

# How do the new Covid-19 rules affect my centre?

*Document by Frank Sudlow, Chair, MS National Therapy Centre, October 2020*

## Background

On 23 March 2020 the Government imposed a lockdown on all of the UK in response to the growing threat of the Covid-19 Pandemic. This did not require us to close, as our Technical Adviser, David Downie, together with Prof Philip James, Petra Kliempt and Dr Mark Wilbourne pointed out, but many centres did close since they did not feel secure in being able to meet the appropriate regulations especially for PPE and Social Distancing.

Since then we have worked together to develop the appropriate protocols and most centres have now reopened. Though new regulations are now being introduced, they are no more severe than those introduced in March and in many cases less so. There is therefore no need for us to change our practice. Provided we continue to observe the protocols we have developed and shared, **Centres can all remain open**. Indeed, we encourage those centres which have yet to reopen to do so.

## Is my centre allowed to be open?

Our research of Covid-19 related documentation has not identified any recommendations or legal bar to centres being open for therapies. Not now, or at any time during the pandemic. Furthermore, there is ample provenance for centres continuing to provide therapies;

- Such health related provision is an essential service (World Health Organisation NIS, Annex II)
- Our therapy centres are not included in any list of businesses or facilities that must close or are subject to baseline/key measures (HM Government Covid-19 Guidance)
- Citizens, other than those subject to isolation, are permitted to leave home for the purposes of healthcare (ditto)
- MSNTC continuing research confirms that those with MS suffer health deterioration when access to therapies is not available
- Public Health England recognises the important role of the Third Sector in addressing NHS inequalities in response to the pandemic (PHE). Their equivalent bodies in Wales and Scotland say the same.
- The NHS across Great Britain are actively seeking to remobilise recovery and rehabilitation services, for which our centres perform an active role.

## **Conclusions**

Our research has not revealed any requirement for MS therapy centres to close as a result of the new and forecast rules and legislation. Indeed there was no legal imperative to close any centre back in March 2020 in response to the UK lockdown.

All of the documentation that we have seen and our conversations /correspondence with the national and regional Public Health professionals and our own advisors confirm that the therapy services provided by centres are valuable and not subject to closure orders.

Many of those with MS have told us that they need therapies and they suffer deterioration without such access.

Frank Sudlow MSNTC Chair;  
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