

**HEMOCARE DEPARTMENT**  
**CORONAVIRUS [COVID-19] ADVICE & ACTION CARD UPDATE**  
**VERSION 3 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2020**

This advice is an update to Version 2 dated 20<sup>th</sup> March 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

The evidence to date suggests that for people who are normally in good health the symptoms are generally mild. However these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

**Preventing the Spread of Infection**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

There are general principles anyone can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- washing your hands often - with soap and water, or use alcohol sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol, only if adequate handwashing facilities are not available. Refer to hand-washing guidance previously provided.
- covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in a bin. Catch It, Bin It, Kill It
- people who feel unwell should stay at home and should not attend work
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

**What to do if you develop symptoms consistent with Coronavirus?**

**It is important that you are fully aware of what you must do should you develop any of the symptoms of the virus as referred to above.**

You must contact your Supervisor **by telephone** as soon as practicable to discuss your situation. If the matter arises out of normal office hours contact the Homecare Manager On-Call service.

If you develop any or all of the symptoms listed above you are required to self-isolate **for 7 days**. There is no need to contact your doctor or other health professional at this stage, you should only make contact with your doctor or the NHS 111 service if you are no better after 7 days, your condition worsens or you have an underlying condition that increases the risk of coronavirus, such as lung disease, compromised immune system, diabetes, etc. Self-isolation can end on day 8 after the on-set of the symptoms if clinical improvement has occurred and you have had no fever for 2 days.

If any member of your household develops a fever, new cough or experiences breathlessness you must also self-isolate, along with the rest of your household for **14 days**.

In the event of a medical emergency dial 999.

Your Supervisor will link with Occupational Health to determine how your absence from work will be recorded.

When in self-isolation you will refrain from work and remain at home. You should restrict contact with family members and visitors throughout your self-isolation. Further advice on self-isolation is available from the PHA website <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/pha-advice-new-coronavirus-guidance>

### **What do you do if a service user becomes unwell and displays symptoms consistent with Covid-19.**

**It is important that you are fully aware of what you must do should any of your service users develop any of the symptoms of the virus as referred to above.**

At each scheduled visit before you commence your care tasks check with your service user if they are feeling unwell and presenting with any of the symptoms of Covid-19, fever, new & persistent cough or breathlessness. If you become aware that one of your service users has developed any of the symptoms you must make contact with your Supervisor immediately, if out of hours contact the Homecare Manager On-Call. Advise the service user or a family member to make contact with their GP practice by phone for advice. Your Supervisor will liaise with the service user, their family and social worker who will make arrangements for the matter to be addressed. You will be advised by your Supervisor if there any implications for your ongoing care and support to the individual in question. It is very likely that the services user will be required to self-isolate. Your Supervisor will consider what particular arrangements will need to be put in place to facilitate this including the provision of PPE [see section below]

### **Guidance for the provision of care and support when service users are required to self-isolate.**

The following guidance has been issued to social work staff to follow in the event that a service user must self-isolate. By following this guidance the risk of transmission of the virus will be reduced and thereby protecting the service user and the care worker

If a service user or a member of the household develops symptoms of COVID-19 [fever, new and persistent cough or breathlessness] they are required to self-isolate. The purpose of Self-Isolation is to minimise the risk of transmission of the virus, as such the person in self-isolation should avoid contact with all other people as far as is reasonably practical. When the service user is self-isolating the Key worker should in the first instance consider whether the service can be temporarily stood-down to minimise the potential for transmission. The key worker must consider alternative supports that can be put in place during the period of self-isolation, in particular input from family.

If no alternative arrangement can be made and home care support needs to continue then this should be on the basis of the minimum level to meet the short-term need and to address identified risk. This may involve temporarily reducing the number of calls and or the duration of the calls. In doing so it is acknowledged that some elements of the care plan will not be delivered. If the homecare service is for meal provision then alternative arrangements should be made, e.g. meals on wheels, family support, etc. Once the period of self-isolation has passed, up to 14 days, then the service will be re-instated.

In a case where the service user is symptomatic and in self-isolation the home care workers will be required to wear appropriate PPE, gloves, aprons, fluid resistant face mask and in particular circumstances a visor. Your Supervisor will make sure that you have access to the necessary PPE. If the situation arises out of hours contact Homecare On-Call who will provide a response. If a member of the household is symptomatic there is no requirement for the face mask if appropriate social-distancing can be observed within the household. Your Supervisor will determine if this is the case

### **Service User Letter**

The Trust has written to all homecare service users who are in receipt of a domiciliary care service to advise how the evolving situation may affect the service they receive. A copy of this letter is attached for your reference.

### **Personal Protective Equipment [PPE]**

**You should already have a supply of routine PPE.**

***IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A SUPPLY OF PPE THEN CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR IMMEDIATELY TO ARRANGE FOR PPE TO BE PROVIDED.***

**Please note that face-masks are not provided to be worn routinely, only in cases where the service user is symptomatic, in such circumstances you will be provided with a supply of face-masks as a priority.**

Attached is the most recent guidance issued by N. Ireland's Chief Medical Officer [dated 28<sup>th</sup> March 2020] that clarifies what appropriate PPE is required in a range of care settings, the requirement in a domiciliary care setting has been highlighted.

If the official guidance relating to PPE is updated in the future you will be routinely notified.

Your Supervisor will distribute PPE in the normal manner. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly increased the demand on PPE. The Trust has put arrangements in place to ensure its staff have a timely supply of all necessary items. It is important not to be wasteful with PPE at this time.

## **Social Distancing**

It is very important at this time that the care system continues to operate and the crucial work done by you is vital to this. Wherever possible whilst carrying out your work you should adhere to social distancing. However the very nature of your job will make this difficult at times as you provide personal care and practical support to vulnerable individuals in their own homes. If you have any concerns about aspects of your role speak to your Supervisor who will provide advice and guidance on a case by case basis on how to mitigate any risk.

**Everyone** should do what they can to stop coronavirus spreading. The best way to do this is to take heed of Government instructions to **stay at home:**

- only go outside for food, health reasons or to carry out your work which is deemed as an essential service
- if you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people;
- avoid non-essential use of public transport, varying your travel times to avoid rush hour, when possible;
- do not meet with friends and family – keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media;
- use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services;
- wash your hands well and often, and avoid touching your face.

The PSNI can enforce the travel and social restrictions that have been implemented. It is therefore important that you carry your Trust photographic ID card with you as you go about your work duties as you may be requested by the PSNI to provide proof that you are undertaking travel associated with your essential worker role.

## **Self-Care**

Life is very different at this time. It is important that during this time of uncertainty and apprehension that you take time to look after yourself. Attached is advice on self-care and details of the Staff Support Helpline where you can speak to someone in complete confidence if you are finding your thoughts or emotions more difficult to manage at this time.

## **Further Information and Advice**

This is an evolving situation. The Trust will be provided with updated information in the days and weeks ahead. All relevant information will be shared with you by email.

If you have any questions about this matter speak to your Supervisor or Homecare Service Manager.

You can obtain the latest advice from the following websites;

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>

**Homecare Department, Spruce Villa, Gransha Park, BT47 6TF**  
**Tel: 02871 864385 Email: [martin.mcgeady@westerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:martin.mcgeady@westerntrust.hscni.net)**