

24 April 2020

Dear VisionWest Home HealthCare Support Workers,

Many of you have been working hard through this lockdown period and we thank you for your outstanding work—I know that this may not have been easy for some of you in these unusual circumstances.

As a team, we have continued to deliver approximately 26,000 visits a week to around 4,500 clients. For each of these 4,500 clients, you are a large reason why they are able to continue to live in a home of their choice. You may never be told by those you support, but you are heroes. Thank you for your efforts.

This update will help you understand some important matters as we **move from Alert Level 4 to Alert Level 3** and as we plan for the eventual move to Alert Level 2.

Non-essential Services

Current Government Guidelines are that, when we are at Level 3, we should continue to provide only Essential Services (as we have been doing in Level 4). In general, this means that, if a support has been postponed, we are not planning to restart that support until we begin the transition from Level 3 to Level 2.

We are restarting services for some people on a case by case basis. This is primarily where we identify, through our client welfare checks, that a person has urgent need for support to ensure that their health and safety are maintained.

What are we doing for people who are currently receiving no services

I know a number of you will be worried for the health and safety of clients whose services have not been deemed essential and are therefore no longer receiving visits.

To ensure that we are aware of any safety issues with these clients, we have had a team doing phone welfare checks for every client who is not having support worker visits. In most cases clients are safe (but looking forward to you coming back to them). There are, however, a small number of cases where we have found that we need to restart supports to ensure ongoing health and safety.

While New Zealand is at Level 4 and Level 3, we will continue to provide these welfare checks until such time as we restart support in these people's homes. This should ensure clients remain safe and that, if there is an urgent need, we can prioritise supports.

Pay and Leave

VisionWest has committed to maintain the current pay and leave arrangements for people on COVID-19 Special Leave until Government Guidelines enable us to bring these people back on rosters.

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For more information about this please join our private VisionWest Support Worker Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/VisionWestSupportWorkers/> or contact your coordinator.

If you believe that you have been paid incorrectly, please contact your local branch for assistance.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

To date, we have closely followed all Ministry of Health Guidelines regarding the use and allocation of PPE.

VisionWest has been working closely with DHBs and the Ministry of Health over access to PPE, and how and when it should be used to ensure the safety of both Support Workers and Clients.

As a result of this work, we now have a significantly better PPE supply than we had at the start of the Level 4 lockdown. We are in the middle of ensuring that you have enough PPE so that you are both kept safe and feel safe. We are currently distributing large volumes of PPE to staff in all the regions we operate in.

If, for some reason, you do not have enough PPE to ensure safety for yourself and your, please contact your local branch for additional PPE.

COVID-19 Testing

If you feel sick with any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 please contact your local branch. We will require that you, as an essential worker, are tested for COVID-19.

When you are tested, it is very important that you inform the testing station that you are an essential worker. This will ensure that your test results are prioritised. If you do not inform them that you are an essential worker, it may take 4 to 5 days for your test results to come back (rather than 24 to 48 hours).

Transition from Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 2.

At the point when it becomes clear from Government announcements that we are to begin transitioning from Level 3 to Level 2, we plan to restart supports that we have postponed. This may take between 2 and 6 weeks to complete

When we do this, we will follow Government guidance on what cares we restart. When these changes start to roll out, and you are affected by supports restarting, we will inform you by sending out new rosters.

Facebook Group

We would like as many support workers as possible to join the private VisionWest Support Worker Facebook group—a number of you have already done this.

Unfortunately, we have had to decline some people because they hadn't fully completed the questionnaire. I understand that there may have also been technical difficulties for some of you.

For those who are not yet signed up to this Facebook group, or those who, for some reason, were declined the first time, please sign up again. If you continue to have trouble with signing up, please contact your local branch.

We recently sent out a text to all support workers inviting them to join this Facebook group. If you did not receive this text, please contact your local branch—we will update your records in our systems.

Who do I contact if I have questions about this communication?

If you have any more questions about this communication, contact your Coordinator.

Thanks again for the awesome work you do.

Kind Regards,



Murray Penman
National General Manager Homecare