Coronavirus (COVID 19) Guidance

Based on information as of May 2022

Crossroads Together has set out the following guidance to assist staff delivering our services to feel supported.

The organisation will seek advice from and guidance the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health England (PHE).

Information about the Virus

A coronavirus is a type of virus, as a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020.

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection:

- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Difficulty in breathing
- ✓ Fever
- ✓ Loss of smell or taste

How COVID-19 is spread

From what is known about other coronaviruses, spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 meters - 7 feet) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

Respiratory secretions containing the virus are most likely to be the most important means of transmission; these are produces when an infected person coughs or sneezes, in the same way colds spread.

There are 2 main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:

- ✓ Infection can be spread to people who are nearby (within 2 meters - 7 feet) or possibly could be inhaled into the lungs
- ✓ It is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes (such as touching a door knob or shaking hands, then touching own face).

The Department of Health`s current understanding that the virus doesn`t survive on surfaces for longer than 72 hours.

How long the virus can survive

How long any respiratory virus survives will depend on several factors, for example:

- ✓ what surface the virus is on
- ✓ whether it is exposed to sunlight
- ✓ differences in temperature and humidity
- ✓ exposure to cleaning products

Living safely with Covid 19:

As we learn to live safely with coronavirus (COVID-19), there are actions we can all take to help reduce the risk of catching COVID-19 and passing it on to others. These actions will also help to reduce the spread of other respiratory infections, such as flu, which can spread easily and may cause serious illness in some people.

COVID-19, along with many other respiratory infections such as influenza (flu), can spread easily and cause serious illness in some people. You may be infected with a respiratory virus such as COVID-19 and not have any symptoms but still pass infection onto others.

The risk of catching or passing on COVID-19 is greatest when someone who is infected is physically close to, or sharing an enclosed and/or poorly ventilated space with, other people. When someone with a respiratory viral infection such as COVID-19 breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes, they release small particles that contain the virus which causes the infection. These particles can be breathed in or can come into contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth. The particles can also land on surfaces and be passed from person to person via touch.

You will not always know whether someone you come into contact with is at higher risk of becoming seriously ill from respiratory infections, including COVID-19. They could be strangers (for example people you sit next to on public transport) or people you may have regular contact with (for example friends and work colleagues).

There are simple things you can do in your daily life that will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections and protect those at highest risk. Things you can choose to do are:

1. Get vaccinated.
2. Let fresh air in if meeting others indoors.
3. Practise good hygiene:
   - wash your hands
   - cover your coughs and sneezes
   - clean your surroundings frequently
4. Wear a face covering or a face mask.

Face coverings and face masks can help reduce the chance of you spreading infection to others, especially in crowded and enclosed spaces, and may protect you from becoming infected by some respiratory viruses.

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If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, you are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

There is guidance on steps you can take to protect other people if you are unwell with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including COVID-19.

Face Coverings

Face coverings are needed in NHS settings, including hospitals and primary or community care settings, such as GP surgeries.

PHE recommends that the best way to reduce any risk of infection for anyone is good hygiene and avoiding direct or close contact (within 2 meters - 7 feet) with any potentially infected person.

What to do if an employee becomes unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19

If staff become unwell in the workplace, the unwell person should be removed to an area which is at least 2 meters away from other people and wear a fluid repellent surgical mask. If possible find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a shut door, such as a staff office. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation.

They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag then throw the tissue in the bin. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. Returning from travel overseas

All other staff should continue to attend work.

Closure of the office or workplace setting and other actions if staff, members of the public are undergoing COVID-19 testing and they have been in the office, workplace setting. (Public Health England 26/02/2020)

If a confirmed case is identified in this setting, the Health Protection team will provide the relevant people with advice and guidance. (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/contacts-phe-health-protection-teams)

Contacts are not considered cases and if they are well they are very unlikely to spread the infection to others.

People who have not had close contact with the confirmed case do not need to take any precautions and can continue their routines as usual.

Cleaning the office, workplace setting where there are confirmed cases of COVID-19

The local Health Protection Team will provide advice on cleaning; all surfaces that the person has come into contact with must be cleaned including:

- ✓ all surfaces and objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluid
- ✓ all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones

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- ✓ clothing and linen used by the person should be set aside pending assessment of the person by a healthcare professional
- ✓ All surfaces should be cleaned with an anti-viral cleaner

What social, community care setting need to do now

Continue to wear PPE including fluid repellent surgical mask, nitrile gloves, aprons. Visors are to be used when there is a suspected or confirmed case of covid or if there is a risk of bodily fluids splashing.

Continue to undertake weekly covid 19 asymptomatic testing.

Health Protection Teams are part of Public Health England and will provide advice and guidance on infectious disease and non-infectious environmental hazards, manage and control outbreaks of infectious disease in the community and are a source of expert advice in new infections.

For further, frequently updated information see Department of Health website.

Please ensure you collect and wear your PPE (disposable gloves, disposable aprons, hand wash) from you local office.

Reducing risk

The hierarchy of controls is a system used to reduce risk at work. See the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) toolkit on [management of risk when planning work: the right priorities](#) for further information.

The hierarchy of control principles can be broadly interpreted for social care settings under the following headings:

- reducing the hazard
- changing what we do
- changing where we work
- changing how we work
- use of PPE

These controls are ranked in the order of effectiveness. PPE is the last control in the hierarchy, used when all other controls have not reduced the risks sufficiently. To be effective, PPE must be used correctly – for example, putting it on and removing it correctly and safely. This relies on individual compliance, which is considered less reliable as a way of reducing risk.

Reducing the hazard

Public health measures such as vaccination, testing and isolation help to reduce the risk of infection. Vaccination against respiratory illnesses such as flu and COVID-19 is an important measure in reducing the risk of severe disease. Measures such as not coming to work when ill, advising people to isolate while

infectious and recognising and reporting infections promptly, all help to prevent infections spreading at work.

Changing what we do

When faced with a particular risk, such as an outbreak, we may need to change what we do. This might include reducing communal activities, limiting visiting, or adding disinfection into a more frequent cleaning schedule, for example.

Changing where we work

We may not be able to change where we work but the work environment can be made as safe as possible. For example, by improving ventilation, ensuring fixtures and fittings are in good repair and can be easily cleaned and following water safety guidelines, we reduce opportunities for pathogens to survive in the environment.

Changing how we work

Changing the way we organise work can reduce risk. Examples include reducing the number of people in a space at any one time and minimising the movement of staff between different settings. Administrative controls such as risk assessments, training, audit, and providing clear signage and instructions also help to reduce the risk of infection at work.