

## Supporting our BAME colleagues during and beyond COVID-19

As we witnessed the Black Lives Matter movement resonate across the world, the sentiments behind this campaign have helped us all be more aware of our behaviour - and that we can all do more to promote diversity, equality and inclusion throughout the society we are an active part of.

In addition to this, we have also seen evidence of the disproportionate impact COVID-19 has had on our Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) colleagues in the health and social care sector.

These two issues combined have reinforced our commitment to fully support our BAME colleagues at Friends of the Elderly and in communities affected by our services and activities. As we learn more about the impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities, our immediate focus is on ensuring that our colleagues are fully served by our values as a charity to:

- Promote **wellbeing**
- Strive for **excellence**
- Treat people with **respect**
- Keep everyone **safe**

### What are we doing to support our BAME colleagues?

- Updating the risk assessment processes to include ethnicity in the vulnerable and at-risk groups. Managers are encouraged to have supportive and confidential conversations with BAME colleagues about any underlying health conditions.
- Engaging with BAME colleagues by giving dedicated time and actively listening to their concerns regarding COVID-19, but also any other issues they might face within their working and personal lives.
- Ensuring that engagement continues beyond one conversation to get the full picture of lived lives.
- Ensuring that all colleagues are aware of the support and counselling services available to them to maintain and promote wellbeing, especially our Virtual GP service for advice and support.
- Ensuring that colleagues know how to raise concerns about their safety, that they feel safe and empowered to raise concerns - and that those concerns are acted on.
- Making sure guidance and training around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), hand hygiene, social distancing, and travel to work is communicated to all; but

offering additional PPE and training to staff identified as higher risk, including where the risk may be higher due to ethnicity.

- Ensure that all BAME colleagues have access to FFP2 masks, if required, and are supported to be fit-tested and given the training and information to ensure safe donning and doffing of all PPE.
- Regular and consistent COVID-19 testing of all staff.
- Increased awareness and communication of enhancements and developments in best-practice infection control measures.
- Supporting colleagues who rely on public transport, if requested.
- Making our workplaces as COVID-19 secure as we can and working in a *Covid Wise* way.
- Delivering on our new staff Wellbeing Pledge which commits to improving, developing, and learning as a charity to ensure we are inclusive and that we continue to promote cultural awareness.

Our support and response will continue to be developed through our Wellbeing Action Plan and our People Strategy, which will value our colleagues, respect them as individuals, understand their perspectives, and strive to provide a supported environment.

We are committed to listening, learning and improving our workplace and we ask and enable all our staff to make a personal commitment to educate themselves on the impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities; and engage in conversations about race, bias and exclusion with our BAME colleagues so that we may share their stories. We encourage all staff to call out behaviours not consistent with our values, and champion the rights of others.

All of us have a duty of care to protect each other and it falls to the Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees to set the tone and provide the necessary leadership, resources, reassurance, and support to enable this to happen.

As an employer, charity and care and support operator, Friends of the Elderly is committed to sustained action, visible leadership, and a willingness to change in order to establish a working environment and culture that attracts and retains the best people who champion our vision, mission and values.

With warmest regards,

**Steve Allen**  
**Chief Executive**