**COVID-19 POLICY**

**Aim of this Policy**

This policy has been urgently put in place to give guidance on the running of Pathways to Opportunities given the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus which began in March 2020. This policy aims to give guidance to the management, staff and how to control risks associated with the pandemic.

**Staff**

1. Communication: All staff members should be communicated to regularly by the management team with regards to any changes that need to be made – due to the ever-changing nature of current guidance, the best method of communicating changes is to be made via the WhatsApp groups. Staff members are also required to be in good communication with the management team regarding their health and wellbeing, and that of the people they are supporting.
2. Concerns about service users: Any concerns about the health and wellbeing of our service users should be reported to the management team as per the usual process (via phone or message). Staff are to keep confidentiality and not pass on unnecessary information to their colleagues (but pass on all information to management team).
3. Time off: Should staff develop COVID-19 symptoms, they are to contact their GP or 111 service for advice. Should staff need to self-isolate, they are to do this in line with the advice given by medical professionals. Once they have been given advice, staff are to contact the management team to inform them. Sick notes/isolation notes/self-certificates must be provided to the management team as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Should staff require unpaid leave in order to care for their dependents, they should inform the management team as soon as possible.

Should staff need time off for other illness, they are to follow the usual absence policy and obtain a sick note if necessary, from their GP.

Should staff wish to take annual leave, they are to request this via message to the management team. Requests may not be granted but this will be at the discretion of the management.

1. Contracts: Staff who wish to work their contracted hours will be given the opportunity to do so. However, this may mean that their job role is changed to accommodate the needs of the service. Staff need to be aware that their job descriptions may not be a full exhaustive list of what is expected of them during a pandemic, and need to adapt to what is needed of them at the time. If staff have issue with this, they must inform the management team as soon as possible.
2. Risk Management: Staff are to be assured that the management of Pathways to Opportunities are doing everything within their power to reduce risk as much as possible –

any action that needs to be taken by the staff to reduce risks MUST be followed by the staff. Due to social distancing guidelines, this may be communicated to staff via messages on the WhatsApp groups. It is important that staff stay up to date with updates on these groups during this time.

1. Social Distancing: Where possible, staff should aim to follow social distancing guidelines and stay 2m from others. In the course of working closely with individuals and a second member

of staff, this will not be possible. However, if staff are working within the day service, they should be staying 2m away from their colleagues. Staff should be careful about their behaviour outside of work, as they are Key Workers, they have a responsibility to keep themselves as safe as possible. Staff should, where possible, follow social distancing guidance when outside of work too.

1. Rota’s: Staff are to be aware that rota’s will be done on a weekly basis for the following week, due to the ever-changing nature of the pandemic and how this affects staffing/service users. Pathways to Opportunities appreciates the inconvenience of this, and will endeavour to resume to normal as soon as possible.

**PPE**

Pathways to Opportunities will aim to have a good supply of PPE at all times. Where this is not possible, the management are to undertake a risk assessment on their ability to continue their services. The management team will attempt to source PPE from various sources including the regular suppliers, online, council, and request for donations from third parties. The PPE that Pathways provides to the staff will be: disposable latex gloves, disposable aprons, and disposable surgical masks. Staff will also be provided with wipes, bin bags, individual hand sanitisers and paper towels. All of this PPE will be at the Day Service which is open Monday-Friday, so staff can come and go and pick up what they need. Staff MUST ensure that they are prepared for their shifts with the right amount of PPE – if they are not, they must contact management as soon as possible.

The proper process on how to apply/remove PPE in the current circumstances is as follows (and has been advised to the staff via the WhatsApp Group):

1. Ensure your cars/bags are stocked with the necessary amount of PPE that you need. If you run out for whatever reason, give the management a call. The centre is open Monday-Friday every week and we are stocked with PPE.
2. On arriving at a service users’ home, before entering the property, please sanitise your hands and put on an apron and face mask. Once you go in the property, please wash your hands and apply gloves. This PPE must be worn at all times throughout your time supporting people (and especially when doing intimate/personal care). If you need a break from wearing a face mask during your shift, you can step outside for some air.
3. PPE aprons and gloves MUST be changed from task to task e.g. after showering someone, if you then need to do some cleaning, dispose of apron and gloves and apply new ones. Wash hands between changes.
4. Once you have finished supporting someone, please put all PPE that you have worn into a plastic bag, dispose of it in an outside bin, and then sanitise your hands with hand sanitiser.

**Service Users**

Service users will be made aware of how the pandemic will impact the service they receive. This may be done via letter, phone call or email. The management team will make every effort to ensure that all the people that are currently being supported by Pathways are made aware as soon as possible to any changes that may affect them. Pathways to Opportunities reserves the right to change the type of care and support that they are providing to individuals in light of the pandemic, given government and Public Health Guidance, and ensuring that the local authority, service users and their families/carers are also informed of changes which may affect individuals. These changes may include limiting service users’ social contact with others, temporarily suspending community activities, and only giving what is deemed as “essential support”. Essential support may be urgent respite that families need, personal care, medication administration, household tasks, and shopping/errands.

Temporary Cancellations to support: Should service users/families/carers wish to temporarily suspend their support, they are able to do so. However, Pathways will still charge for the support as per the service level agreement. Service users reserve the right to permanently cancel their service, giving 4 weeks’ notice. Pathways can then endeavour to recommence support when the pandemic ceases if the cancellation option is used.

**Management**

Members of the senior management team are to ensure they are prepared for questions from staff/families/individuals that they have not encountered before. If they are unsure of how to answer these, they are to refer to higher management and seek advice. Questions regarding how the pandemic affects staff/service users should be sent to the Deputy Manager or Registered Manager for the time being.

The impact of the pandemic on the service needs to be assessed on a daily basis, and regular online/telephone meetings with the management team should be held as often as possible to ensure collaborative working.

Members of the management team may be expected to work from home during the pandemic, and need to prepare themselves for this, ensuring they bring the equipment and documents that they need to conduct their role from home.

Roles and responsibilities may shift and vary depending on the needs of the service.

This policy is to be updated as and when necessary.

Signed:

Date: 01/04/2020

Review Dates:

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