

## To Members of the Methodist Church in Great Britain

### Summary

- How coronavirus is affecting our homes and schemes
- Our challenges around equipment
- Community schemes adapting to help our care homes and those in the community
- Our finances as a charity
- Ways you can help
- Finally, the necessity of hope

I hope you, your family and church community are well.

It is a disorienting time for us all across the country. Within a month our normal daily lives and routines have been disrupted, which for many has caused considerable worry and uncertainty.

Through this, however, I'm proud of how my colleagues across Methodist Homes (MHA) have come together. They have shown strength and kindness like never before. Normality will return but, given the Government's announcements, we are preparing for months of these new routines and ways of working, while maintaining hope that it may improve sooner. My compassionate and caring colleagues have ensured that 'new normal' life continues with dignity for those we care for at the centre of our approach.

As a valued partner in our mission to help people live later life well I'd like to give you an update on the approach MHA is taking and ask for your prayers and support.

### How coronavirus is affecting our frontline

We're monitoring daily the impact of the pandemic upon our care homes, retirement living and Live at Home schemes – our services on the front line. Sadly, at the time of writing, we have a small but growing number of residents who have died as a result of Covid-19 and our first MHA colleague. As you will appreciate, in many cases these deaths take place in the absence of loved ones.

Staff shortages resulting from the virus continue at around 11% of our workforce, with the great majority self-isolating. We are identifying those homes under greatest pressure and planning how best to provide support, as well as responding where homes and schemes are facing shortfalls in Personal Protective Equipment, hand sanitiser etc.

Enabling people to live later life well

Chief Executive: Sam Monaghan

Chair: John Robinson

Methodist Homes (MHA), registered as a Charity – No. 1083995

Company Limited by Guarantee – No. 4043124

## **Testing**

We also know that testing is crucial to preventing the spread of the pandemic. And whilst the Government has stated NHS front line staff will be prioritised in the first instance, we are relentlessly pressing the Government for our care workers and residents to be tested. We have been told this will be imminent, but we won't stop making our voice heard until we see this actually happening across our services. You may have seen this issue and MHA featured on the front page of The Guardian on 1 April.

## **Protecting our colleagues**

As stated above, some care homes and retirement living schemes are now reporting low levels of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), which we are addressing urgently to make sure no one runs out. We continue to lobby the Government to supply more to ensure the safety of our staff and residents. We are also working with businesses across the country to explore how they can support us. If you have any connections or opportunities, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

## **How our community and head office teams are adapting and helping**

Through all this my colleagues are pulling together in order to support those we look after. Our community teams are stepping in and supporting their local care homes as well as starting to provide valuable new community services for our members – and new members – who are now having to stay in their own homes.

Activity coordinators are keeping morale up among residents and members, coming up with ingenious ways to help them stay active and occupied. Our recent investment to upgrade Wi-Fi in homes and schemes means online conversations to stay in touch with family members and friends are happening each day.

Head office colleagues are also continuing to support the delivery of our frontline services with new initiatives such as our 'MHA Needs You' recruitment and volunteering campaign, telephoning and progressing enquiries 7 days a week, seeking and procuring PPE and other resources and supporting colleagues through wellbeing services. Our chaplaincy service also continues during this time, offering remote support to colleagues, residents (where the local chaplain is not able to be on site) and friends and family of residents.

A new 'Pastoral Support Service' has been set up by the Chaplaincy Directorate to support friends and family who are unable to visit at this time. A dedicated phone line has been created and any message left will be responded to within 24 hours. A small team of chaplains staff the service and have received bespoke training for this from The Samaritans.

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## **Our finances as a charity**

Charities like ourselves are experiencing a financial challenge never seen before, with a predicted 48% drop in fundraised income for the sector. Our fundraising events programme, including MHA Sunday, has been postponed and we are continually looking at how to manage financial implications of the current situation. Whilst we will be running MHA Sunday on the first weekend in September we appreciate you may want to continue with the June date with a 'virtual MHA Sunday' and welcome all support you are able to give us. There are video resources that could be shared from our website in an online service, and virtual giving could be done through a Just Giving page or directly on the MHA website.

Our charitable focus needs to be on the services that will impact those who need us the most at this time. How we can improve the quality of life for the people we care for and support, when they are unable to meet face to face with their loved ones. How we can help decrease anxiety for those of our residents living with dementia, who struggle with shielding and self-isolation. How our chaplaincy service can offer vital support to our residents, their families and our colleagues during these worrying times and our community members, many of whom will now be experiencing increased social isolation.

During this difficult time we are coming together as a community and thank you for your continued support. Please continue to hold us in your prayers and thoughts as we will you. If you or anyone you know would like to support our work please do visit [mha.org.uk](http://mha.org.uk) where you can both donate and express an interest in volunteering.

## **Last but not least...**

You may have seen reports in the media about individuals and company's supplying food gifts to NHS hospitals. Often care homes can be overlooked and if any Methodist Church would like to arrange a hamper for a home or scheme that would be truly appreciated – not solely for the content but for the token of care and concern the gift represents.

A selection of fresh fruit and/or flowers, would be fantastic. Perhaps an Easter card as well to remind people that hope is alive even in our darkest times. Of course, it's only a suggestion and I'm sure churches will find all sorts of safe and inventive ways to show appreciation and support.

Please take care of yourself, look after each other and remember that the necessity of hope never changes.

Wishing you, and all who are dear to you, the love and peace of Easter.

Thank you for all that you are doing, stay safe.

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