**Infection Control Policy (COVID-19 Led)**

**Includes company policy on general infection control**

Infectious and highly contagious diseases such as The Coronavirus disease named COVID-19, has now been classed by the World Health Organisation as a Pandemic. As the virus has the potential to spread extensively, it’s likely to pose a significant challenge to many organisations.

Providers must work in a collaborative and multi-agency way to mitigate the spread and contain the risk of such highly infectious and damaging diseases.

The government, Public Health England and all Local Authorities are responsible for the advice and guidance disseminated to their Local Providers. Management will ensure all advice and instructions are applied on a daily basis while the threat remains. 1st Healthcare will ensure infection control is a continuous practice and the prevention or management is to be adhered to even when there appears to be no current contagious infections.

As a provider there are several things that need to be in place and that are continually monitored as the spread and breadth of the virus increases.

**Inform**

Staff need to be aware of the responsibilities of informing the management of any symptoms of the virus. The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 and 14 days.

Symptoms of Coronavirus are:

* A cough
* A high temperature
* Shortness of breath

These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have the illness. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu.

If staff exhibit any of the above symptoms, they must contact the NHS 111 service for advice. Do not go to your GP, an Outpatient Walk- In or Hospital. Follow the advice given by the NHS III Service staff. Staff must then inform their employer as soon as practicable to inhibit the spread of the virus.

Employers’ advice will then be given to individual staff who may have contracted the virus on what they must do next including where a sick note has been issued by the NHS 111 Service.

Employees returning from Annual Leave

All employees returning from certain designated areas must contact NHS 111 and inform their employer of the advice given before they return to work.

The Government updates the information about COVID-19 at 14:00 daily, and it’s vital that everyone keeps up to date with the latest official advice on travelling to and from certain countries.

This is in order to delay the spread of infection to both staff, service users and residents.

Staff must be kept up to date through formal identified communication channels.

**Face Masks**

Face Masks are recommended to be worn by symptomatic individuals (advised by a healthcare worker) to reduce the risk of transmitting the infection to other people.

PHE recommends that the best way to reduce any risk of infection is good hygiene and avoiding direct or close contact (closer than 2 metres) with any potentially infected person.

Any member of staff who deals with members of the public from behind a full screen will be protected from airborne particles.

Hand sanitisers are placed strategically at the entrance of all homes and to be used on exit or entry to the unit.

Staff and clients are reminded to wash hands with soap and water on a regular basis after handling objects that can become sources of contamination within the unit.

staff, visitors and clients to log in entrance and exit times placed near the unit main doors. Track and trace applied.

**Communication**

This is a developing situation and changes daily. The following methods will be used to update staff on any developments of new advice issued by the Government or other statutory bodies:

Telephone

Email

Letter

Text message

Company Intranet

Social Media

**Prepare**

In order to prepare for any staff shortage, the Business Contingency Plan must be robust and tested to ensure reliability.

It’s important to keep up to date with Government and Public Health England advice as the situation is developing hour by hour.

There are basic but effective ways to follow to help prevent the infection’s spread including:

* Making sure the workplace is clean and hygienic
* Promoting regular and thorough handwashing by everyone
* Providing all employees with an alcohol-based hand rub which is at least 60% alcohol
* Staff, service users and residents need to be aware of the importance of good personal hygiene practice including used tissue appropriately disposed of immediately after use
* All staff need to be aware of the need to comply with the Infection Control Policy

The Identified Lead or management must be the communication channel that feeds back to senior management who have the responsibility for the liaison with Local Authorities designated Leads.

Local Authorities will have already begun preparations to manage the pandemic; it is therefore crucial that any guidance and advice issued via your Local Authority Commissioning is followed and implemented. Several Local Authorities have already issued contingency planning assessments for providers.

With over 155 Local Authorities it is not possible for us to provide a one size fits all policy, but the steps as listed here are to be used as a self-assessment exercise in managing the risk within the organisation.

All external visitors are expected to follow the infection control protocols which includes immediate hand sanitisation using the items at the stations located right at the entrance of the homes. Visitor access is limited depending on stages of regional infection.

Social distance is expected to come into play.

Access to various rooms within the property is on a needs basis. Items prone to necessary touch must be wiped down with cleaning products provided after any form of contractor work or delivery is completed.

Use of face mask coverings to be adhered to at all times while the visitor is within the accommodation.

Windows are to be opened where work is being completed within the property.

**Business Contingency Planning**

As part of Regulation 17 Good Governance every provider will have in place a Business Contingency Plan. This plan needs to be reviewed, amended and tested for its reliability. The Self-Assessment Contingency Checklist which should be used to ascertain the robustness of the Plan ensuring that any Amber or Red areas identified in the checklist are remedied.

As the situation develops those responsible for the contingency plan will meet regularly to review the preparations and ensure they are still fit for purpose. It is important to act early, even if planned contingencies are not then needed. This will include the general/service manager and all other managers or supervisors available.

This organisation has a statutory duty of care for people’s health and safety. Looking after our Service Users/Residents & Employees, health, well-being and safety is our number one priority during this outbreak.

Workforce Planning:

Schedules will be planned based on essential calls (RED) prioritised First

Available staff will be asked to work overtime in accordance with working time regulations

Asking family members to act as the extra staff member on double up calls (subject to risk assessment being carried out)

Where possible cancel all annual leave

Offer incentives to work additional shifts/hours

Office staff to assist where possible

Use Agency Staff if required

Work with other providers to cooperate with each other and share resources where possible

Office staff will work remotely

Office will be closed if necessary

Flexible Working will be implemented

For Residential Services

Available staff will be asked to work overtime in accordance with working time regulations.

Ask staff to work split shifts.

Where possible Management and Office staff to assist with care tasks.

Use agency staff if required.

Where possible cancel all annual leave.

Work with other homes in the area to share resources.

Flexible Working to be implemented.

Are staff able to be accommodated overnight.

**Young People**

All steps must be taken to protect and mitigate the spread of the virus to the people who matter most, our service users or residents. It is important that staff remain calm, diligent and observation will be key to picking up any likely infection source. Close monitoring of service users or residents should be introduced in order that any contagion is picked up as early as possible and appropriately reported in order that the required measures are put in place. Follow specific government guidance for care homes and community settings.

All service users, and their wider support network will be contacted to assess their wellbeing and to inform them that there is a disruption to the service and therefore an interruption or change to their normal service is going to be made. It is important that people are reassured during this time and anyone that is particularly alarmed or distressed should be offered some support.

Reassurance and support to young people is paramount to prevent panic and distress.

**Contingency Self-Assessment checklist.**

This document is to be reviewed daily by the Organisations lead or team

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Business Contingency Actions | Fully Ready | Part Ready | Not Ready | Action Taken/ Risk Mitigation |
| Identify your Lead or team manager | X |  |  | General manager / Safeguarding Manager |
| Have you tested your Plan for reliability |  | X |  | We’ve had to identify and minimise risks . |
| Identify and mitigate risks |  | X |  | Unit manager to check with staff team if they would consider working with quarantine client for 7-14 days and document response |
| Accessible, up to date and reliable information from government sources | X |  |  | The general Manager or Safeguarding Manager |
| Update your communication strategy to staff, visitors and family | X |  |  | General Manager / Safeguarding Manager provides regular updates based on government sources |
| Test your Plan with the staff and evaluate their reaction | X |  |  | Staff are fully cooperating |
| Check all supplies of all PPE, consumables and medicines | X |  |  | All other managers keeps the General manager fully up-to date re supplies and confirms placed orders |
| Check pharmacy reliability |  |  |  | NA |
| Financial check on cash flow requirements. | X |  |  | Director /General Manager closely monitoring cash flow |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Check and test contingency of employee absences of 10%, 20% and 50% | X |  |  | Identified a number of Bank staff who are currently willing to fill in any gaps / absences. |
| Institute Red, Amber and Green priority for Young people |  |  | X | Duty or general Manager to issue a spreadsheet for staff to identify all young people particularly vulnerable with underlying health issues. |
| Consider how to reduce contact between staff to staff and young people e.g. staff or young people’ meetings, visitors etc. | X |  |  | Depending on the infection situation regionally, management will introduce a No Visitor Policy and extend that to include No inter service visits. |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Monitor and implement government and employment advice on sick leave, pay and return to work | X |  |  | Human Resources fully up to speed re new employment advice. |
| Consider flexible and at home working for relevant staff | X |  |  | Already in place, managers are working where possible from home and working flexible hours. |
| Ensure adherence to all relevant policies and procedures | X |  |  | Staff fully aware of current policies and are emailed all updates. |
| Establish quarantine procedures where applicable |  | X |  | General-Safeguarding Manager to submit measures identified for individual clients. |
| Communicate all roles and responsibilities for triggering the Plan |  | X |  | Gene-Safeguarding Manager to submit measures identified for channels of communication. |
| In case of outbreak take immediate steps to non-essential activities |  | X |  | General-Safeguarding Manager to submit measures identified. |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Consider a central point of communication for Coronavirus only | X |  |  | General -Safeguarding Manager |
| Support and assist staff and communicate to allay rumours and anxiety | X |  |  | All Managers |
| Develop platforms, intranet, social media, email for communicating actions to staff, customers and visitors. | X |  |  | Currently emails issued to all staff, re early shopping hours, confirmation of employment letters. WhatsApp groups created for Managers to raise any concerns and highlight any immediate issues. |
| How effective are the communication systems | X |  |  | Working well and informative |
| Establish connection with Public Health Protection Team and all Local Authority relevant departments e.g. Local Emergency Planning. |  |  |  | [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)  Location Plans  Corona Virus (COVID19)-signposts to the link to Gov.uk website &NHS website.  [Phe.slhpt@nhs.net](mailto:Phe.slhpt@nhs.net) [slhpt.oncall@phe.gov.uk](mailto:slhpt.oncall@phe.gov.uk)  Telephone -03443262052  Fax 03443267255  Out of hours 0344326 2052  Location Plans  Corona Virus (COVID19)- link to Gov.uk website & NHS website  UKHCA  0208661 8188  020 8661 8161  Guidance and information easily accessible from these locations. Accessed and shared and discussed company wide. |

Sources of supported information:

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care>
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19#guidance-on-facemasks>
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-social-or-community-care-and-residential-settings-on-covid-19>