

At-Risk Groups and Coronavirus

Please be aware that this is an evolving situation and advice may change.

Update as at 26th March 2020

Important Points

1. The people we support may be more at risk of serious illness if they catch coronavirus. The Government have instructed that extremely vulnerable people should be shielded because they have a high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19). Shielding is a practice used to protect extremely vulnerable people from coming into contact with coronavirus.

People who fall in the high-risk group include:

- Solid organ transplant recipients
 - People with specific cancers
 - People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD
 - People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
 - People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
2. This advice also applies to extremely vulnerable persons living in long-term care facilities, either for the elderly or persons with special needs. For emh this includes:
 - Nursing Homes
 - Supported Living
 - Extra Care Schemes (in which emh provide care and support)
 3. All staff must follow the government instructions around 'Shielding' when caring for the people we support.

4. When caring for and supporting someone in an at-risk group, we should support them to follow the face-to-face distancing measures set out below:

- Strictly avoiding contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
- Contact regular visitors to the home, such as friends and family of the people supported to let them know that the household is shielding and that they should not visit during this time
- Not leaving their house - except for regular exercise in their garden
- Supporting them not to attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces for example other family homes, weddings and religious services
- No taking them shopping, participating in external leisure activities or travelling
- When arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact with others

5. When supporting individuals in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and Nursing Homes, the following should be followed:

- Minimise as much as possible the time members of the household spend in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep shared spaces well ventilated at all times
- Aim to keep the people we support at least 2 metres (7 feet) away from people each other. Understandably this is not always possible, so it is vital that everyone in the household should be encouraged and supported to regularly wash their hands and avoid touching their face
- Shared toilets and bathrooms must be cleaned after use every time (for example, wiping surfaces the people supported have come into contact with)

6. *When you are caring for and supporting someone who is extremely vulnerable due to severe illness from COVID-19, there are steps that you must take to protect them and to reduce their risk at this current time:*

- Do not provide care if you are unwell or displaying virus symptoms. Immediately contact the Duty Manager / Line Manager and advise of this so that alternate arrangements can be made for people's care

- Always follow good hygiene and infection control procedures
 - Only care that is essential should be provided (this will have been discussed with you and updated in support plans - however if in doubt, speak with your immediate line manager)
 - Wash your hands when arriving on shift and often during your shift, using soap and water, and for at least 20 seconds each time
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue (or your sleeve), never your hands, when you cough or sneeze
 - Put all used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
7. Medical assistance should be accessed remotely, wherever possible for all of the people we are supporting. However, if a supported individual has a scheduled hospital or other medical appointment during this period of 'shielding', talk to their GP or specialist to ensure they continue to receive the clinical care they need and determine which of these appointments are essential
- It is possible that their hospital may need to cancel or postpone some clinics and appointments. Please ensure you contact supported individual's hospital or clinic to confirm appointments are still going ahead.
8. Social isolation, reduction in physical activity, unpredictability and changes in routine can all contribute to increasing anxiety and challenging behaviours in the people we support. Many people including those without existing mental health needs may feel anxious about this impact, including support with daily living, ongoing care arrangements, support with medication and changes in their daily routines

Individuals can be supported in this by:

- look for ideas of exercises they can do at home on the NHS website
- spend time doing things they enjoy - this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to favourite radio programmes or watching TV
- try to ensure they eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly
- try spending time with the windows open to let in the fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into any private space, keeping at least 2 metres away from other household members

Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T
<p>Keep up-to-date with emh and Public Health England Guidelines</p> <p>Support individuals to keep in touch with friends and family using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media</p> <p>Encourage and support individuals to wash their hands regularly and properly</p> <p>Support individuals to get regular fresh air and exercise by taking part in activities in their garden</p> <p>Clean toilets, sinks and baths/showers after use, every time</p> <p>Use a dishwasher to clean and dry crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using the usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly.</p> <p>Use separate tea towels and bath towels if sharing a house</p>	<p>Leave the house for 12 weeks, except for light exercise in the garden or for emergency appointments</p> <p>Allow non-essential visitors to the home</p> <p>Take part in alternative activities if they involve any contact with other people</p> <p>Eat together if sharing a house or congregate in communal areas</p>