

# Supported housing... the latest update (8 December)



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing

Supported housing, including retirement/ sheltered and extra care schemes support a number of people in groups identified as vulnerable to COVID-19, such as people over 70 and people living with underlying health conditions. Organisations running these schemes have worked hard to ensure that tenants and residents are kept safe and to respond appropriately to the government guidance issued across the UK, as it changes.

The governments across the nations of the UK are now taking approaches that differ in some of the detail; this fact sheet provides a summary of the latest guidance across all countries of the UK.

There is some general guidance that will be relevant for providers of supported housing to take into account when continuing to support people effectively and to manage schemes safely and appropriately.

## General requirements across the UK

The fundamental principles of hygiene and frequent hand washing; wearing face masks in enclosed public spaces; and taking care to maintain physical distance from others in public underpin all restrictions applied across the UK.

Differences are occurring in the level of restrictions applied across and within the different nations of the UK, including restrictions on

- How often and for what reason people should leave home
- Whether and under what circumstances households can mix in private homes and gardens
- How many people/ households people can meet in open, public spaces
- What facilities and services are open and when
- What services can be delivered in person or online
- What restrictions are being placed on travel between areas and the use of public transport.

All of these have implications for the management of, and delivery of support and care within supported housing schemes.

From 2 December, the Westminster government has introduced a tiered approach applied across England. The detail on what restrictions apply in the three tiers can be found [here](#) and the list of what tier applies where can be found [here](#).

Where someone has symptoms of COVID-19 they must self-isolate for 10 days from start of symptoms (or from date a positive test was taken). Members of their household should self-isolate for 14 days from the time the person showed symptoms (more detail where there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 [here](#)).

The Northern Ireland Executive has introduced [restrictions](#), requiring people to work from home where possible and avoid unnecessary travel. No household gatherings other than with support bubbles. (This is a short term circuit breaker until 11 December; check for updates [here](#).)

Guidance for:

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

**COVID-19**  
**FACT SHEET**

**#CV19HOUSING**

The Scottish Government has set out a [strategic framework](#) for its approach to suppress the virus to its lowest possible limit and keep it there.

From 2 November it is applying tiered protection levels as appropriate to the level of infection and transmission within communities, which extend from a baseline level 0 to the highest level 4 (which local protection level applies where can be found [here](#)).

The Welsh government has provided information on its national rules, which can be found [here](#).

The Welsh government has also issued a suit of guidance for housing, including for home owners, private renters and landlords, as well as social housing and organisations supporting homeless people ([here](#)).

## Steps to take in supported housing

The Westminster government has issued updated [guidance for supported living](#) settings; it is also useful to shape approaches to be applied in other supported housing settings such as retirement/ sheltered and extra care schemes.

Providers and local authorities should take the following steps to support residents:

- Ensure all details of residents are up to date, including the level of formal and informal care people receive, and support people to draw up personal contingency plans for any interruption to care should they/ their carers contract COVID-19.
- This should include identifying people who have personal budgets or self-fund to be aware of the extent of care/ support needs required.
- Providers should have business contingency plans to apply in emergencies and in the case of interruptions to care for residents, as above.
- This should include any information about the impact of changes in care and support/ the manner in which it is provided and likely impacts for the individuals concerned.

- Oversight of people who are extremely clinically vulnerable and self-isolating should be maintained to ensure that they receive appropriate help, including from local health and community volunteering.
- Providers and local authorities should work together to plan for how any severe interruption in care provision can be addressed, including appropriate and safe use of volunteers, but taking care regarding staff moving between different settings.

The government has also recently issued guidance about when testing services are available in extra care and supported living settings [here](#).

There is also previous guidance from Public Health England on:

- [the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) in care homes](#)
- [the use of PPE in domiciliary care](#) (both updated 2 November)
- and government [guidance on cleaning](#) in non health-care settings outside the home.

The Department of Health in Northern Ireland has issued [guidance](#) for providers and commissioners of supported living services, to be used alongside its guidance for domiciliary care and care homes services. Advice for supported accommodation schemes for young people is separate and can be found [here](#).

Health Protection Scotland has updated its [information and guidance](#) in social, community and residential care settings, which includes guidance on:

- Preventing the spread of the virus and protecting people at increased risk
- Staffing measures
- PPE and care equipment
- Management of environmental decontamination
- Guidance on visiting practices.

It has also published advice for staff in these settings and an outbreak checklist ([available here](#)).

Information and guidance for [care home settings](#) has also been updated.

The Welsh government has issued [practical guidance for managing supported living](#), to ensure that it complies with its broader regulations, such as ensuring that no more than four residents gather together at any one time, where the supported living is a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), as each person counts as a separate household under the restrictions.

Indoor visits and physical contact is allowed where the person is providing care and support to a resident in supported living, in accordance with the Welsh Government's [guidance](#) for health and social care professionals (see also the detailed guidance for care homes and providers of social services under that link).

## Regulation of social housing

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) in England suspended its In-Depth Assessments at the outset of the pandemic and extended the submission date for financial Viability Accounts to the end of 2020. It has since recommenced some virtual IDAs, and is focused on organisations with previous G3/G2 judgements where progress is advanced on addressing the actions identified for improvement.

It continues to conduct regular monthly surveys to ascertain the impact of the current coronavirus pandemic on business and service delivery. Reporting is likely to reduce to bi-monthly early in 2021.

Its Coronavirus Operational Response Survey (CORS) reports can be found [here](#).

The Welsh Government has issued guidance on temporary changes it is making to its regulatory programme.

This will involve two stages:

- A contextual assessment (considering organisational size, complexity, development growth and financial capacity and management) to determine when to assess individual registered social landlords
- A light touch interim regulatory judgement confirming the previous judgement in place depending on any issues arising which would materially change its risk profile.

It provides more detail on the process, including the self-certification statement required in the guidance.

The Scottish Housing regulator has issued further [direction](#) for landlords on its requirements. In addition to extending the timeframe for returns on the [Annual Assurance Statement](#) (November 2020) and performance against the [Scottish Social Housing Charter](#) (December 2020), it has issued [supplementary advice](#) to its business planning recommended practice to take account of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, setting out questions to consider on five key areas:

- rent affordability
- risk management and mitigation (including resident safety)
- asset management
- financial planning
- treasury management.

It has also [updated advice](#) for Registered Social Landlord governing bodies covering requirements for AGMs, tenant satisfaction surveys and approving and filing accounts.

The Housing Regulation Branch in Northern Ireland has issued [information](#) on its approach to regulating housing associations during the pandemic, including answers to frequently arising questions around gas safety checks.

## Regulation of care services

The Care Quality Commission has [set out](#) its transitional approach to monitoring adult care services across England from October 2020, including:

- A strengthened monitoring of risk in services, based on existing key lines of enquiry
- Better direct contact with staff, service users and families through strong local relationships and use of technology
- Targeted and focused inspection activity where there are concerns.

There will not yet be a return to a routine programme of inspections.

The Regulation and Quality Inspection Authority in Northern Ireland have established guidance

teams to provide support to care home and domiciliary care providers during the pandemic; information and links are available [here](#).

Visiting in health care and care homes has been [restricted](#).

The Care Inspectorate Scotland has developed a series of self-assessment tools for a range of services including care homes for older people; this will inform and enable any inspections to be targeted, short and focused during the pandemic; See: [Inspection during COVID-19](#).

It has also issued a report with finding and insight from health and social care services on [supporting person-centred care in COVID-19 situations](#).

The Care Inspectorate Wales have issued a [statement](#) on its approach to assurance across social care services for adults and children.

Monitoring services will continue using:

- information and feedback from service users
- discussions with local authorities and health board commissioners
- regular direct contact with services.

More in-depth discussions will take place if needed including:

- virtual tours of the service if appropriate
- virtual interviews with staff
- contact with service users, families/ parents.

If on-site inspections are required, the time on site will be minimised to control risks.