**A HUGE thank you to all our staff at this very difficult time. You have all been amazing, your commitment and support to those you care for is so much appreciated.**

**Update on Coronavirus pandemic**

Since our last newsletter a pandemic has been declared and many things have had to change to prevent the spread of the virus. Above all we need to ensure that we follow advice given by Public Health England (PHE) and previous memos have given you all this advice. **Keep up with frequent hand washing for 20 seconds and this includes when you arrive home after work.**

**SPDNS training updates:** To confirm a previous memo, we have temporarily cancelled update training for all of April and May. We will review the situation for June and keep you informed. If you need any advice or support on training please contact Sue Laurie on extension 232.

**Key Worker status:** We have issued you all with a key worker letter, please keep this with you along with your ID badge. Several shops are setting aside time for key workers to shop so this should help you.

**Here is some information for you**

* **MOT testing:** The government has granted car owners a six-month exemption from MOT testing from Monday 30th March, but vehicles must be kept in a roadworthy condition. Garages will remain open for essential repair work while drivers will face prosecution if they're caught driving unsafe vehicles.
* **Breakdown Cover:** If you have breakdown cover with Green flag they are advising their customers who are key workers to download their app, it is quicker to get through and then state key worker when calling. The AA say download their app for a quicker response
* **Contactless card payment limit increasing:** In a bid to encourage contactless card use the limit for contactless cards is going up to £45 from 1st April
* **Parking restrictions in Southend:** Southend Borough Council announced the following on 24th March 2020 “It has been agreed to **suspend enforcement of all one hour yellow line parking restrictions until Sunday 3 May 2020**, as the council continues to ask people to stay at home to help tackle the Coronavirus outbreak”

**28th March 2020**

**A thank you from the Secretary of State**

**for Health and Social Care**

To my brilliant colleagues in social care,

The last few weeks have been difficult for all of us. I am acutely conscious that you, along with colleagues across the health and social care system, are on the front line caring for and supporting people in incredibly challenging circumstances. Many of the people you care for will be in groups that are at higher risk from Covid-19 and I know that you will have naturally felt concerned for them. At the same time, you will have been grappling with the same issues we all face: how we can best keep ourselves and our loved ones healthy, juggling our own personal caring responsibilities, and looking out for our friends, our neighbours and communities.

**My main message to you is simple: thank you.** Thank you for going the extra mile to make sure the people who rely on you are supported. Thank you in advance for the difficult decisions you will have to make that will keep as many people as possible safe. Thank you for taking on extra shifts to cover for those who need to isolate or have their own caring responsibilities. Thank you for doing the right thing by isolating if you or somebody you live with has symptoms.  Thank you for everything you are doing this week, next week and in the months to come.

We face more difficult times ahead and I know you will have been personally impacted by the measures we have had to take to reduce the spread of Covid-19. Whilst many people are now staying at home, I know that is not an option for most of you as your work, caring for others, cannot be done from home. We will do all we can to make your lives easier during this period, including, for example, making parking on council owned on-street spaces and car parks free for those who work in social care.

The Government is releasing advice and information updates daily and we are working round the clock to make sure you and your employer have the information, equipment and resources you need. For those of you that use Twitter, please follow the Department for Health and Social Care (@DHSCgovuk) for the latest information. We will also make it available through other channels. I also want to reiterate what the Chancellor has said: we are committed to doing whatever is needed; that promise applies just as much to social care as it does for the NHS. Thank you again for everything you do.

Yours ever,

Matt Hancock