

30 November 2020

Dear Member

I finished my last letter by hoping that I would be able to write with better news before Christmas; there is particularly good news about the development and trials of the vaccine and much publicity has been given to 3 vaccines that seem to have completed highly effective advance trials.

Last week it was announced that the Government had referred 2 vaccines to the MHRA (The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency). If these vaccines are authorised then the government expects that the vaccine will be rolled out from December but realistically the bulk of the rollout will be in the early part of 2021. The Prime Minister very much hopes that by Easter the majority of adults will have been offered the vaccine.

This certainly now gives us the opportunity of beginning to plan for branches to start meetings and other activities early summer 2021 although we would still need to remain cautious.

The vaccination programme will be a huge logistical challenge and it would appear that in addition to vaccinations taking place in GP surgeries and local community centres there will be 30 or 40 mass vaccination centres opened up throughout the country. I know a number of you have volunteered to help with the vaccination programme and although the details are far from clear at present it would seem the best way to volunteer would be to approach your local NHS Trust many of which are currently advertising for help. A cautionary note though some if not all are not engaging people over 70.

If you are successful in becoming a volunteer we would very much like to hear about your experience.

In England from just after midnight on 2nd December the majority of the country will be in Tier 2 high and Tier 3 very high with surprisingly only 2 areas of the country in Tier 1 medium. The tiering arrangements are to be reviewed fortnightly but realistically there will not be any significant changes before the new year.

NHS England has asked if we have any members that have been involved in previous mass vaccinations and would like to talk to them so that these experiences can be published. I know one of our members, Sally Bishop Chairman of the Sutton and District Branch was involved and had agreed to speak to NHS England and the media. If you have similar experience and are prepared to talk to NHS England and the press please let Central Office know?

Wales and Scotland have slightly different rules but all the countries have agreed a window of 5 days over Christmas when the rules will be relaxed.

The Board of Trustees has confirmed that there will not be an Annual General Meeting this year. It had been re-arranged to March but all the signs show that such a venture would not be possible. As there is no AGM it has been necessary to ensure continuity that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman continue in their existing roles until October 2021.

I am really pleased that the monthly newsletters are being so well received and I am grateful to those members who write or ring central office or me. I continue to be fascinated by the stories that our members relate to me and we will try to capture some of these for our future national newsletters. If you do want to share aspects of your career (what might appear ordinary to you, will probably be extraordinary to everyone else) - we would be delighted to hear from you.

My request to share email addresses continues to have some effect but the numbers of you signing up is now dwindling. This is unfortunate because the printed copy of my newsletter often arrives a week or more later than the email copy, although I accept there were some glitches in the system in November which I think we have now overcome.

The Development Officers have produced newsletters for their regions which if you have not already seen a copy can be viewed by clicking on the link <https://nhsrf.org.uk/resources/regional-information/> This may be a good time to remind you to visit our website www.nhsrf.org.uk and to enter the members' area to use Username: member and Password: nhsrf-2019

It is always good when a new benefit is helpful to our members and I am very pleased to report that at least one of our members took advantage of the warm home discount scheme within an hour of receiving the email. To remind you it's a one-off discount on your energy bill between November and March and the contact is <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

Last time I sought expressions of interest from members living in the North West, North East, Yorkshire, North Wales and South West England to become a Regional Representative and I am very pleased to report that it looks as though we have an ideal candidate for the North West. If any other member would like to put their name forward for the vacancy in the North West please contact Central Office before the 15th December. We are still seeking interest for the other areas.

The Mirthy talks continue to be very popular with our members and at the last one on 17th November we had a record 581 households participating. The talks will continue and the programme for the rest of this year is:-

1 st December	10.45am	A Christmas Entertainment
15 th December	10.45am	'Tis the Season to be Jolly
29 th December	10.45am	You're Never Too Old to Rock N Roll

This means that by the end of 2020 Mirthy will have provided 17 talks completely free of charge to the Fellowship. They have been so successful in fact that we have agreed that we will pay for fortnightly talks starting in 2021. The talks of course will remain free to all members and I hope you will let us know what sort of talks you might appreciate in the future.

As I mentioned before we have now started a book club and members were asked to give a recommendation of a book to get the club started. Three books have been selected to be read over the Christmas and New Year period. The chosen books are "The Thursday Murder Club" by Richard Osman, "The Threads of Life" by Clare Hunter and "The Yorkshire Shepherdess" by Amanda Owens. All 3 books are available via Amazon in either paperback or kindle version or you could also buy from bookshop.org which supports independent bookshops. If you want to join the club, which has over 40 members so far, don't hesitate to let us know. When you have read one or more of the books you can email sherry.smith2@nhs.net or debbie.arnold4@nhs.net or write to central office with your appraisal of the book before 31st December 2020. Contacting Debbie or Sherry will also enable you to join the book club.

It's early days, it's a new venture for us, we might not get it exactly right but we think this is the beginning of something that will become very popular over a period of time.

It is encouraging to see that a number of branches have taken advantage of zoom to hold their meetings. It's well worth trying if you haven't done it before, it will never replace face to face meetings but it does enable members to keep in touch during lockdown periods.

Finally as this is my last newsletter before the New Year, and I really do hope that despite all the circumstances you have a thoroughly enjoyable festive period. We all look forward to 2021 and hope that the current prediction that things will be back to "near normal" after Easter is true.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely



John Rostill OBE
Chief Executive