

Date: Thursday 19 March 2020

Dear member,

You will have all spotted the developing advice from Government around Covid-19 also known as Coronavirus, which is a virus which affects the respiratory (breathing) system whose effects can be mild or serious. I wanted to write a short note to explain the group's position and summarise the Government advice.

Group Position

The Government advice issued on 16th March 2020 indicated that there is potential for people with HSP to be more at risk of severe illness if they are infected, and the government advice is for everyone to reduce gatherings with family or friends.

Principally as a result of these factors we have decided to postpone or cancel group meetings for the next couple of months. I know that many of you find these meetings a lifeline, so I know that having these meetings postponed will be a disappointment. Postponing the meetings prevents you needing to travel and decreases the risk of exposure to the virus either on the way to or whilst you are at our meetings.

I have summarised the Government advice on self-isolation and social distancing as it relates to those with HSP on the next page. We will review the situation as it changes and as the advice from government changes, and I hope that we can plan to hold these meetings again soon.

We have not made a decision about the AGM at this time as that is not for some 3-4 months. The decision to go ahead or cancel the AGM will take into account the government advice on social distancing and if the advice changes about who has an increased risk of severe infection.

I think it may be prudent to assume you are at a higher risk of severe illness and take appropriate action in your day-to-day activities. For your mental health it is important to keep in touch with people regularly during this time, which you can do by phone or through the internet. Some may have kind neighbours offering to help with tasks, which is a good chance to develop new local contacts with people who are genuinely trying to help.

I know that many of you live a life which feels like social distancing or self-isolation a lot of the time, and that many of you often have difficulties accessing food, travel, activities and services. Perhaps Covid-19 will help the wider public appreciate what it is like to live all the time with a restrictive condition like HSP. Also, the sudden prevalence of remote working for many job types may open up opportunities for some of you once this crisis has passed.

I hope that you are all well, and I encourage you to stay safe.

Yours sincerely

Adam Lawrence
Chair

Government Advice

New advice was issued on 16th March 2020. This advice set out general procedures which everyone in the country is advised to follow. The advice also sets out a number of groups of people who are at increased risk of severe illness from Covid-19.

The most common symptoms of Covid-19 are a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature.

Steps everyone should take:

Everyone should wash their hands more often, for 20 seconds with soap. Everyone should cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze, but not with their hands.

Steps for anyone with those common symptoms:

Anyone with those common symptoms should stay at home for 7 days. If you live with other people then all people in your household should stay at home for 14 days. This is known as self-isolation. Those with symptoms should avoid visiting their doctor.

Steps for those without those common symptoms:

People who do not have those common symptoms are advised to reduce interactions with others to reduce the transmission of the virus. This is known as social distancing. People should avoid contact with people displaying symptoms, avoid public transport, work at home where possible, avoid large gatherings and gatherings with family and friends.

Groups with increased risk of severe effects if infected:

The increased risk groups include those:

- Aged over 70
- Aged under 70 and instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds
- Aged under 70 and with a chronic neurological condition

There are many other categories given. Many of us are invited to get a flu jab. You can decide if your HSP is chronic or not, and you may be affected by more than one condition on the list.

If you are in the increased risk group, the advice around social distancing becomes strong advice and you should significantly limit face-to-face interactions.

Further Information:

Those of you with access to the internet can find more information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>