

2nd April 2020



Questions and answers about the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation for members of the public in South Lanarkshire who are volunteering their support and staff of community and voluntary organisations assisting in the community

It is recognised that members of the public who volunteer their time and staff of community and voluntary organisations who are supporting others within the community have already played a key role since the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak began and that they will have a vital role to play in the coming weeks and months. This document has been developed to try to address the information needs that volunteers and staff of community and voluntary organisations may have.

Members of the public and staff of community and voluntary organisations should not undertake community support work for COVID 19 if they are over 70, have an existing long term condition, are pregnant or have symptoms indicative of COVID-19 infection. Please check the latest advice on www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus

Community and voluntary organisations should ensure all volunteers and staff are appropriately screened to ensure they are suitable for providing support on this basis.

General COVID-19 advice

What is coronavirus (COVID-19) and what are the symptoms?

COVID-19 is the illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan city, China. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a new continuous cough and/or high temperature (37.8C or greater). The majority of people will have mild symptoms, however, COVID-19 can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people and those with long term conditions.

How does the virus spread?

COVID-19 is spread by droplets. Respiratory secretions, from the coughs and sneezes of an infected person and also when they speak, are likely to be the main vehicle for transmission of infection. This could be:

- Directly – from close contact with an infected person (within two metres) where respiratory secretions can enter the eyes, nose, mouth or airways;
- Indirectly – by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching your own eyes, nose or mouth.

What can I do to help to stop it spreading?

COVID-19 is now spreading within communities. This means that you should stay at home and only go outside for food, health reasons or essential work (only if you can't work from home) and for one form of exercise per day (alone or with members of your household).

You should practice good hand and respiratory hygiene and social distancing measures ensuring you are a minimum of two metres from others at all times when going to the supermarket, going to work or helping others in the community. Please check the latest guidance on www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus

How do I practice good hand hygiene?

Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, particularly before eating or handling food, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, and after going to the toilet. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.

How do I practice good respiratory hygiene?

Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with disposable tissues and dispose of them in the nearest waste bin after use and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

What's the advice about contact with people who have respiratory illness?

It is important to avoid direct contact with people who have a respiratory illness (including avoiding using their personal items such as their mobile phone).

What should I do if I develop symptoms – or anyone in my household has symptoms?

If you develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, the most common of which is a new continuous cough and/or high temperature, you should stay at home and not attend for work/volunteering duties. If you have these symptoms you should stay at home for seven days from the start of the symptoms, even if these symptoms are mild. If you live with someone who has symptoms of cough and/or high temperature, you should stay at home for 14 days. Please check the latest guidance on www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus

Community Support by Volunteers and staff of community and voluntary organisations

What is the advice on reducing the risk of infection in my role?

The majority of community support roles by volunteers and staff of community and voluntary organisations at this time should not involve face to face contact with clients.

Minimising contact with others ensures reduction in spread of coronavirus. In your community support role you may be shopping or picking up prescriptions and delivering these items to people in the community who are vulnerable or self-isolating.

You should practice good hand and respiratory hygiene. You should wash your hands or use alcohol hand sanitizer prior to handling any goods or items being delivered to the person you are supporting.

You should ensure that you deliver items to the door, knock on the door, ring the bell, or phone the client and then step at least two metres back from the door. Check that the client receives the items, then leave. You should then wash your hands again or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer following delivery of the items to the door. If delivering a prescription ensure it is delivered to the correct address/client.

Always avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.

What is the advice for home visits?

Direct contact with clients should be avoided however where there is a requirement for you to have face to face contact with an individual you are supporting (e.g. due to mobility issues) it is **essential** you contact them in advance of your visit to check if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

If you must be in someone's home, **only do so if they are symptom-free** and remain for the shortest time possible. Avoid being in the same room. If you must be in the same room stay for the shortest time possible and remain at least two metres apart.

Where the person you are supporting has COVID-19 symptoms (a temperature or new continuous cough), face to face contact should be avoided and you should not go into their home. Support should be delayed until the person recovers (after 7 days from onset of symptoms - if they live with others, you would also need to consider whether they are symptomatic).

If you have concerns regarding the welfare of a client following withdrawal of voluntary sector support, advice can be sought from the South Lanarkshire Council Community Well-being line on Tel: 0303 123 1009.

Home visits are not recommended for people who are **shielding**, except in exceptional circumstances. Shielding is a measure to protect extremely vulnerable people from coming into contact with coronavirus, by minimising all interaction between them and others. These individuals are being offered support directly from the local authority, and will have received a letter advising them of this.

What is the advice on cleaning?

Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces that you use while undertaking your community support role.

What is the advice on “social distancing”?

You should consider how to implement social distancing advice and ensure that you are aware whether the person you are supporting belongs to an at risk group as outlined in the social distancing guidance at www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus. Ensure in all of your activities that you apply social distancing between you and anyone else, keeping a distance of at least two metres apart.

What is the advice on community transport?

If you are providing transport to take someone to an essential appointment, **only do so if they are symptom-free** and use a larger vehicle like a mini-bus or people carrier. Ensure the passenger sits at the back of the vehicle and the distance between you and the passenger is as wide as possible (two metres minimum). Ensure the vehicle interior is wiped down with household detergent or bleach before and after each journey and wash your hands/use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after the journey. The organization delivering community transport should complete a risk assessment for this activity which should be reviewed by the driver prior to each client journey.

Do I need to use personal protective equipment?

Personal protective equipment e.g. face masks, gloves or aprons is not recommended for community support roles as this does not involve the provision of direct care to individuals with confirmed or suspected coronavirus infection. Good hand and respiratory hygiene and following social distancing guidance are the best ways of preventing spread of the virus.

Further advice and information

- It's important to keep in touch with and talk to friends, family and colleagues during this difficult period (by phone or online apps).
- Further up to date information on COVID-19 is available from NHS Inform: www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus
- If you don't have symptoms and are looking for general information, phone the free coronavirus helpline on 0800 028 2816. The helpline is open from 8am to 10pm each day.