

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Registered Charity 209376

Bethesda COVID-19 Update Friday 6 November 2020

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to update subscribers and other interested parties regarding the national restrictions that have been put in place to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 that are effective from Thursday 5 November to Wednesday 2 December 2020. We would acknowledge the good hand of the Lord watching over the Bethesda Homes during the first lockdown and the subsequent months and we trust in the forthcoming days.

Situation in the Homes

The current situation regarding COVID-19 in the Bethesda Homes is that there are no reported cases of the virus in the Homes. However, this should not make us complacent and needs to be tempered with the comments below.

All the Homes are involved in regular swab testing for COVID-19. Staff are tested once a week and residents once a month. For those of us who have had a swab test, it is not a particularly nice experience and we are mindful of the staff and residents having to undergo this test albeit a necessary one as part of Bethesda's Infection Prevention and Control processes and procedures. Additionally, this another administrative burden amongst all the other things that must be undertaken in the Homes. Thankfully all the residents and staff, to date, at Harpenden and Studley have returned negative test results for which we are grateful.

As reported on the Bethesda website on Tuesday 3 November 2020, there has been a case where a member of staff has tested positive for COVID-19 at the Brighton and Hove Home. They were tested last Thursday and having worked on Friday they have not been in the Home since and are self-isolating.

As a result of this, the Home Manager brought forward the swab testing for all staff and residents and arranged for an emergency courier to deliver the samples to the test laboratory on Monday evening. Thankfully, none of the residents are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and their temperatures are being taken twice a day, as part of Bethesda's ongoing Infection Prevention and Control processes and procedures. In addition staff continue to be diligent in the wearing of PPE and as a consequence there will be no need for staff to self-isolate (unless they are tested positive) as there has been no breach of PPE.

At the time of writing, 16 out of the 17 residents have tested negative for COVID-19 and one result is still awaited. Also, none of the residents in the Home are currently exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. The staff results that have been returned are also negative, although eight results are still awaited. Thankfully, the recent pleasant weather has meant that residents had been able to go outside and enjoy the sunshine - the Lord knows what is needed. (Philippians 4:19)

Although the focus of government activity has been on the northern regions of the country, this does not mean that the virus is limited to those areas as we have been reminded by the test result at Brighton. This does highlight the constant need to be vigilant and rigorous in helping to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19, especially in the Homes.

We would value your prayers that the Lord might prevent COVID-19 infecting the Brighton and Hove Bethesda Home - and indeed any of the Homes or flatlets.

Home Visiting

As you may be aware, the decision was prayerfully taken in July 2020 to provide visiting facilities in the Homes. This was done, at the time, ahead of any decisions by the government to restart residential care home visiting, as our concern was the need to find a way for residents and loved ones to meet again in a safe and secure environment.

Little did we know at the time that there would be a second lockdown. Mercifully the visitor rooms, that have been developed at Bethesda, meet the requirements of the DHSS guidance "Visiting arrangements in care homes for the period of national restrictions".

We are thankful for the Lord's guidance and help in developing the visitor rooms earlier in the year and we are reminded that the Lord does know what is before us.

We have also listened to feedback regarding the visitor rooms and, if the Lord will, we will be providing, where needed, hearing loops.

In addition we have upgraded, where appropriate, the wireless connectivity in the Homes and, using government funding, have purchased iPads so that those unable to visit the Homes can communicate with their loved ones via the Internet. Further details will follow shortly.

Information regarding visiting the Homes can be found on the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund website. (See: <https://www.gospelstandard.org.uk/Bethesda/Visits-Booking-Page>)

Morning and evening readings

Morning and evening readings are an important part of the ethos of Bethesda. During the first lockdown and the subsequent months, in the Lord's mercies, it has been possible to continue the morning readings digitally. We would take this opportunity to again thank those who are continuing to help with morning readings which is much appreciated.

It has been pleasing to note the number of people listening to the morning readings, in addition to the residents, and we have had encouragements from individuals who regularly listen to the readings and have found them helpful. If you know anyone who might be interested in listening to the morning readings, then please pass the website details to them: <https://www.gospelstandard.org.uk/Bethesda/Morning-Worship-Livestream>

At the Harpenden Home, we are thankful that the morning readings are relayed into the home using the telephone connection to Bethel Chapel, Luton.

In all three Homes the afternoon readings are taken in-house and we pray that the Lord will continue to help the residents and staff who undertake this for us.

Thinking of elderly friends

Although Bethesda's focus is on the homes and flatlets, for which we are responsible, we are also mindful of the elderly amongst the causes of truth which we seek to serve and would not forget them.

At the start of the second lockdown, we need to be mindful of those elderly friends who are unable to leave their homes. We would encourage you to take a few moments to think of those we know and perhaps give them a telephone call, text or send a letter that may be a timely help to them.

Also if you are in touch with elderly friends then do remind them, in a tactful way, to be careful and watchful when approached about giving away personal details and/or being pressurised to buy something they do not want. Sadly, there are some who would take advantage of the vulnerable.

Staying in touch

For the duration of this second lockdown, we will endeavour to remain in regular contact through the Gospel Stand Bethesda website and/or our email list. Consequently, please can you forward this document to any of your contacts who may be interested in its contents.

If anyone wishes to be added to the emailing list then please contact Adrian Topping (adriantopping@gsbf.uk)

If you are able to print this Update, please pass it onto someone who does not have access to the internet. This would be appreciated as it will help keep them in touch with what we are trying to do.

Finally

It would be remiss not to thank the Home Managers and their staff for their continued dedication and love to the residents through these difficult times. We especially pray that they will be upheld and helped physically and emotionally as they care for the residents. We would also prayerfully remember Adrian Topping, our General Manager, in all the many responsibilities in his role.

Our heartfelt love goes to all the residents in this 'strange and mysterious' path and would bear them before the Lord and pray that they might prove "and even to your old age I am he". (Isaiah 46:4) We are also mindful of the relatives and loved ones of the residents and we pray that they might be strengthened and given submission at this trying time.

We would also acknowledge the Lord's goodness and mercy in answering many prayers enabling the Homes to function in these trying times. Your continued prayerful interest and support is much appreciated and valued. We would encourage you to continue to pray for Bethesda that the Lord would hear those cries for help in time of need and grant wisdom in those decisions that have to be made both now and in that way before us.

On behalf of the Bethesda trustees,



M Ridout
Chairman GSBF