

Mid/Far North Office

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For regular updates please go to our website "NEWS" page - www.homesupport.co.nz/page/news.html

COVID-19 – Lockdown update @ Thursday 23rd April 2020

Earlier this week the Government Announced that we will move from Alert Level 4 to Alert Level 3 at Midnight on Monday 27 April 2020.

It is important to remember that until next week, we remain at Alert Level 4.

Also, because the risk to our Clients & Staff remains high, the Level of support and the way we provide it, WILL NOT CHANGE when we move to Alert Level 3.

At Alert Level 3, we will continue to provide Essential Services only. It is still not possible to provide Non-Essential Services. However, we will review this decision if/when the Government announces a move to Alert Level 2.

Call us if you have concerns about your service.

We hope you keep your bubble small so there is no additional risk to you or our Support workers

Thank you to all our Clients for your understanding in these difficult times.

Thank you to all our Staff: for caring and being willing to do whatever is required.

We have 326 Clients whose support is suspended during the Lockdown.

And there are 136 Support Workers not working (for various reasons).

Still more than six hundred visits a day happening though.

An amazing effort by all staff to keep this Service running - thank you all.

1. Our Services:

Essential Services – which we will keep providing wherever possible:

- Personal Care (including showering supervision and medication supervision)
- Most Meal Preparation
- Some essential Shopping

Non-essential services – not prioritised during the lockdown:

- Household Management (Home Care) will not be prioritised and may not be provided
- Supervision (attendant care of a Client, where the spouse/partner is relieved from being the sole carer and can have a rest, go shopping, go out, etc) will most likely not be provided during the lockdown
- Most Shopping will not be provided during the lockdown. Alternative arrangements have been made or discussed with Clients or family.

To our Support Workers - Call us if you are unsure whether to go to work or not.

To our Clients - Call us if you are unsure about your service. Please let us know if you are unwell for any reason.

When a Support Worker arrives at your home, they will ask if you are unwell before they enter your home. If you are unwell they will not enter your home until they have contacted the office and been given further instructions.

We have been working on other things that might change for Clients and Support Workers as the Alert Levels drop. For example:

- a) When we can safely allow people at higher risk of severe illness from Covid-19 to come back to work (older people and those with existing medical conditions)
- b) What can we do for Support Workers with no childcare
- c) What can we do for Support Workers who live with compromised people

We will be communicating with staff to clarify their situation.

Please be aware the change to Alert Level 3 may result in only minimal change. But there may be an opportunity for Support Workers to do a quick toilet clean / bed change after their personal care tasks are complete. Our Co-ordinators are happy to arrange this for you.

To our Clients, please ensure that you keep yourself and your bubble safe. Alert Level 3 allows some further contact, but all our Clients are still vulnerable to any exposure to Covid-19. Social Distancing is extra-specially important for your welfare.

if you are thinking of letting someone else into your bubble, which should only be for caregiving, please let us know in advance as we need to note the activity if future contact tracing data is required by the Public Health System.

2. Staff Wages

We have committed to maintain the pay of our Support Workers at expected/normal levels.

For Support Workers, please see the Support Worker section of our website for the latest information, processes and the forms you may need.

3. Shopping

Shopping continues to be problematic, with different supermarkets having a range of responses when Support Workers identify themselves as Essential Workers. Sorry if you have to wait in a queue. The Northland Welfare Group is aware of the varied response and are escalating the issue, as has our local MP Dr Shane Reti. Call us if we can help with anything.

4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (and forms/timesheets etc)

We are now getting a better supply of PPE from the NDHB.

Face Masks - There are new guidelines for Support Workers' use of PPE - See our website - We will also provide a copy of these guidelines to our Staff when PPE is collected.

These new guidelines state: *"In addition to usual precautions, support worker to wear a mask to help protect them and the client if they can't stay >2m away"*.

This means, PPE including Face Masks should be worn for all Personal Care Tasks and situations where it is not possible to keep 2 metres apart.

PPE Supplies are only for Support Workers who are currently working.

Gowns - It is recommended that a full sleeve gown is worn for close personal contact cares - like for masks. Please enquire with your distribution person about collecting these in your area. Continue to use aprons if appropriate to do so.

Remember to bring a small container for us to decant a 50ml supply of hand sanitiser into for you (we only have 500ml bottles). Please bring your own bag for carrying supplies.

We intend to continue with these same time/place routines each week. (Including being able to get your supplies at the Kerikeri and Whangarei offices.)

Kaitaia – Thursdays, with our Trainer Fiona at the Chaplin’s office (located at the rear of the Kaitaia Hospital) from 12.30pm to 2.30pm for PPE and forms.

Russell - Medical Centre – Tuesdays, between 11am – 12noon with our Co-ordinator Julie for supply of masks, gowns and hand sanitiser. Any weekday between 10am – 4pm for other PPE needed.

Kaikohe - Broadway Health (including Ohaeawai & Okaihau) – Tuesday’s between 11am – 12noon for supply of masks, gowns and hand sanitiser. Look for the Blue Mitsubishi Lancer over by the tree away from the covered walkway.

Paihia - text Pamela 0276153757 for your supplies – she will provide you with collection details

Doubtless Bay/Coopers Beach area - text Lynn 027 441 0968 for your supplies – she will provide you with collection details

5. Kaitaia timesheet drop-off/pick-up

Far North (Kaitaia) Support Workers - Please continue to drop your timesheets off in the post box at the People Centre and we’ll collect them as usual at 12noon after the next pay period end, on Monday the 4th of May.

6. Flu vaccinations

To our Clients, if you haven’t already done so, we encourage you to make arrangements to get a Flu vaccination.

To our Support Workers - remember, you have priority to receive an early flu vaccination because you are an aged/disability care worker. You should be vaccinated to enable you to keep well when working over winter and stop you getting sick and adding to the demand that Covid-19 will place on our health system. Just to remind you, we have sent you a Claim Form for reimbursement (up to \$45). We strongly encourage you to get this shot asap. (You may even get it for free – we have had at least one lucky Support Worker encounter this.)

7. ACC hours not worked

For Support Workers - As we have been saying in previous updates, ACC will only pay for hours worked so we are unable to pay you ‘Special Leave’ for any unworked hours. Contact Robert or the Employee Support Team (Liz, Leonie and Lee) if you want to discuss your situation. You may have other leave (Annual Leave, Sick Leave or Alt Days) that you can claim. Our national association is still in negotiation with ACC to fund un-worked hours (if the Client has self-isolated or has had their non-essential hours stopped) so we are ever hopeful. If it turns out that way, and ACC retrospectively

funds un-worked hours, then we can change the category of payment to 'Special Leave' and re-instate your leave entitlement.

8. Phoning the office

If you call us on our 0800 numbers, and the call might be a bit complicated and take some time, can you please let us know when you call. It may be best if we call you back. Calls that are made from the offices are free, whereas we pay for every 0800 call received. That is normally approx. \$700 each month, but as you can imagine there has been a massive increase over the last month (more than 60%). Anything that we can do to reduce this cost will be useful to the Service's ongoing sustainability.

9. To our Clients who are vulnerable (over 70, underlying medical conditions, compromised immunity) - you still need to take more precautions to protect yourself against all infections, including COVID-19.

Even when we move to Alert Level 3, avoid close contact with people with cold or flu-like illnesses.

- Cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing.
- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with water and soap and dry them thoroughly:
 - before eating or handling food
 - after using the toilet
 - after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or wiping children's noses
 - after caring for sick people.

On top of the normal self-isolation that we are all practicing (staying within our bubbles at home, etc) - additional measures that you and your whānau and friends can take include:

- Stay at home, and ask others to pick up supplies for you. You just need to ask them to leave these at the door, rather than come in. Drop-offs at the door, rather than coming in, will protect vulnerable people from exposure to COVID-19.
- Stay at least 2 metres away from people who are unwell.
- If you're unwell, avoid contact with someone who is immune-compromised.
- If your health care provider advises you to wear a mask when in public areas because you have a particularly vulnerable immune system, follow that advice.
- If you are taking immunosuppressive drugs we advise that you do not stop this medication without first consulting your GP or specialist.

Also checkout the following links for regular updates:

[MOH COVID-19 Info - \(www.health.govt.nz\)](http://www.health.govt.nz)

[Government Website - All info related to COVID-19 – \(www.covid19.govt.nz\)](http://www.covid19.govt.nz)

[Home Support North Website COVID-19 Page \(www.homesupport.co.nz/page/covid-19\)](http://www.homesupport.co.nz/page/covid-19)

10. Our web-site has lots of resources and information related to Covid-19. **Newly posted** to our web-site today is a link to a **Wecare Kiwi Counselling List**. This list has information about a range of advisory and counselling services that are available in New Zealand. Many of these can be accessed by phone, text, or email.

**Don't feel alone if you're struggling – reach out for help.
Stay safe and keep in touch.**

The Management Team
Home Support North Charitable Trust