

Public Health Guidance on Covid-19 for Sheltered Accommodation

Background

As a country, we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of coronavirus, the government has given clear guidance on self-isolation, staying at home and social distancing.

Sheltered accommodation has been highlighted to Public Health as an area where we may see an increased spread of the virus, due to; use of communal areas, the age of the residents living in such accommodation and needing to support residents to understand the importance of self-isolation, staying at home and social distancing.

Below is key guidance summarised to support sheltered accommodation providers to maintain levels of cleanliness and help their residents understand the importance of government measures.

Context for sheltered accommodation

The below guidance has been written for sheltered accommodation schemes of any size.

This guidance refers to Sheltered Accommodation, meaning accommodation consisting of private, independent units, with some shared facilities. Many singular households, under one roof.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness; therefore it is spread from person to person via respiratory droplets. These droplets can be transferred 1) directly from person to person in close proximity to one another 2) from person to surfaces within accommodation settings and therefore between residents touching the same surfaces.

Preventing Coronavirus transmission in supported accommodation

Whilst sheltered accommodation offers residents their own individual accommodation where they can self-isolate, there are communal areas of the property that may have frequent usage from the residents. Public Health advises that communal areas such as lounges, libraries, cafes, commercial facilities including hairdressers etc are closed off during COVID 19. Closing these areas will reduce transmission.

Public Health recognises that not all communal facilities can be closed, e.g. staircases, bin storage, hallways and laundry rooms.

If a Sheltered Accommodation scheme is notified of a resident who is symptomatic or with a COVID positive test result, Public Health would advise:

1. Messages to all residents are reinforced around social isolation and social distancing – Public Health are preparing a letter that can be sent to residents, highlighting the government guidance.
2. An assessment is carried out around how much time and contact the resident spent in any communal areas, in order to determine the correct level of cleaning required.
3. If required, an increased level of cleaning should be urgently carried out.
4. Waste disposal from any COVID +ve or symptomatic patient should be treated differently (see below, advice also outlines in the letter to residents).

5. If the accommodation provider is aware of any care or support provision arranged privately by the tenant, the need to inform the care agency should be communicated to the tenant. The care/support provider should then be informed by the accommodation provider

If a resident is discharged from hospital, into their own home

If sheltered accommodation schemes are notified of a COVID+ve or symptomatic resident, discharged to their own home, within the scheme, residents should follow the [Stay at Home guidance for households](#) with COVID-19 patients:

- if they required critical care or they are [severely immunocompromised](#), they should complete their self-isolation until 14 days from their first positive test
- patients who did not require critical care and are not immunosuppressed should complete their self-isolation until 7 days from their first positive test
- If the resident lives with others, they should isolate for 14 days as per national guidance.

If the sheltered accommodation scheme is notified of a resident who should be self-isolating and isn't, Public Health would recommend the scheme delivers a letter to the resident, reinforcing the government guidance. In addition, please contact phadmin@warwickshire.gov.uk or call 01926 731484 for any further advice.

Public awareness and actions sheltered accommodation can take

Sheltered accommodation schemes have a key role to play in displaying advice and guidance during this time. Please follow the link:

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101/resources/5016> for access to a suite of posters and leaflets which can be downloaded and printed

The main public health messages include:

- Sanitise hands on entry to and exit from the sheltered accommodation (it would be ideal if sheltered accommodation can provide sanitiser, to reduce the likelihood of transferring respiratory droplets from hands to surfaces).
- To cough into a tissue (or your sleeve) and wash hands after to prevent transfer to surfaces
- To refrain from touching your face
- To maintain a 2 metre distance from other residents
- To wash your hands once you return home, to ensure that you reduced your likelihood of transferring anything from your hands once you have returned home.

Cleaning of communal areas

Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time, such as corridors, but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids can be cleaned thoroughly as normal.

All surfaces that the symptomatic person has come into contact with must be cleaned and disinfected, including:

- objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids
- all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as bathrooms, door handles, telephones, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells

Use disposable cloths or paper roll and disposable mop heads, to clean all hard surfaces, floors, chairs, door handles and sanitary fittings, following one of the options below:

- Clean with a detergent followed by disinfectant with chlorine (1000ppm) – example of disinfectants include Milton, Chlorclean or Tritan.
- if an alternative disinfectant is used within the organisation, this should be checked and ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses
- When items cannot be cleaned using detergents or laundered, for example, upholstered furniture and mattresses, steam cleaning should be used.
- Any items that are heavily contaminated with body fluids and cannot be cleaned by washing should be disposed of.
- If the room is contaminated with body fluids then gloves, apron, fluid-resistant surgical mask and eye protection should be worn. If multiple rooms need cleaning the same mask and eye protection can be worn but gloves and apron should be changed for each room.

Laundry

Wash and dry laundry at the warmest setting the manufacturers instructions allow. Laundry of a symptomatic person does not need to be washed separately. Clean anything used to transport laundry as per cleaning advice.

Waste

Waste from symptomatic individuals and cleaning of areas where possible cases have been (including disposable cloths and tissues), should be double bagged, be kept for 72 hours and then disposed of within normal waste facilities.

If storage for at least 72 hours is not appropriate, arrange for collection as a Category B infectious waste either by your local waste collection authority if they currently collect your waste or otherwise by a specialist clinical waste contractor. They will supply you with orange clinical waste bags for you to place your bags into so the waste can be sent for appropriate treatment.

Repairs and compliance visits

Public Health advice is to continue essential visits to sheltered accommodation in order to undertake:

- health and care provision
- gas servicing
- domestic electric tests
- health safety checks, such as compliance testing for fire safety in blocks

Public Health advice is to contact the tenant before the visit to check whether the tenant or anyone in their household has symptoms or are shielding, and let them know what to expect. If the tenant has symptoms of COVID-19, they must tell the sheltered accommodation provider, prior to the essential visit, to allow providers safe access to accommodation and for the maintenance workers to use appropriate PPE.

Sheltered accommodation residents who are 'shielding' should avoid people visiting their homes, unless absolutely essential. Any care providers or maintenance workers visiting a 'shielding' persons home should wear appropriate PPE to protect the resident, to include a surgical mask, gloves and an apron.

Social Distancing in sheltered accommodation

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). They include things like keeping 2 metres away from people outside of your household and washing your hands as mentioned in previous sections of the guidance. Full social distancing guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

Social distancing in sheltered accommodation is best evaluated by the scheme manager. In addition to the letter to residents, Public Health recommends displaying social distancing posters in communal areas.

If residents persistently breach social distancing guidelines, Public Health advice is to repeat and reinforce government advice, through direct letters to residents. In addition, please contact phadmin@warwickshire.gov.uk or call 01926 731484 for any further advice.

Notes on Extra Care

For Extra Care Housing providers, please refer to the 'social care guidance', in particular, advice aimed at people providing care in people's homes, or advice on appropriate levels of PPE.

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/information-coronavirus/covid-19-national-local-guidance-care-providers/1>

<https://apps.warwickshire.gov.uk/api/documents/WCCC-630-2027>

If care providers are visiting someone's home, who has been discharged within the last 14 days, for associated COVID related systems, please follow the social care guidance, in particular, advice aimed at people providing care in people's homes and advice on appropriate levels of PPE.

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

COVID-19: guidance for 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>

Key Guidance

Key information about the national and local picture with links to key guidance and resources can be found [here](#) (this is updated regularly and sets out the national approach being taken).

Information for the public

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Guidance regarding staying at home and guidance for those at extremely high risk

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>