

## **Briefing Number: 2**

**Title: Advice on Coronavirus and SCI people who require care support**

**Date: 13 March 2020**

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### **Purpose of this document**

Approx 20% of SCI people have either live-in care or daily support to help meet their SCI-specific needs. SCI people have been calling us with their concerns and questions about Coronavirus and especially how Coronavirus might impact on their care arrangements.

### **Introduction**

If you require the support of carers or personal assistants, like many other SCI people you'll want to know what to do if you have to self-isolate due to the Covid-19 strain of the Coronavirus. This is relevant to all SCI people but especially so for people with tetraplegia or high-level paraplegia, or who have other health conditions. If you have a higher level of injury, then your respiratory function may be compromised and you could therefore be more susceptible to developing complications from a respiratory infection.

If you acquired your SCI through Transverse Myelitis, Guillain-Barre Syndrome, Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression or Spinal Tumour, you may have an impaired immune system and be at greater risk of serious infection.

In providing this guidance our priorities are twofold;

- to ensure that you get the expert care and support you need - to meet both your SCI-related care needs and, if necessary, to be treated for Coronavirus, and
- that healthcare professionals and PAs/ Carers can conduct their work safely and with confidence around you.

### **How Coronavirus might affect you**

Everyone's situation is different and therefore providing the same advice to everyone is not practical. However, we hope that the guidance below is helpful.

If you contract Coronavirus or another respiratory infection it is very likely that your care needs will increase. They will likely need to be met in different ways, so you should discuss your needs and wishes with your care team before an emergency situation arises. For example, the NHS may provide additional personal protective equipment so that your care team can work safely, increase your care hours, or – if you are diagnosed with Coronavirus – that you would be admitted to hospital as a priority case.

### **Actions you can take now**

- Make sure that your CCG and GP are aware that you are a high-risk patient.

- If you have PAs, ask your care funder, e.g. CCG, for a supply of face masks/ protective equipment for you and your care team. You need FFP3 masks to provide protection from infective aerosol particles produced when you or your PAs cough or sneeze. It is important to protect your care team if they are involved in procedures that can generate infective aerosol particles e.g. if your care team assist with an assisted cough, postural drainage or sputum induction.
- Please also ensure that you have completed an SIA Care Plan available [here](#) or have a written account of your SCI-related care needs and how these are usually met so that other healthcare professionals can understand your SCI-specific needs and how to meet them. We also have [additional information for healthcare professionals](#).
- Make sure you have an adequate stock of medicines and supplies to meet your care needs e.g. continence supplies. Our home delivery partner [SIA Healthcare](#) can help.
- Effective infection control procedures are a sensible precaution at any time. Please see our fact sheet at [www.spinal.co.uk](http://www.spinal.co.uk) and our social media channels for further advice on how to stay safe.
- You should also consider reducing your risk of exposure to Coronavirus by, for example, avoiding large group gatherings, public transport etc.

### **If you think you have been exposed**

If you think you may have been exposed to Coronavirus or are displaying symptoms, you should immediately;

- call NHS 111 and clearly state that you are spinal cord injured and therefore considered to be "high risk" and secondly that your care support is essential in meeting your SCI needs.
- inform your care provider - either the care agency that supplies your carers or your local Clinical Commissioning Group or Local Authority
- inform your local Specialist Spinal Injuries Centre and/or GP

### **Further information**

- Visit our website [spinal.co.uk](http://spinal.co.uk) for further updates
- Follow us on social media:
  - Facebook: [Spinal Injuries Association](#)
  - Twitter: [@spinalinjuries](#)
- Call our advice line on 0800 980 0501 from 1100 - 1630 for further information and guidance.

Spinal Injuries Association, 2 Trueman Place, Milton Keynes MK6 2HH

Email: [sia@spinal.co.uk](mailto:sia@spinal.co.uk)

Website: [www.spinal.co.uk](http://www.spinal.co.uk)

Charity Registration Number: 1054097