

Supported housing...what we know so far (13 May)



Chartered
Institute of
Housing

Supported housing, including sheltered/retirement housing and extra care schemes, will be supporting a number of people in groups identified as vulnerable to COVID-19, such as those over 70 and people living with underlying health conditions.

UK government guidance:

There are several pieces of guidance that will be relevant for providers of specialist housing to take into account to ensure that they support residents most effectively and to manage these schemes appropriately and safely.

Public Health England's [guidance](#) on shielding is targeted at people whose health conditions make them most at risk of serious illness from COVID-19. It strongly advises them to shield and protect themselves by staying at home for 12 weeks, with no social contact with anyone, except for visits from carers to undertake essential care tasks (such as washing, dressing and preparing food). Those considered most at risk include people with:

- Solid organ transplants
- Specific cancers
- Severe respiratory conditions
- Rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that increase risk of infections
- Immunosuppression therapies
- Pregnant women with significant heart disease.

From 13th May in England, new [guidance](#) has been issued about when people can leave their homes.

People should stay at home as much as possible and only leave it for limited periods and reasons including:

- Work, where you cannot work from home
- Going to the shops that are allowed to open, for food, medicine etc.

- To exercise or spend time outdoors
- For any medical need, including care/ help for a vulnerable person.

Meetings with one other person who is not from your own household is allowed as long as it is outdoors. At all times, people should continue to keep 2 meters apart (social distancing).

People over 70 or with underlying health conditions are asked to be particularly stringent in applying social distancing (see [guidance](#) on staying alert and safe - social distancing)

If anyone shows symptoms of coronavirus, they (and their household members) are required to [self-isolate](#).

The Welsh government has extended its period of restrictions with minor adjustments including:

- Being able to go out to exercise more than once a day
- Planning for safe re-opening for libraries and recycling centres
- Opening garden centres providing they can comply with physical distancing duties.

Click [here](#) for more details.

The Scottish government is maintaining its message to stay at home whilst enabling people to go out more than once a day for exercise; see more details [here](#).

Guidance for:

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

COVID-19
FACT SHEET #3

#CV19HOUSING

The NI Executive has published its [five-step "pathway to recovery"](#) including contact between households and families. Moving between steps will depend on public health criteria being met, and not against any timetable. The regulations will be reviewed "within every three week period", with the NI Executive having already extended lockdown until 28 May.

Regulation of social housing

Regulators across the UK are pausing inspections unless there are serious concerns.

The Regulator of Social Housing in England has issued its latest statement [here](#).

The Scottish Housing Regulator has [announced](#) a shift in its focus on risks arising from the coronavirus. Landlords and local authorities exercising homelessness duties, must notify the regulator where it leads to changes in service levels (including closure of offices, significant disruption to services or financial risks).

The Welsh government has [produced](#) guidance for services supporting people with substance misuse or homelessness.

It has published [guidance](#) for social landlords on visits to and cleaning of properties where there are/ have been confirmed cases.

It has also issued [guidance](#) on action to take where people are unable or unwilling to follow guidance or self-isolate.

Most recently the Welsh government has issued [guidance](#) for local authorities and providers in supported accommodations settings. It emphasises the importance of developing and effective local response to ensure people's safety, ability to self-isolate, and to access sanitation, medical and other support as necessary. It sets out practical solutions to issues arising in the management of supported accommodation settings, including around shared and communal spaces.

Housing Regulation Branch, which undertakes regulation activity on behalf of the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland, issued information on its website which can be found [here](#).

A request to update the Regulator, on the impact of COVID-19 on service levels, is issued and the response to it will be prioritised over routine regulatory work.

Regulation of care services

The regulators of care across the UK are taking similar approaches:

- Inspections of care homes suspended
- Developing remote/ alternative ways to assess and assure quality
- Some limited inspections where concerns about risks to safety and wellbeing

Care Quality Commission England

More specific guidance for commissioners and providers around care homes, supported living schemes and home care provision from Public Health England has been issued by the Care Quality Commission, which may also be helpful for specialist schemes where many households are likely to receive care and support.

[Guidance on home care provision](#)

Includes steps to maintain provision of services by providers and commissioners, and government support, as well as advice on the delivery of care.

- If neither the care worker nor the client has symptoms, careful hygiene regime, including hand washing should be sufficient
- If the client has symptoms, advice is given on use of protective personal equipment
- It provides advice on laundry services and the disposal of material such as tissues.

Guidance on care home provision

As well as detailing steps to maintain services, advice is given to care homes on:

- Reviewing visiting policies
- Emphasising good hand washing hygiene to staff, visitors etc
- Planning how to implement any isolation precautions
- Cleaning and laundry procedures

Similar advice on maintaining services and the appropriate delivery of services has been issued for [supported living schemes](#).

Care Inspectorate Scotland and Health Protection Scotland

Updated information and guidance has been issued for Social, Community and Residential Care settings ([here](#)). It includes information and guidance about:

- Measures to prevent the spread of the virus and protect people at increased risk
- PPE and care equipment
- Management of environmental decontamination
- Restriction of visitors.

New advice for staff in social, community and residential care settings has also been published [here](#).

The information and guidance for care home settings has also been updated; available [here](#) where there is also an incident and outbreak control tool.

Care Inspectorate Wales

It has issued broad information and advice in [social or community care and residential settings guidance](#), giving information about COVID-19 and what to do should staff or someone supported with care and support services become unwell.

It signposts to guidance issued by Public Health England/ CQC for guidance in relation to care homes, home care and supported living (links above).

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (Northern Ireland)

It has stated it will not be issuing any guidance in respect of COVID-19 but reminds colleagues that business continuity plans should be revised and updated to facilitate business model changes in the case of service disruption.

The RQIA has stopped its regular inspection programmes. It is operating a seven day a week single point of contact for care homes and domiciliary care providers. More information can be found by following this [link](#).

Legislation

Legislation to protect tenants in social and private rented housing across England and Wales has been introduced and is covered in CIH's COVID-19 fact sheet #1, which can be found [here](#).

The [Coronavirus Act](#) contains provisions that are intended to free up the time and resources of NHS social care staff, which may also impact on residents of specialist housing services.

Amongst other measures it proposes lifting the duties on local authorities introduced in the Care Act 2014 and Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 to enable local authorities to prioritise services offered to meet the most urgent and serious care needs. This will include assessments of people's need for care and support services and carers' need for support as well as delivery of some services.

Local authorities will still be expected to do as much as possible to comply with their duties, but this is to help to manage demand pressures and possible workforce issues due to illness. It would not remove the local authorities' duty of care towards an individual's risk of serious neglect or harm.

It would introduce similar measures in respect of a duties under a number of acts in Scotland, including:

- Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Social Care (self directed support) (Scotland) Act 2013
- Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.

Westminster government support

A funding package of £2.9 billion from the COVID-19 fund was recently announced. It is targeted at supporting people to be transferred out of hospital when they no longer need urgent medical care, aimed at freeing up to 15,000 hospital beds to meet the pressures of COVID-19.

£1.6 billion will be for local authorities to increase support for the social care workforce, for services helping the most vulnerable people, including those who are homeless, and to ensure follow up care for people who require it when discharged from hospital.

£1.3 billion will be directed to the NHS to enhance the discharge process.

At the same time, NHS England [guidance](#) on hospital discharge requirements was issued, which requires local authorities to ensure strong and clear links between social care and hospitals to speed up discharge of patients in timely way and release hospital beds for new patients.

Local authorities are expected to lead on expanding capacity across domiciliary care, care homes and reablement services.

Voluntary and community services have a place to support people on discharge for example by:

- Receiving necessary equipment at the patient's home
- Safety checks
- Essential food shopping
- Ongoing wellbeing support and contact (telephone calls etc.).

Public Health England have recently issued guidance for the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in domiciliary care, including on extra care schemes, available [here](#).

Recent guidance for businesses and people returning to work also includes guidance for people working in homes, such as cleaners available [here](#).