

# GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Registered Charity 209376

## **Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund Update: Wednesday 15 July 2020 (Updated August 15 2020)**

### **Reopening the Bethesda Homes to relatives and friends to allow them to visit loved ones**

We would take this opportunity to provide you with the background and arrangements that have been put in place, we trust in the Lord's mercies, to reopen the Homes to visitors once more albeit with certain limitations in place whilst COVID-19 is still active in the land.

On March 23, 2020, the GSBF trustees took the decision, in view of the vulnerability of the residents in the Bethesda Homes to COVID-19 infection and the risk to staff, to suspend all visits to residents from relatives and friends (with the exception of end of life situations and more recently in the case of an emergencies impacting on the safety of the residents). This decision was not taken lightly however it was necessary in view of the need to safeguard and protect residents and staff from COVID-19 infection.

Although Bethesda has put in place arrangements, such as telephoning, video calls, emailing and writing, to allow relatives and friends to keep in touch with their loved ones, we are acutely aware that this is no substitute for visiting in person.

The Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy (May 2020) highlights the following expectation "The Government expects all care homes to restrict all routine and non-essential healthcare visits and reduce staff movement between homes, in order to limit the risk of further infection". Although there is currently mention by government of easing the lockdown arrangements for care homes; these, at the time of writing, do not seem to be forthcoming.

The trustees have been prayerfully considering how visiting could re-occur, in the Lord's purposes, in the three Homes. In doing so, two principles were identified as being uppermost in any action taken to restart visiting in the Homes and these are:

- The safety of the residents and staff is paramount, and it is vital that the Homes are kept separate from any likely source of COVID-19 infection.
- Any arrangement to allow visiting to the Bethesda Homes must not place residents staff and visitors at risk of COVID-19 infection.

During June 2020, we noticed in the Care Home press an approach adopted by Yorkare that met these principles that have been identified. The approach was to develop 'visitor rooms' with a secure self-contained area for those visiting the care home. These rooms allow residents and loved ones to see each other without the use of PPE yet still maintaining the safety and protection of residents and staff.

Discussions, subsequently, took place between a group of trustees, the General Manager and the Home Managers and suitable rooms in a way forward were identified. 'Visitor rooms' have been completed for all three Homes (Brighton, Harpenden and Studley) and are fully operational. Early feedback is that the rooms have been well received by residents, staff and relatives. We have appended to this document, photographs taken at the three Homes.

Initially the Homes were open to close relatives, although, if the Lord will, we are hoping to open the Homes for visitors from Monday, 20 July 2020 using an online booking system. (For those who do not have access to the Internet, it is possible to contact the Homes directly to arrange a visit.)

A set of rules and guidelines have been published for the use of the 'visitor rooms'. These have in cross-reference to the government's guidance "Update on policies of visiting arrangements in care homes" (July 31, 2020). They have also been supplemented by drawing on information, published by the Scottish government, that explain some of the aspects of preparing to meet a loved one after

a long time.

Details of the booking system and copies of the guidelines can be found at: <https://www.gospelstandard.org.uk/Bethesda/Visits-Booking-Page>

Please bear in mind limitations have been placed on visitors and the arrangements for restarting visiting in the Homes will proceed on a cautious and limited basis so the risk of any infection can be minimised. Inevitably, this will mean doing things in a different way and the cooperation of visitors will be appreciated.

Once the government has published their guidelines on visiting arrangements for care homes, we will cross-reference against these and, if appropriate, modify our rules and guidelines.

We are thankful to all those who have helped to make the visitor rooms possible.

We do trust and pray the Lord will continue to go before us and watch over the Homes and keep them free from COVID-19 and grant a thankful heart that a way has been made to allow visiting in the Homes once more.

On behalf of the Bethesda trustees



M Ridout  
Chairman GSBF

### Photographs of the 'visitor rooms'



Brighton



Studley

Harpenden