



# Underley Garden

16<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Dear Parents / Carers / Social Workers / SEN Officers / Local Authority Commissioners**

I thought it was appropriate to update you on what Underley Garden is doing to safeguard our children, young people and staff in relation to the Coronavirus outbreak.

**Firstly**, we are following government advice closely. We receive a government update every single day and respond to this advice. We are working with all of our staff. Any member of staff who has even mild symptoms are following the advice of NHS England and we are following the advice of Public Health England. So anyone with even moderate symptoms is advised to stay at home for 7 days. Our company is also providing daily advice and support to schools and residential services. We have a company strategy and response to this situation.

**Secondly** I need to ask all parents to do a number of things

1. We need to maintain normality as far as possible for as long as possible for our young people. So please continue to send your children to school unless we advise you differently. We are very lucky that our site is very rural and remote. Your children are probably safer with us than most places.
2. Please do follow strict hygiene habits at home of handwashing regularly, and every time you have all used the toilet. Teach your child how to cough and sneeze into tissue.
3. If your child has even a moderate temperature, sore throat or cough please phone 111 for advice. You should keep your child at home and stay at home as a whole family for 7 days if **any** member of the family is unwell.
4. For families of children in residential care who may be planning a trip to UGS, discuss with your home staff whether the trip is absolutely necessary. If it is very important that you come, expect to have your visit away from the other children/adults in the home in a designated visitor house or space. If you can FaceTime or phone instead we would really appreciate that so we limit the people on site.





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**Thirdly** I wanted you to know what different actions we have taken to maintain our services and stay infection free as far as we are able. **As of 16<sup>th</sup> March at 12pm we have no reported cases of coronavirus in our staff team or our children.** **From this weekend we have introduced a number of measures which can be described as a form of social distancing:-**

1. We are ceasing all unnecessary visits to our site. No one will be permitted to visit for meetings. All meetings will be held by teleconference, and all attendees will access the meetings remotely.
2. The ONLY visits to site will be for social worker 6 weekly statutory visits, essential deliveries and maintenance workers and a very limited number of parental visits to children who live with us. Parental visits will be arranged in a place we have set up away from other children and homes.
3. We will limit the off site visits both in the children's home and educationally. We will prioritise outdoor visits and visits to places where we have booked exclusive use of a particular place – like our swimming lessons, the Calvert trust, horse riding, sensory sessions etc.
4. We will not be going to places like cinemas, bowling alleys, and anywhere else where large groups of people will meet. We are lucky to have a number of sensory spaces, sports hall, gymnasium, soft play centre and lots of outdoor space without stepping outside the gates.
5. Whilst we pride ourselves in developing young people's independence we will be ceasing all trips on public transport and limiting our off site trips to transport in our own vehicles.
6. Wherever it is possible due to current demand, we will be shopping on-line and booking deliveries rather than going out with our children to supermarkets. If we do decide to go out it will be at quieter times and to smaller shops with fewer people.
7. I can reassure you we have a good supply of food, hygiene products, medication, cleaning products, fuel, gas, oil to run the organisation for a long period.
8. We have met with our contract cleaning company and introduced the advice of Public Health England with an increased regime.
9. We have a business continuity plan which has been very well thought through and includes clear actions for if we have a number of staff off work in





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self isolation, what we will do if we have a confirmed case of coronavirus and how we will manage the essential services which have to run for 52 weeks, 7 days per week, 24 hours per day for those young people who live on our sites.

This is a worrying time for everyone, as it is unprecedented in our lifetime. We must do our best to protect ourselves and our communities. Trying to keep things as normal as possible for as long as possible whilst taking sensible precautions is the very best we can do. We will of course keep you fully informed of any changes in our plans if circumstances change or if the government advice changes over the forthcoming weeks. It is not helpful to speculate on government next steps, but focus our energies on very high standards of hygiene and following to the letter government and NHS advice.

All of the teachers and keyworkers who work with your child have received advice on what to do in a variety of different scenarios and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with the staff you have regular contact with. If they cannot answer your question, they will, of course, ask one of the leadership team at Underley to speak to you.

Kind Regards

Ann Henderson, Principal and the Underley Leadership Team

