

Red Balloon Foundation: Statement on COVID 19 Response

Red Balloon Foundation are committed to supporting our team and the families' we serve throughout the current COVID 19 (Coronavirus) pandemic that is affecting the UK and wider world. We trust that under God we will be able to continue in our ministry through this difficult time:

"The faithful love of the Lord never ends!
His mercies never cease.
Great is his faithfulness;
his mercies begin afresh each morning.
I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance;
therefore, I will hope in him!"
Lamentations 3:22-24

We will be following all advice released by the UK Government and will update this document whenever new advice is issued which is applicable to our operations.

Red Balloon Foundation Team

Much of the guidance in this section stands but in the recognition that the vast majority of RBF's face to face delivery is now effectively suspended in line with UK Government advice; we continue to note it here in the hope that we can continue physical delivery in some form as time goes on.

- RBF Team will notify their allocated Strategic Team Member by telephone immediately if they develop any of the following symptoms:
 - o *Fever*
 - o *New Dry Persistent Cough*
- If these symptoms occur during delivery of a group, other team members will assist them to self-isolate within the setting and contact the RBF Duty Manager, who will then seek advice/assistance from 111/999 as appropriate. At the Duty Manager's discretion, the group's activities may stop and remaining team members will contact parents/carers to collect their children as soon as possible.
- Should any RBF team members receive a positive diagnosis of COVID19 infection, all other team members and families that they have interacted with will be contacted by Public Health/RBF to advise them of further steps which need to be taken which may include periods of self-isolation.
- Any team member who exhibits the above symptoms themselves, or shares a home with a person of any age who exhibits these symptoms, whether they have a positive diagnosis of COVID 19 or not, must self-isolate for a period of at least fourteen days and contact their line manager at least twenty-four hours before returning to work. They may in some circumstances be able to continue working from home but if required will receive sick pay from the first day of their self-isolation; any team member who is self-isolating should discuss the options with their line manager within the first twenty four hours of their isolation and review the arrangements if their symptoms change.
- RBF will additionally adjust working times and arrangements to limit non-essential person to person contact, so where home working is possible it will be actively facilitated and encouraged until further notice. Any other timetable changes will be notified to team by telephone on a daily basis (weekdays).
- Any RBF team members who have underlying health conditions which may put them at greater risk of complications arising from a COVID19 infection should seek advice from their GP/111 about any changes that should be made to their work arrangements or practice and communicate these to their line manager as soon as possible.
- All RBF team will be issued with additional cleaning equipment to ensure that shared delivery spaces including surfaces, door handles, etc., are disinfected before groups take place and participants will be directed to wash

their hands-on arrival and throughout sessions as appropriate. Where supplies are available, RBF will also provide tissues and hand sanitising facilities at all of our groups.

- Just as RBF reiterates our behaviour management strategies to all under 18 participants at the beginning of every session, we will also remind everyone in an age appropriate manner about the most current UK Public Health advice around COVID19 prevention (such as hand washing technique, 'catch it, bin it, kill it', etc).
- Should any RBF team members choose to travel to areas identified by the UK Government as particularly 'at risk' due to widespread local COVID19 infection during booked leave time then they must notify RBF before departure and observe all guidance regarding self-isolation on their return. RBF encourages all team to avoid all but absolutely essential long distance or international travel until further notice.
- RBF understands that this may be a very stressful and uncertain time for certain members of our team and will in line with our regular practice offer referrals to counselling and other wellbeing services as required.
- We recognise that during this period it is sadly likely that members of our team may need to take time out to care for family who are affected by COVID19 or to work through bereavements. Team members are encouraged to stay in regular contact with their line manager if these cases should arise so that RBF can do what we can to support our team and their families.

Red Balloon Foundation Groups/Activities

- In line with current UK Government advice, RBF will not be facilitating any activities that would be classed as an 'unnecessary physical social gathering'. We may also have to defer delivery in the case where so many RBF staff have to self-isolate per the guidelines above that we cannot safely continue to offer provision in the opinion of our Safeguarding/Health & Safety Officers. Instead, we are looking wherever possible to creative ways to continue provision in an online/virtual environment and, if possible, in street-based work where this is fully risk assessed and appropriate.
- In any delivery still continuing, where a service user under the age of 18 presents any of the symptoms of COVID19 outlined above, the child will be appropriately isolated under supervision from an RBF team member and parents/carers called immediately to collect the child. If the symptoms persist overnight, parents/carers should notify RBF on office@rbf.org.uk and the child should not attend any RBF activity for a period of fourteen days.
- For groups where parents/carers pay RBF directly for service provision, our standard refund policies apply, as follows:
 - o *"In the event that your child is off school for more than ten consecutive school days due to a serious illness, RBF may be able to offer a refund where a letter from a GP or other medical professional can be presented."*
 - o *"If RBF is forced to cancel a session due to unavoidable circumstances relating to our staff (e.g., multiple staff illness, etc.) a refund for that session will be made available but no further compensation due to alternative childcare costs incurred by parents/carers will be available. If the school site is unexpectedly unavailable (due to heating failure, snow day, etc.) then RBF will not offer a refund."*
- Now that the UK Government has mandated the suspension of all childcare settings in England, we recognise it is unsustainable to continue to ask families to pay for provision they cannot access. As such, unless RBF is allowed to continue to offer childcare to the families of key workers (where separate arrangements will then be made) we will suspend all charges from 20th March 2020 until we are able to reopen when new advice is issued. We would ask in the strongest terms for all families to bring their accounts up to date as soon as possible in line with the last invoice they received.
- RBF undertakes to notify Public Health, OFSTED and our partner agencies as appropriate if any of our team or families' receive a positive COVID19 diagnosis.
- In terms of our relationship with partner agencies, in line with our standard Service Level Agreement, where delivery sites become unavailable, RBF will not offer refunds for undelivered services (see section A1) but where delivery is affected by the non-availability of RBF staff, where this extends for more than one week, partner agencies may activate the SLA termination clause after having discussed options for service delivery variations (see section 14.3.2). RBF will be working with all of our partners to put in place SLA variations to reflect where delivery is being continued and taken online/on to the street.

Red Balloon Foundation Charity Continuity

- With the closure of education settings, RBF has now lost one of its main sources of regular income. Every week of school term time, RBF generates over £4000 through the running of our before and after school care settings which means if the school closures extend to May half term, we will lose over £28000.
- In addition, we will receive no further 'one off' income supporting special events, holiday clubs, festivals, etc., nor are we able to deliver any further commissioned services like MiLife, MiChoice, etc., nor can we fulfil our delivery level contracts with schools and churches where we were providing single staff to support groups or teach. Up to May half term, these activities were budgeted to bring in over £24000 to RBF.
- Needless to say, this huge loss of income will necessitate us redefining ourselves as a charity. RBF is not eligible for any of the support that the UK Government has announced so far in the forms of grants or loans. While the NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) is lobbying hard for the voluntary sector to receive governmental support, there are no concrete proposals or timescale for this support to be offered if it is even agreed. As such, we are going to need to take some very difficult decisions going forward as over 85% of our outgoings are on staffing costs and we have very little standing financial reserves.
- Team should be aware that the leadership of RBF are doing everything possible to pursue new methods of project delivery (including accelerating the role out of our 'FamilyBox' scheme and shifting some children's/youthwork delivery online) as well as launching brand new projects aimed at both supporting families during this difficult time and raising new revenue (such as online curriculum lesson teaching and delivering schemes to feed vulnerable communities). Samantha and Luke as Directors of RBF have additionally chosen to not take any salary since January 2020 and we are also actively looking at liquidating as many assets as possible during the coming days from our equipment stock. However, even in our most optimistic projections, all of that new/altered delivery is very unlikely to bring the required level of income through these next two months, let alone if the school closures persist into June/July. We will be therefore be contacting all of our staff within the coming days to discuss the following options in line with our evolving Charity Continuity Plan:
 - o Agreed Contract Variations – where possible, for some staff where particular aspects of their role can continue in an online/virtual environment or through the drafting of print resources, we may be able to offer continued employment but reduced/altered hours. In addition, for some people we may be able to switch to a 'zero hours' arrangement in the short to medium term so if we are able to generate new projects while our main delivery is suspended then that work can be offered to staff immediately or at least so team can have full continuity of employment and can switch back to a regular contract when schools reopen and our core projects restart in the future.
 - o Enforced Contract Variations – in line with the above, RBF may have to unilaterally make contract alterations where we are unable to meet the costs of paying salaries or offer appropriate alternative work within the charity; team will have the option of taking redundancy as an alternative if they do not wish to accept the variations offered.
 - o Voluntary Redundancy – team may request to take voluntary redundancy at this time and their request will be considered in the normal way in line with their contract of employment.
 - o Compulsory Redundancy – unfortunately in some cases we are likely to have to make some of our team redundant as in the current climate there is simply no work to be completed as key projects they deliver on have ceased with no viable alternative delivery method/funding available.
- It is our desire, hope and prayer that RBF will continue long beyond the current crisis and that we will be serving families, churches, schools and others for decades to come, but without making difficult choices now, the RBF journey will come to an end within the next few weeks. We ask all our team to consider this fact prayerfully as we work together to seek God's will for everyone in the Red Balloon Family in the coming days.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document and for your support through this difficult period. The wellbeing of our team and the families' we serve is always our highest priority. If you have any questions or concerns please contact office@rbf.org.uk and we will be pleased to help.