

3 November 2020

Dear Member

The Prime Minister's statement on Saturday announced that there would be a national lockdown in England until 2 December. It is not exactly the same as the lockdown in March insofar as schools and universities remain open and there are a few other differences.

There is no guarantee as to what will happen on 2 December but probably the best we can expect is that we will return to tiered regional lockdown depending on the rate of infections generally and in particular parts of England specifically.

Today has also seen a 5-tiered system introduced in Scotland and in Wales a "firebreak" which introduced a series of restrictive measures has been in place in since 23 October and will remain so until 9 November.

I do hope that you understand the rules as they apply to you specifically? I understand how difficult the next couple of months or so will be but please follow the rules and stay safe.

I have been heartened by the number of comments I received about how much members have appreciated the activities of the staff during these difficult times and I can emphasise again that despite the new restrictions members of staff are on hand to help. The Development Officers will continue to work from home as normal and Central Office staff will ensure that the phone 01305 360317 is monitored on a regular basis and a member of staff will get back to you.

Additionally, this time round, instead of closing the office completely, we will access the office at least 3 times a week to ensure there is no backlog of post and to undertake those duties that cannot be undertaken at home.

I have to mention specifically the very nice card I received from Evelyn Cooper, who is a member of the Aberdeen branch, doesn't have a computer and wrote specifically to let me know how grateful she has been for the letters received nationally and the contact she has had from her friends in the NHSRF locally. This lady retired 32 years ago, is very well and has been able to take daily walks. I really do appreciate receiving these messages from you.

We don't know how long this latest lockdown will last but please don't hesitate to let us know if there is anything you think we should be doing to help to alleviate your situation.

One idea is that we should start a book club. At the moment we are looking for people to sign up (by email preferably) and also give a recommendation of a book to get the club started. It can be fiction or non-fiction but should have as wide an appeal as possible.

If you are not on email, please contact the Central Office and we will ensure that you are included. We are asking that you sign up by Wednesday, 25 November so we can then contact those with an interest with details of our first chosen book and where you can access it both in paper copy and electronically.

It is then suggested we have a 6 week period for people to read the book and we ask you to send us your thoughts or comments by email or phone so that we can share the views of book club members and seek nominations for the next book and so on. We will have regular posts on our Facebook page too. You might think 6 weeks is too long and that you might prefer a shorter period. I read the latest Jeffrey Archer book "Hidden in Plain Sight" over the weekend.

I am very pleased that so many of you have given us authority to contact you by email, and if you haven't you might like to consider letting Central Office know that we can because it makes it so much easier and quicker for contact to be made. We have also had a steady increase of followers of our Facebook page and we now have over 1400 followers. I am sure we can have more and I do ask that those who are already on Facebook to post more comments, recently it seems to be dominated by staff comments and I am sure our members have lots of interesting comments to make.

I have recently been approached by the Marie Curie organisation as to whether there is any way that the Fellowship and the Marie Curie organisation could work together more closely. Marie Curie is a well known organisation and last year helped more than 60,000 people directly and reached over 2 million more. We are exploring how NHSRF and Marie Curie could work together to ensure more people receive the care and support they need. I feel that there are common interests and values which make a partnership viable with a wide range of options on how we can become involved from raising awareness, free online talks, volunteering, fundraising and supporting campaigns.

Do let me know what you think, particularly if you are interested specifically in volunteering, fundraising or supporting campaigns.

The Mirthy talks continue to be very popular and we had a record number of households involved at the last one (519). The process is easy, just visit [www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF](http://www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF)

The next three talks planned are:-

17 November - "We can't let you broadcast that"

1 December - A Christmas entertainment

15 December - 'Tis the season to be jolly

Replays are now available on demand, but you have to register and a confirmation email with a link to join the talk live will be sent. Once the talk has finished, this same link can be used for 7 days to watch a replay of the talk on demand. This overcomes the difficulties of some of our member who routinely had other commitments on Tuesday mornings.

We have just become aware of the Warm Home Discount Scheme where if you are on a low income you may be able to apply directly to your energy supplier to receive £140 off your energy bill for this winter. The money is not paid to you, it is a one-off discount on your energy bill between November and March. <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

Have you thought of becoming a regional representative? You may feel this is a silly time to ask, but it could be ideal as you begin to re-assess what you might want to do during further periods of lockdown and boredom. The regional representative as the title implies, represents the membership across a particular area, works in partnership with Fellowship staff to increase membership and supports branches in their development and sustainability. We currently have several vacancies covering the North West, the North East, Yorkshire, North Wales and South West England. If you live in one of these areas and are tempted don't hesitate to arrange to talk to me by ringing Central Office so we can arrange a convenient time.

Finally, whilst it is a difficult time, you will no doubt be pleased to know that the staff continue to work behind the scenes and Bob Middleton has successfully negotiated a £75,000 grant from the National Lottery Community Fund. The bid was made to make good the shortfall which will occur as a result of the reduced capitation fee this year. It certainly helps the future sustainability of the Fellowship.

I very much hope that the situation has begun to improve when I write to you again at the beginning of December and that we can all look forward to Christmas and the New Year.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely



John Rostill OBE  
Chief Executive