

Housing First and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is having and will continue to have a significant impact on people experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage, as well as on the services supporting them. It might be useful to spend some time reviewing Homeless Link’s online resources and information, which will be updated regularly: www.homeless.org.uk/covid19-homelessness.

The following is specific advice for Housing First teams in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please also see Housing First Europe website for additional information: <https://housingfirsteurope.eu/research/covid-19-resources-homelessness-housing-first/>

General advice for the people you support

In England, you are currently allowed to leave the house for certain reasons. It might be useful to text this to the person you are supporting as a plain English reminder:

Staying Home Saves Lives

You can leave the house for:

1. One daily form of exercise
2. Food shopping (as infrequently as possible)
3. Meeting medical needs

Please stay at home

For people with internet access, it may be useful to share this [YouTube](#) video.

Key Advice for Housing First Teams

Tips on how to support people remotely or while maintaining social distancing rules:

Practical Tips	
People who are housed	People are who not housed
Daily telephone contact and follow-up with text messages	Speak to the Local Authority about access to hotel accommodation or other temporary accommodation
Doorstep food parcel deliveries (use gloves and maintain 2 metre distance)	Liaise with outreach teams
Doorstep medication deliveries (use gloves and maintain 2 metre distance)	
Ensure people have adequate hand wash	Ensure the person has a mobile phone

If possible, arrange a weekly face-to-face welfare check. Stand 2 metres from the door and use gloves. If no contact, liaise with other services regarding concerns	Attempt contact via telephone calls/text messages
No one should be evicted during this time – speak to Shelter if you need legal advice 0808 800 4444	Speak to Adult Social Care about someone you are concerned about – a care needs assessment may be appropriate
Door step delivery of activities such as DVDs, books, crosswords, art supplies etc (use gloves and maintain 2 metre distance)	Day Centres are being advised to close. If you are concerned someone has no access to washing facilities or food, contact the Safeguarding Team
Where possible, enable digital inclusion by providing internet enabled devices and dongles – this could enable video calls through WhatsApp (or similar applications) for contact or appointments	
Liaise with your COVID-19 Homelessness task force	Liaise with your COVID-19 Homelessness task force

General

Maintain self-care and boundaries

- Increased team contact with daily check-ins. Set up Zoom meetings for weekly 'face-to-face' contact. A guide to using Zoom has been produced by Migrant Voice: www.migrantvoice.org/img/upload/How_to_use_Zoom.pdf
- Ensure 1-1 supervisions continue as planned
- Reissue any Employee Support Programme information to staff teams and share other support options, such as:
 - Text Shout to 85258 if you're experiencing a personal crisis, are unable to cope and need support
 - Call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org.uk
 - Call Rethink Mental Illness on 0300 5000 927
- Your health and safety comes first – do not take risks and always use personal protective equipment (PPE)

Staying strengths-based

- Be mindful of language – try to stay positive
- Talk to colleagues about your concerns/frustrations
- During telephone check-ins, ask people what might help them during this time

Following the 'stay home' rules

- People experiencing multiple disadvantage may find it hard to stay home – reiterate the importance of this during each contact. It might be useful to text the rules (see above).
- Liaise with police, work together to support people finding it difficult to stay home.
- Liaise with Drug and Alcohol and GP services regarding prescriptions and ensure people have the medication they need.
- Take a harm reduction approach to reduce the number of times someone leaves the house, further advice available on Homeless Link www.homeless.org.uk/covid19-homelessness

Risks and Safety Planning

It may be helpful to consider a COVID-19 risk assessment and risk management plan, taking into account:

- Physical health concerns and if someone is in a high risk category
- Domestic abuse and any additional support which may be needed
- Isolation and emergency planning for essential supplies
- Mental health and maintaining contact with supports, medication and crisis management

Co-produce a support plan for isolation by talking through:

1. What does a typical day look like for you?
2. What does a day in isolation look like for you?
3. What needs to happen to help you stay in isolation and feel well?

Support people to register with the NHS Extremely Vulnerable Scheme for additional support: www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable

Stay in touch

This document will be updated. Please send additional information to: alex.smith@homelesslink.org.uk.

To get the latest information, join Homeless Link for Webinar Wednesday by signing up from the website here on Mondays: www.homeless.org.uk/events and follow conversations on Twitter with the hashtag **#HomelessCovid19** and join our COVID-19 Homelessness online forum: www.homeless.org.uk/covid19-homelessness.

If you need information on your local COVID-19 Homelessness Taskforce, get in touch with our Partnerships team:

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