



23 March 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Housing and Care in Specialist Housing

A Housing LIN Practice Briefing

About this briefing

This briefing sets out at a number of practical things for providers of specialist housing to consider when seeking to reduce the risk of an outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).

It is divided into four sections. The first considers a number of factors about preventing the spread of coronavirus and measures to put in place to ensure residents can continue to live independently. The second section features staffing and workforce matters while the third section considers broader issues relating to the operational management of schemes. Lastly, the fourth and final section signposts to a range of useful online resources on government, and other trade and professional bodies' websites.

Background

Residents living in specialist such as extra care housing will be concerned about the evolving situation, especially if they have an underlying health condition, are vulnerable and/or in need of personal care and support.

It's important that all providers continue to follow the latest information and advice. You can find the most up to date information and advice on the coronavirus on the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

The government has produced key guidance for adult social care and housing. They include:

- Guidance on residential care provision:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-residential-care-provision>
- Guidance for supported living provision:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-supported-living-provision>
- Guidance on home care provision:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-home-care-provision>

- Infection prevention and control:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>
- Complete ban on evictions and additional protection for renters:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/complete-ban-on-evictions-and-additional-protection-for-renters>

Further information on useful government, trade and professional websites can be found in section 4 of the briefing. In the meantime, do let us know of any other steps you are taking not covered above so we can add to this list and share with Housing LIN members. Email us at info@housinglin.org.uk

Some general questions

- What practices and procedures do you have in place to shield residents and staff from coronavirus? [Are they sufficient? Compare to the government COVID-19: guidance for supported living provision.](#)
- Have you set up a coronavirus group with senior managers so you can take decisive action?
- What measures have you implemented to minimise risks and address the challenges of managing your scheme? For example, do they include the following?

1) Independent living

- **Communications with residents:** not all residents have access to the internet, are you providing written advice on what the virtual lock down / self-isolating / social distance is?
- **Personal hygiene:** display information and communicate about coronavirus, its symptoms and how to avoid further spread to ensure all residents maintain their personal hygiene; and ensure that they maintain their personal hygiene i.e. handwashing for at least 20 seconds, to reduce the likelihood of contracting coronavirus; provide sanitisers and encourage cleaning of surfaces that are likely to be touched frequently.
- **Keeping a social distance:** where residents do come into contact with each other encourage a social distance of 2 metres is maintained, e.g. in corridors. They should only be in public areas if there is an essential need – i.e. shopping, getting medical supplies.
- **Covid-19 symptoms:** in line with the latest government advice, any resident showing signs of a new persistent cough or fever should self-isolate at home within their flat.
- **Care needs:** map all residents' personal care or support needs to ensure they are up-to-date.
- **Medication and health care:** discuss with residents if they have any medication requirements or health concerns that might require a prescription, a visit to their GP, a hospital appointment or visit to a pharmacy. In particular, assess any resident who

may need additional reserve medication for emergency respiratory situations such as asthma.

- **Eating:** to restrict unnecessary social contact, ensure food is consumed in residents' apartments only.
- **Leaving the scheme:** residents must follow government advice and stay home except for shopping for basic essentials, medical need and once a day exercise.
- **Exercise:** residents should follow government advice to exercise and not leave home more than once a day.
- **Visitors:** essential visitors only to your schemes, including delivery drivers and those who volunteer, other than essential care or NHS staff providing planned or responsive care.
- **Communal areas:** ensure that residents keep their distance from each other in communal parts or internal areas of the scheme where residents can come in close contact with other residents. Close any bar, cafe or restaurant, lounges, guest rooms etc. Essential use of laundry and shops only.
- **Group activities:** All group activities to close. Encourage residents to engage in activities in their home such as: reading, magazines, jigsaws, music, knitting, their favourite TV/radio programmes available.
- **Feeling isolated:** with restrictions in place preventing going out of apartments, consider alternative ways in which to encourage social contact via telephone, Skype and over the internet.
- **Pets policy:** if you have one, what arrangements are in place to walk dogs or care for pets?
- **Counselling:** advise on how to access bereavement support upon the loss of a family member, friend, relative or fellow resident.
- **Support for people with dementia:** if residents live with or care for someone living with dementia they may be more worried about coronavirus or the impact of staying in their home. Share with them the **National Dementia Helpline** number of **0300 222 11 22**.
- **Safeguarding:** continue to maintain safeguarding policy and be mindful of any additional risk from isolation.
- **Domestic Violence:** people experiencing domestic violence may now be trapped be their abuser – think about how you can support this group.

2) Workforce matters

- **Personal hygiene:** display information and communicate about coronavirus, it's symptoms and how to avoid further spread to ensure that staff maintain their personal hygiene i.e. handwashing for at least 20 seconds, to reduce the likelihood of contracting coronavirus, provide sanitisers.

- **Staff illness:** if staff show signs of a persistent cough or fever they must self-isolate but may be able to work from home. The government has announced new statutory sick pay measures. Can you track who they have been in contact with and give advice to isolate?
- **Travel:** prevent all non-essential travel between schemes and/or offices.
- **Sleep in arrangements/waking cover:** Manage staff concerns by reinforcing protective and infection control measures and resources.
- **On-site staff:** scheme manager, housing officer on-site staff will be required to undertake a number of roles flexibly. This will include working with care providers and local authorities to identify people who are vulnerable and to inform planning if there is an outbreak. On site staff should also be supported to undertake additional protective and infection control measures. Flexible hours should be considered.
- **Contractors:** ensure contractors are following government advice and only permit access where providing an essential service. For example emergency maintenance or repair. Make safe and stop all planned works.
- **Protective clothing and equipment:** do you have sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) for caring for an infected resident?
- **Cleaning:** do you have an infection control policy? Add deep cleaning after confirmed case.
- **Cleaning rotas:** amend so cleaners pay attention to door handles, door plates, lift plates and buttons, metal surfaces and other areas which are likely to be touched frequently. Schemes to be deep cleaned following any confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- **Social alarm/telecare:** make sure you have the right contact number for the resident and any family member. What other functionality does your system have to enable remote care?
- **Remote support to staff:** Staff may be working tirelessly to support residents. Consider whether remote coaching, mentoring and telephone support is needed to help them manage any stresses that arise.

3) Other operational issues

- **Lettings panel:** what arrangements do you have in place to jointly assess a prospective resident with social services? Can you carry this out as a team virtually?
- **Commissioned care:** have you spoken with your social services commissioner about the levels of care you are able to deliver on site? How flexible is the council's contract to respond to additional crisis/emergency in interventions on account of COVID-19?
- **Difficulty paying rent or mortgage:** are you aware of government guidelines on what happens if tenants have difficulty paying their rent or mortgage?

- **End of Life Care:** do you know your local community end of life care services, hospice or Macmillan nurses? Do you know which residents have advanced care planning arrangements, have stated their preference in the event of emergency resuscitation (via a DNACPR or ReSPECT process) and have this documented?
- **Health and medical support:** Can you help minimise any non-essential or routine requests to local GP surgeries? Can you work with GP practices to co-ordinate any visits to different residents?
- **Hospital discharge:** do you have protocols in place for the transfer of care back home? Are you able to offer 'step down' provision?
- **Viewing properties:** Should be put on hold what procedures do you have in place for viewing vacant properties prior to relets?
- **New resident moves:** what procedures do you have in place to help new residents move in (e.g. managed access for removal men) and to help them settle in and become acquainted with their neighbours (see independent living – feeling isolated above)?
- **Staffing ratios:** Given the likelihood that staff will also get ill and need time off to recover, what safer staffing ratios have been developed to ensure that there is enough cover? What business continuity plans are being utilised to use agency staff?
- **Sharing limited resources:** how can you best work with local authorities to establish plans for mutual aid, including sharing of the workforce between supported living and home care providers, and with local primary and community health services providers; and with deployment of volunteers where that is safe to do so?

4) Useful websites

For latest public and professional information and advice on coronavirus and the sector's response visit:

Government policy, guidelines and advice

- Department of Health and Care Services <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>
- NHS England <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Trade and professional bodies

- ADASS <https://www.adass.org.uk/covid-19-responses-and-guidance>
- ARCO <https://www.arcouk.org/guidance-and-information-for-covid-19>
- Chartered Institute of Housing <https://cihnews.org/p/YRX-FXV/our-approach-to-covid-19>
- Local Government Association <https://local.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-councils>

- National Housing Federation - <https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/responding-to-coronavirus--resources-for-housing-associations/>
- Shakespeare Martineau <https://www.shma.co.uk/coronavirus-resource-hub/>

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Note

Updated to reflect government guidance issued on 23rd March 2020. We will continue to review content in line with government advice.

Disclaimer

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About the Housing LIN

The Housing LIN is a sophisticated network bringing together over 25,000 housing, health and social care professionals in England, Wales and Scotland to exemplify innovative housing solutions for an ageing population.

For more information on Coronavirus, visit the Housing LIN's online Info Hub on our Health Intel webpages at:

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HealthandHousing/coronavirus-info-hub/>

If you would like to talk through how the Housing LIN can support your organisation at this time, please do not hesitate to contact us (see contact details below). And for more about our consultancy services, visit: <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/consultancy/>

If you would like to write a briefing for the Housing LIN on how your organisation is tackling coronavirus, please email us at: info@housinglin.org.uk

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