

23 March 2020

Dear VisionWest Home HealthCare Support Workers,

I know that you will be concerned about the COVID-19 Pandemic that is impacting the world and now New Zealand.

Many of you will have heard the Prime Minister's announcement on Saturday and will now be concerned for your safety as well as the safety of the vulnerable people you support. I am sending you this communication because I need you to know what we are doing about the current situation and what you need to do.

VisionWest is closely monitoring any changes in advice and is working with the Ministry of Health and District Health Boards so that we are best able to respond to the developing situation. We use current advice from the Ministry of Health to assist us evaluate all risks for Support Workers and the people you support.

From Monday 23 March we will be putting regular updates and resources that will help you on our website <https://www.homehealthcare.org.nz/>. You can also contact your local branch if you have any questions.

Saturday's announcement was that anyone who is over 70 and those with pre-existing conditions, such as chronic respiratory disease - including severe asthma, bronchiectasis and COPD - and those who are immunocompromised should stay at home.

This is in addition to those people who have returned from overseas in the last 14 days or those have been in contact with a confirmed case in the last 14 days.

If you are in any of these categories, please contact us immediately as you will need to stay at home, and we need to discuss with you how you are affected.

In addition, if you have child caring responsibilities due to your child's school or ECE being shut please call us immediately so we can discuss how this affects you.

Home HealthCare is considered an essential healthcare service. This means that right now (subject to support worker availability) we are still filling all planned visits. We can do this because the National Alert status is Level 2

However, if New Zealand's alert status is increased, we may only be able to provide support to those people with the highest need.

If this happens, we will let you know if you are affected and how you are affected.

You will have heard that there is a nationwide shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). As a result, we are currently having to limit how much PPE people can have at once.

We are working with our suppliers and District Health Boards to access stocks of PPE so that we can have adequate supplies for support workers.

Please remember your training about when and how you should wash your hands. This is an extremely important step so we can help prevent any infection from spreading.

Attached to this letter is a number of resources that will help you over the coming days.

These include

- Procedures for all support workers to follow when visiting homes
- A guideline for visiting people in self-isolation
- PPE Instructions
- Ministry Guidelines for the use of PPE.
- Frequently asked questions

Finally, thank you for all your hard work. Without your support, thousands of vulnerable people would not be able to stay safe and live in the community.

Kind regards,



Murray Penman
National General Manager Homecare