



COVID-19 – An Open Letter to Patients & Families

Dear Patients, Carers and Families,

It is fair to say that as a renal community we find ourselves in uncharted waters. The growing concerns regarding COVID-19 and the categorisation of CKD within the high-risk group, has led to the unprecedented decision by Public Health England/Wales to recommend that all patients with CKD **stringently follow social distancing measures** to shield themselves from the wide-spread public infection.

These measures, together with regular media coverage, can understandably contribute to concern, fear, uncertainty and anxiousness. Moreover, the forthcoming period of isolation is likely to contribute to feelings of loneliness and disconnection. As an organisation we would like to assure you that our support services remain active and that we continue to provide emotional support, information and advice to **all renal patients and their families**. Whilst we have taken steps to modify the delivery of our services, in order to protect the health and safety of our patients, volunteers and staff; **the availability of our core services remain unchanged**. We are also actively taking steps to increase our services, to meet the growing needs of all renal patients and their families. Throughout this, our aim is to do our best to continue our mission of **Putting Patients First** and helping everyone with CKD to **Believe in Themselves**.

If you feel worried, anxious or alone – we are here to help!

Peer-to-Peer Support – our Peer Mentors are a team of renal patients, carers and family members who have been trained to provide **emotional support, information and advice**. Patients, carers and families can access this service for an informal chat with someone who understands their concerns and who is able to provide support during this difficult time.

Please note – to ensure the safety of all patients and volunteers, until further notice this support will be delivered remotely via telephone, video calling or email.



Counselling – our counselling service is available to **all patients, carers or family members**. Our counsellor is also a renal patient undergoing social distancing, and so understands the complexities of CKD and the difficulties faced during this worrying time. Our counsellor can help you discuss and **explore your concerns and manage your anxiety**. We can also provide relaxation techniques and coping strategies to assist you throughout your period of isolation and beyond.

Please note – to ensure the safety of all patients, until further notice counselling sessions will take place remotely via telephone, video calling or email.

Careline – our dedicated careline is available to anyone affected by CKD, as well as carers and family members. We are able to **answer any questions or queries and provide information and advice on a range of topics**. We can also put you in touch with our Peer Mentor and Counselling services, as well as provide useful contacts and signposting to other organisations who provide support for specific issues. This service is also available for anyone feeling lonely who would like a chat during this difficult time.

What else are we doing? – we are continuously seeking to develop and expand our service to meet the needs of all patients, carers and family members. Whilst our face-to-face support groups, such as 'Kidney Cafes', 'Transplant Cafe' and 'Parents & Carers Group' have suspended meetings until further notice, we are **working to set up online groups to ensure all attendees have access to ongoing support**. Details of these online groups will be posted to our website and social media accounts as they develop. We also welcome input from patients, carers and family members, and encourage you to inform us of the services you would like to see developed. Whilst we cannot safely assist with practical tasks such as shopping, we are keen to ensure that all renal patients and their families are supported during this difficult time.

If you would like to access any of the above services, or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch via support@paulpophamfund.co.uk or by calling our Careline on 0800 038 8989

Best wishes from all the team at
The Paul Popham Fund