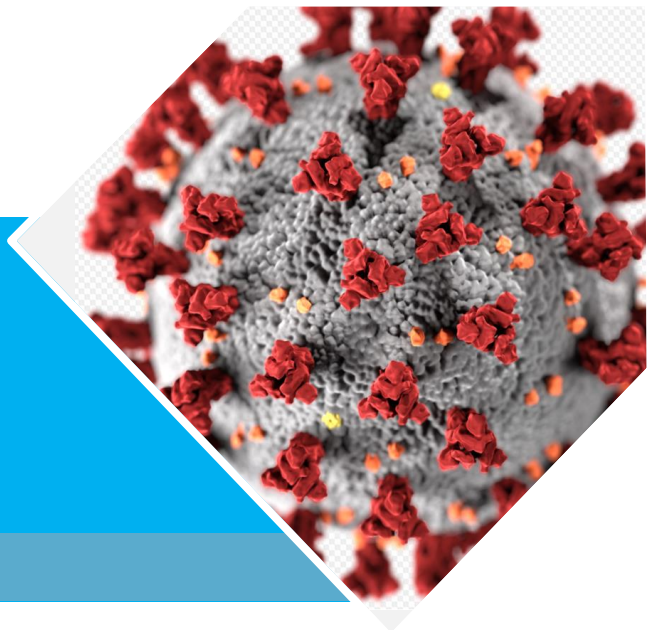
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advice; staff screening and temperature checks are undertaken before the start of each shift; we insist on rigorous handwashing practices and the use of new, disposable aprons when attending to each resident, and staff members are required to change into their uniforms at work. We're continuing to reinforce these protocols and provide ongoing staff training on best practice in this area.

- Should any staff member manifest flu-like symptoms, they're obliged to take discretionary leave on full pay until they're free of all symptoms. A subsequent clearance from their GP will then be required, confirming that the individual is able to work in aged care, before they return to work at Selwyn.
- Avoiding the risk of COVID-19 entering our care homes via community transmission, by ensuring that our staff work in one care home only (and for Selwyn exclusively) while we're on Level 4 alert. Where any of our staff have also had a position with another aged care provider, we've enabled them to work in one facility only over this period in order to reduce the risk of their bringing the infection into our villages.
- Having a robust admission procedure for all new residents moving into our care homes. As routine testing for COVID-19 of potential admissions into aged care facilities is not currently being undertaken by District Health Boards (with the exception of those requiring secure dementia care), we've ceased taking new admissions from public hospitals. Where the DHB does test a new admission for COVID-19 and the patient has a negative result and is assessed by DHB medical staff as being symptom-free, we will admit this resident and the 14 day isolation period will be adhered to.
- We are, however, continuing to admit those who are transferring from their home environment within the community. Such admissions will be screened using a series of questions related to their 'bubble' and those within that 'bubble', prior to accepting the admission. They would then be cared for in isolation for 14 days,

and our standard infection control precautions would apply, but with the use of masks as an additional precaution. In addition, any Selwyn resident who's admitted to hospital and who then returns to us is automatically cared for in isolation for 14 days.

- Making provision for separate residential care areas to be available, when required – either within the care home or in an alternative location within the same or another Selwyn village. These additional care settings would be used as temporary accommodation for new admissions who needed to be cared for in isolation. Special procedures for the provision of care and nursing in isolation, as well as for laundry, would also be observed in order to minimise the risk of spreading any infection. Following the 14 day isolation period, the residents concerned would then transfer to their permanent home at Selwyn.
- Implementing the required isolation-type procedures and infection prevention control measures and accompanying use of PPE in our secure dementia care units, as stipulated by the MOH as a necessity for this type of residential care. More frequent daily temperature checks and other observations are also carried out in this environment, in addition to more stringent cleaning practices.
- Having a comprehensive emergency response plan in place for our central laundry, to ensure continuation of the daily service and maintenance of infection control standards. The Selwyn laundry is located in South-East Auckland and services our care homes in Auckland and the Waikato. In addition to deploying high-standard infection control procedures and use of an ozone sanitising system during washing, our laundry staff have daily temperature screening checks prior to starting work. Access to the facility is restricted to only those staff rostered on a given day, and a deep clean of the laundry is completed before each new team commences work. Additional clean linen stock is stored within each care home to ensure continuity of clean sheets and



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towels, should there be a disruption in service. When delivering clean linens and collecting soiled items for each care home, our laundry driver doesn't enter any resident areas – either remaining completely outside or accessing only the secure loading bay areas, all the time using appropriate PPE.

- Exploring new initiatives around contact tracing, so we might identify the source of any potential outbreak if it were to occur within our village communities.

Furthermore, the Foundation is following all Government advice and legislation, as well as that of our industry bodies – the NZ Aged Care Association and Retirement Villages Association – and is sharing knowledge and best practice with other providers within the sector. We're also working closely with the DHBs to ensure that our preparedness for any case of COVID-19 within our care homes is comprehensive, and so we can be sure of any additional support that might be necessary to prevent and manage an outbreak.

The situation is evolving on a daily basis and we're continuing to monitor developments as they occur, responding to the most up-to-date advice from the Ministry of Health and speedily adapting our practices to reflect the latest thinking. We hope you'll be assured that, as an organisation, we're doing everything possible to protect our vulnerable residents living in our care homes and that their health and safety will continue to be our first priority in the days and weeks to come.

If you would like further clarification on any of the above, please don't hesitate to contact me. We understand that it's a difficult time for our residents and families and we wish to do whatever we can to help keep everyone connected through virtual contact. If you'd like to contact your loved one at any point – either by Zoom, FaceTime, phone, email or an app, for example – please do let us know and we'll make sure it happens.

Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding at this time.

Yours faithfully

**Village Manager**