

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION AND ADVICE ON CORONAVIRUS FOR HOUSING

Public Health England provides specific advice, including the current situation in the UK. Their advice is updated at 2.00pm each day and can be consulted at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>

They have recently widened their specific advice relating to:

### Returning Travellers

#### Travellers from Wuhan and Hubei Province and Other Specified Areas

Those who have travelled from Wuhan or Hubei Province in China, Iran, specific lockdown areas in Northern Italy and special care zones in South Korea to the UK in the last 14 days should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of recent travel to the area
- In Scotland phone your GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours
- If in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200 7885.

Residents are asked to follow this advice even if they do not have symptoms of the virus.

#### Travellers from Elsewhere in China and Other Specified Areas

Those who have returned to the UK from China, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Macau are advised that if they have travelled to the UK in the last 14 days and develop symptoms of cough, fever or shortness of breath, they should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as they would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of their recent travel to the country. In Scotland phone your GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours
- If in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200 7885.

#### Travellers from Other Parts of China and Other Specified Areas

This advice applies to travellers who have returned to the UK from the following areas: China, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Macau are advised that if they have returned to the UK from any of these areas in the last 14 days and develop symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath, students should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of their recent travel to the country
- In Scotland phone your GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours
- If in Northern Ireland, call 0300 200 7885.

### What this Means in Practice

We are asking people to take simple, common-sense steps to avoid close contact with other people as much as possible, like they would with other flu viruses.

- this means remaining at home for 14 days after arriving from Wuhan or Hubei Province (or elsewhere in China if there are symptoms) and not going to work, college or public areas.
- where possible, avoid having visitors to your home, but it is ok for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food.

## Implications and Advice for Housing Staff

There are issues for residents "self-isolating" for 14 days if they are living in shared accommodation with other residents. It is difficult to avoid contact with others if residents are sharing WC/washing and/or kitchen facilities. Difficulties are likely to increase in non en-suite shared accommodation of where a kitchen is shared by a larger number of residents.

If possible, the resident concerned should be found some self-contained accommodation which makes self-isolating more practical. It is important that the decision to relocate is made by the resident concerned and that they understand why this is the best way forward.

There are also issues if residents are "self-isolating" about informing other residents in the shared accommodation. Generally, we would recommend that complete transparency is forthcoming and other residents sharing the house or flat should be told. They should be offered help and advice to understand the risks involved and how they can help in the process. In some cases they may also need to be uninformed in any temporary relocation issues.

Residents who are self-isolating will need help and support buying food and other necessities and we recommend that a localised 'support package' is put into place that will ensure that the resident/s do not suffer from social isolation (frequent telephone calls are a good idea).

NHS Guidance for clinicians with a checklist for patients living in houses in multiple occupation are specifically referenced at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation-for-patients-undergoing-testing/guidance-for-nhs-clinicians-on-home-isolation-of-a-patient-while-being-tested-for-wuhan-novel-coronavirus#check> and a checklist of measures and approaches to be taken is given.

**Remember**, this is guidance intended for clinicians but the checklist is helpful in giving a number of criteria for home isolation.

## When Public Health England is Involved

If residents contact the NHS directly then Public Health England is automatically involved and on 10th February 2020 The Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 were put in place to reduce the risk of further human-to-human transmission in this country by keeping individuals in isolation where public health professionals believe there is a reasonable risk an individual may have the virus.

## General Information

This is a time of year when many people in the UK suffer from coughs and colds. Everyone is recommended to follow the usual hygiene precautions in daily life to reduce the risk of infection, such as washing hands regularly, covering their mouth and nose if they sneeze or cough, and keeping kitchens clean.

As a matter of general good practice, this is a good time to urge that all residents should ensure that they are registered with a local doctor and provide further information about that.

Some sites have already displayed posters detailing the Government's advice on the Coronavirus and have followed good practice in disseminating up to date information. If you have not already done so, please ensure up to date information is displayed for all residents to see. Many sites have already displayed helpful information about how to wash hands properly - again this is good practice.

Some sites have considered supplying hand sanitisers in public places, in particular reception areas and areas. There are now severe shortages of these items for bulk purchases by accommodation suppliers. Going forward, it is likely this shortage will continue and become more acute. It is the responsibility of local teams to order these supplies. Please do not over buy and remember, normal handwashing is as effective, so hand sanitisers are mostly helpful in reception areas where people might not be able to wash hands regularly.

## **Disaster Recovery and Emergency Site Plans**

All sites should have a *Disaster Recovery/Management and/or an Emergency Plan* and this is a good time to ensure that this is fully up-to-date and can be used as part of a contingency plan if the situation becomes more serious. That escalation of seriousness will be clearly flagged by Public Health England, not by other bodies. Within those plans many providers will have an *Infectious or Communicable Diseases Policy* or procedure.

## **Dissemination of Information to Residents**

Please ensure your residents are given the information provided by the NHS and do make them aware of general hygiene issues and how to reduce the risk of infection (this can be done electronically if you have text messaging facilities). This is useful but content needs to be balanced against causing unnecessary alarm.

## **Other Matters**

The wider implications of the Coronavirus outbreak have resulted in serious travel disruption being experienced.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office maintains up-to-date travel advice for UK citizens which should be consulted here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

In certain circumstances this advice can affect the validity of travel insurance and residents intending to travel in areas where advice is given should check their insurance with their provider.