

SERVICE CONTINUITY FOLLOWING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Prepared by: *Paul Hunt*

Date: *27th March 2020*

Agenda no: *4*

Purpose of the paper

For Information, Discussion and, if required, Decision

Background and context

The coronavirus COVID-19 infection has been declared a pandemic by the WHO. The UK's response has included increasing numbers and intensity of interventions, in order to suppress the infection rate, protect people and the NHS.

On Monday, 23rd March, the Prime Minister ordered a lock down, initially for three weeks. People are only allowed to leave their home for the following very limited purposes:

- shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible
- one form of exercise a day - for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household;
- any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person; and
- travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home.

Where are we now?

HM's preparations for delivering services differently began several weeks ago (late February), as it became clear that normal service arrangements may not be possible. Arrangements and changes have been accelerated over the past fortnight. At present, all our services have some delivery, but the situation can change very fast. Jonny will provide an operational update to the board.

The Charity Commission and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) have both issued guidance:

- [Charity Commission guidance - 23 March 2020](#)
- [NCVO coronavirus guidance – 24 March 2020](#)
- [NCVO guidance to trustees on governance – 17 March 2020](#)

HM does not have a clause in its governing documents that explicitly allows us to meet virtually or to use telephone facilities. However, the Charity Commission has advised: "Where there is no such clause in your governing document and you decide to hold meetings over the phone or using digital solutions, we will understand but you should record this decision and that you have done this to demonstrate good governance of your

charity.” The decision to hold a formal meeting of the board at short notice with a digital solution is presented in this paper, and will be confirmed in the minutes.

What are the key issues?

There are many topics trustees may want to cover, including concerns, observations and recommendations. Following comments received, review of Charity Commission and NCVO guidance, and discussions with Jonny, the following are proposed as key areas for discussion:

Operational

- Operational update, including redirecting of resources and activities
- Home working arrangements
- How to manage through fast-changing and evolving situation
- Protecting critical functions, e.g. where managed by single staff member

People

- Supporting and protecting our service users, and those new to us experiencing mental distress or crisis
- Supporting and protecting staff and volunteers
- Managing staffing issues, including self-isolation, travel restrictions, sickness, sick leave

Communications

- Communication with funders (inability to meet outputs/outcomes; changes to service delivery; changing priorities for service delivery; reporting deadlines; insufficient resources)
- Public communication
- Service user communication

Financial and commissioning

- For businesses with fewer than 250 employees on 28 February, the government will refund the cost of providing 14 days of Statutory Sick Pay per employee. SSP is £94.25 per week.
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Employers will be able to contact HMRC for a grant to cover most of the wages of their workforce who remain on payroll but are temporarily not working during the coronavirus outbreak. Any employer in the country- small or large, charitable or non-profit will be eligible for the scheme.
- Government loans to small businesses.
- SafeSpace bid
- Resource implications of service continuity

Governance

- Further contingency and continuity planning
- Implications for planned board business: planning for the immediate; governance; forward plan; risk register; next steps

What is asked of trustees?

1. Review the Charity Commission and NCVO guidance.
2. Note, agree and record the decision to meet as required via digital solution, appropriately minuted.
3. Consider the operational update that will be given verbally by our Chief Officer.
4. Discuss the short and medium-term implications for HM.
5. Make any such decisions that: promote and support the health and wellbeing of our service users; support people new to us who find themselves in crisis; support the health and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers; promote service continuity in the short, medium and long term.
6. Consider the effectiveness of the remote meeting and when/how next to meet.

Finance

Whilst there are no financial implications as a consequence of this paper, there may be resource implications (income, expenditure) as a result of the impact of the pandemic: temporary service changes, staff in self-isolation, government continuity grants, funding commitments etc..

Recommendation

The board is asked to note the information provided in advance, discuss the implications of the pandemic, and, as required, make any such decisions that follow from its discussion.