

02 April 2020

Dear VisionWest Home HealthCare Support Workers,

Thank you for the work you are doing to support thousands of vulnerable people. You are the lifeline that keeps people's lives together, something that becomes even more important when community connections change.

Thank you for the continued efforts that you make to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm sending you this communication to update you on some important matters that I know are creating some anxiety, and some key information that will help ensure your safety and the safety of those you support.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

By now you may have heard the announcement by the Director-General of Health (Dr Ashley Bloomfield) regarding PPE. His key messages were:

- over the next 48 hours, 7 million facemasks will be going to DHBs and then to Community Health Providers
- the current guidelines on the use of PPE still remain valid and are based on international evidence and a risk assessment of the environment you work in.

However:

- community health workers need to feel safe rather than just being told they are safe.
- where PPE is used, it must be used properly to ensure its effectiveness.

We have placed orders with each DHB that we operate in for PPE to cover any visit that you feel you need PPE for.

Once we have received stocks of PPE, we will contact you so that you know how to get a supply of PPE for the visits you do.

Please be sensible with this. Make sure that you follow correct practices when using PPE. For example:

- always remember hand hygiene before and after using PPE
- and, never touch your face while wearing the gloves.

Please note: currently we have limited stock of PPE. Until we have been stocked by the DHBs, we can only supply PPE to meet the current Ministry of Health Guidelines. If you have run out for normal visits, please contact us.

Facebook Group

We have created a closed Facebook group specifically for you and our other Support Workers. Please sign up to this group, it will be important because it will be used as another regular communication method.

The purpose of this group, as well as general communications, will be to post information videos, training information and other information that will keep you informed about what we are doing and how you can keep yourselves safe.

You will also be able to ask questions via this group. We will either respond to your questions directly or, when there is a group theme or something that we think everybody should be alerted about, we will communicate via Facebook.

You will be invited to be part of this group via a group text with a link that you can use. If you do not receive this information by the end of next week, please contact us, and we will send the link to you.

Pay and Leave

Last week we sent out a communication regarding pay and leave over the next four weeks. If for some reason you haven't seen this communication, please email us at Healthcare@visionwest.org.nz, or via our main contact number. We can send this communication to you if you have not yet received it, or answer any of your questions that may arise out of it.

Proof of being an Essential Worker

I understand that some of you may have been stopped by the police checking whether you are an essential worker. Your VisionWest Support Worker ID and uniform identifies you as an essential services worker.

Because your lanyards may be a health risk, please leave the lanyard in your car when you go inside your client's home. Bear in mind that you may need to show your ID badge to a client that you have not visited before in order to prove your identity as a VisionWest Support Worker. In this case please show your ID and then put it away in your bag or back in your car.

Process of entering a person's home

When you go into a client's home, before going in, you need to ask the following questions:

- Has the client, or any household member, returned to New Zealand from overseas within the last 14 days?
- Has the client, or any household member, had any contact with any person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- Is the client, or any household member, a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19?

If the client answers yes to any of these questions, maintain social distancing (following MOH guidelines) and explain to the client that you will contact the office for advice.

Our clinical team will provide advice on what action should be taken.

Thank you again for your efforts to support our most vulnerable.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Murray Penman".

Murray Penman
National General Manager Homecare