

**[Patient Name**

Patient address Line 1

Patient address Line 2

Patient address Line 3]

Date

**IMPORTANT: PERSONAL**

**Your HCN: [HCN]**

Dear [Patient],

**IMPORTANT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU SAFE FROM CORONAVIRUS**

**We have identified that you, or the person you care for, is at risk of severe illness if you catch Coronavirus (also known as COVID-19).**

**This letter is about how to protect yourself from Coronavirus and how to continue to access the care and treatment you need.**

You are receiving this letter because you, or someone you care for, has an underlying disease or health condition. This means that if you catch the virus, you are more likely to be admitted to hospital than others.

**The safest course of action is for you to stay at home at all times and avoid all face-to-face contact for at least twelve weeks from today, except from carers and healthcare workers who you must see as part of your medical care.**

This will protect you by stopping you from coming into contact with the virus.

If, at any point, you think you have developed symptoms of coronavirus, such as a new, continuous cough and/or high temperature (above 37.8 °C), seek clinical advice using the NHS 111 NI helpline. **Do this as soon as you get symptoms.**

You, or the person you care for, should:

- strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature (above 37.8 °C) and/or a new and continuous cough;
- not leave your home;
- not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces e.g. family homes, weddings and religious services;
- not go out for shopping, leisure or travel. When arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact;
- keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media;
- use telephone or online services to contact our practice or other essential services; and
- regularly wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Ask carers or support workers who visit your home to do the same.

Anyone else in your household should support you to stay safe and stringently follow guidance on social distancing, reducing their contact outside the home.

In your home, you should:

- minimise the time you spend with others in shared spaces (kitchen, bathroom and sitting areas) and keep shared spaces well ventilated;
- aim to keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from others and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible;
- use separate towels and, if possible, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household, or clean the bathroom after every use; and
- avoid using the kitchen when others are present, take your meals back to your room to eat where possible, and ensure all kitchenware is cleaned thoroughly.

If the rest of your household are able to follow this guidance, there is no need for them to take the full protective measures to keep you safe.

The Department of Health is currently developing an app that can help you with information about what to do if you have symptoms. An announcement will be made soon about the launch of the App 'Covid-19 NI'.

### **1. Carers and support workers who come to your home**

Any essential carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit, unless they have any of the symptoms of coronavirus. All visitors should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, on arrival and often. It is also a good idea to speak to your carers about what happens if one of them becomes unwell.

If you need help, but you're not sure who to contact, the Executive is setting up a Freephone community helpline for all citizens to provide access to advice, help and guidance. It will also connect people to more specialist or practical supports when those are needed. This will be available from Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

To get in touch for advice you can phone, email or text message and the service will initially be available daily from 9am to 5pm and will expand in the coming days.

Telephone: Irrelevant & Sensitive

Email: [covid19@adviceni.net](mailto:covid19@adviceni.net)

Text: ACTION to 81025.

### **2. Medicines that you routinely take**

As you cannot collect your own prescription from the general practice or community pharmacy you are advised to ask someone to do this on your behalf, such as a friend, neighbour, family member or local support network; this is the best option, if possible. If this cannot be arranged, some community pharmacies may be able to arrange to collect and deliver your prescription to your home.

Arrangements are also being put in place for collection or delivery of any specialist medicines that may be prescribed for you by your hospital care team.

### **3. Planned GP practice appointments**

Wherever possible, our practice will provide care by phone, email or online. But if we decide you need to be seen in person, we will contact you to arrange your visit to the surgery or a visit in your home.

### **4. Planned hospital appointments**

As hospitals prepare to manage the growing number of emergency admissions relating to COVID-19, increasing numbers of hospital appointments for clinics and scheduled procedures will need to be postponed indefinitely. If your appointment is proceeding as scheduled, you will be notified. Please don't go to hospital for your appointment unless the hospital/clinic makes contact with you in advance to confirm that it is proceeding. Hospitals will contact you once postponed appointments are rescheduled. The health service will ensure arrangements are in place to support and treat vulnerable patients during this period of isolation.

### **5. Support with daily living**

This letter is evidence, for your employer, to show that you cannot work outside the home. You do not need to get a fit note from your GP. If you need help from the benefit system visit <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>.

Please discuss your daily needs during this period of staying at home with carers, family, friends, neighbours or local community groups to see how they can support you.

You can also contact the Covid-19 Community Helpline. To get in touch for advice you can phone, email or text message, the service will initially be available daily from 9am to 5pm and will expand in the coming days.

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### **6. Urgent medical attention**

If you have an urgent medical question relating to your **existing** medical condition, or the condition of the person you are caring for please contact us, or your specialist