

HAPPY New Year! Let's hope that in 2021 we can be more optimistic about a return to normality, even if things still look somewhat gloomy at the moment, with the threat from a new, more infectious variant of the virus and the national lockdown announced this week.



However, we're delighted to report a significant moment for Springdene when, on the day before New Year's Eve, the first of our residents received their vaccinations against Covid-19.

Rachel Vroom (pictured) and other folk at Spring Lane were visited by a doctor with a team of paramedics who administered the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine – an operation that went smoothly and swiftly for 30 residents and seven staff. (Our residents are veterans of decades of vaccinations and took it all in their stride!) Everybody was happy at how easy it was – and Lori, our manager, who organised the operation, dispensed tea, coffee and chocolates all round.

Residents at Spring Grove are next in line to receive their vaccines, with delivery due this weekend, although at the time of writing Springview folk are still waiting for a date. Vaccinations are proceeding apace for the staff, too – which is another essential tool in our armoury against infection. We have incentives in place to encourage staff to get their vaccinations as soon as possible.

Some of you may be disappointed that the original plan for everyone to receive a second vaccine dose three weeks after the first has been scrapped by the government. The rationale for this is to be able to deliver more first doses to the population in what has become a national emergency. We are now promised a second dose at 12 weeks. This has been a controversial move and we'll report back to you when we know more.

Meanwhile, our Medical Director, Dr Robin Powell, has been contributing to the national debate with a letter in *The Times* this week in which he urges the government to bring retired clinicians back into action to deliver vaccines in "pop-up" clinics. By utilising a team of two to vaccinate 50 people a day, he calculates that 10,000 such teams could achieve the goal of administering two doses to the entire population in a year. Let's hope that ministers are listening!

As many of you will know by now, and despite all the efforts by our staff, the virus has crept back into the homes and folk have been isolating in their rooms in all three locations. But testing has been stepped up, with all staff now taking a rapid (lateral flow) test before starting their shifts. This is in addition to taking a "gold standard" PCR test each week. It offers us an excellent level of knowledge about potential infection and allows people to isolate very quickly.

But isolation does not have to be a lonely business. Eirlys and her activities team have been busy with one-to-one visits to folk in their rooms, and the singalongs in the corridors have been highly rated. Games can still go on, with the Big Quiz and the ever-popular Scattergories keeping people active. Residents are isolated for their own protection, and we don't ask folk to remain cooped up for any longer than is necessary.

There is more good news on the activities front as we welcome the appointment of Tegan to our team at Spring Grove. Tegan is a highly experienced entertainer, having worked in theme parks and on cruise ships. She is also a trained dancer with a very musical background – which sounds like a lot of fun. Welcome, Tegan!

We continue to be asked about visiting to the homes. However, this remains off-limits. Public Health England insist that where there are instances of infection, homes must remain closed. We are also concerned about the risk of the highly infectious mutated virus being transmitted by visitors. Even so, we are hoping that the vaccination programme will allow us to look at re-establishing limited visiting at some time in the future.

In the meantime, we thank you for your many messages of support. Sir Richard Gozney, Governor of the Isle of Man, writes on behalf of his godmother, Marjorie Thacker: "I can understand that this must be a difficult time for Sony and for the staff at Spring Grove. You have all my sympathy and my support."

There is another nice note from Felicity Moir, next-of-kin of Christine Moir, also at Spring Grove. I can imagine how difficult this all is for you, and you have done so well. Take care and my best to you all..."

Lori and the staff at Spring Lane received some wonderful bouquets of flowers, sweets and cards this week from resident Ivy Dawling (who is moving to a nursing home) and her daughter Katherine Jones. They expressed profound thanks to Lori and her team for all their excellent care (see below).



Relative Ondine Upton, writes another warm email: "I just wanted to say a very big thank you. My mother has been in Spring Grove for the last 15 months and has blossomed with the care of your staff – much stronger, happier and more confident now than she was when she joined you.

"Your team have done an exceptional job of both keeping our relatives safe through Covid and being warm and caring when under huge stress. How they have managed this I am not quite sure - truly this is not something any of them signed up for.

"And some of the loveliest things that Sony introduced were occasional "update phone calls" from someone working with our relatives every day – hearing Leonora's news and feedback on how Mum was coping on a daily basis – what she was enjoying and what was tougher – meant so very much when we were not able to see Mum for months at a time.

“So, I wanted to send you a note of appreciation, a full-hearted thank you for all you and your team are doing.”

Residents, too, have been voicing their appreciation. Our three “residents of the week” – Ken Mason at Springview, Reg Boorer at Spring Lane and Artur Reis e Sousa at Spring Grove – tell us that they have been having a great time being pampered with some of their favourite things and receiving a bouquet of flowers. Each brings their own special interests and skills to the homes – Ken is a Liverpool supporter who enjoys crosswords, Reg is a talented artist, while Artur is a distinguished former lawyer.

Next week, we’re looking forward to the 100th birthday of Springview resident Ken Newman. Ken is our very own war hero, having served as a tail gunner in Lancaster bombers during World War Two, including perilous sorties over Berlin. One of the most charming and modest of men, he has many a story to tell about his courageous exploits. Happy centenary, Ken!

We’re very pleased to say we’ve now added up the proceeds from the Christmas raffle organised by Kathy, our reception manager at Springview. There’s a grand total of £520 for Medical Detection Dogs, the brilliant charity which does so much work in identifying Covid-19 and other diseases. One generous individual gave £100 for a 30-year-old bottle of whisky. Cheers! We’ll be organising some more projects in aid of our special charity as the year goes on. Watch this space.

In the meantime, stay safe and stay well for 2021!



Jeremy Balcombe
CEO Springdene Group
