

This is a difficult time for Nursing Homes with many decisions to be made for the good of our residents moving forward. Both residents and staff have suffered loss, loneliness and disruption to their daily routine.

We now face into a new normal and expect many changes to our practices as we learn to live alongside COVID-19. Having worked in an acute hospital for a number of years I appreciate the difficulties both sectors face.

I am committed to giving our residents excellent social and medical care in their home and suggest that we look long and hard at reopening our Nursing Homes by:

- A gradual reopening to visiting starting with planned visits to avoid large numbers of people arriving at any one time.
- Facilitating outdoor visits when weather is good.
- Individual activities or small group activities to facilitate social distancing.
- Use of small dining areas to avoid large groups.
- Return of hairdressing service which can be done in individual rooms using PPE.
- Ideally have no shared rooms and each room to have ensuite facilities.
- Staff to work in one area to avoid cross contamination.
- Provide on site washing for uniforms with showering facilities for staff.
- Ensure staff report any symptoms no matter how minor they may think it is.
- Train nurses to administer IV antibiotics on site thus reducing need for hospitalisation.
- Fund portable X Rays in Nursing Homes thus reducing need to send elderly residents to ED.
- Further improve communication with local hospital. The support from SVUH Frailty team has been excellent and has helped reduce admissions.
- Further outreach services from hospital specialist teams either by phone, e mail or visits.

This is a small number of ideas and I am sure by communicating and working together that we can face the challenges we face as we return to our new normal.