

# Groundswell

Out of homelessness



## CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

For people who are sleeping rough

## What is Coronavirus?

Coronavirus or COVID-19 is an illness that can **affect your lungs and airways.**

COVID-19 has symptoms similar to the flu. In almost all cases people will not die from having coronavirus. However, **for people with existing health conditions it can have increased risks.** Symptoms to be aware of are:

- a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back.
- a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly.

It's important that you take steps to **keep yourself and those around you safe and healthy.** It is particularly important for people who:

- are 70 or over.
- have a long-term health condition.
- are pregnant.
- have a weakened immune system.

## Using day centres & support services

- Official guidance from Public Health England outlines that **hostels and day centres do not need to close** at the current time.
- Day centres and support services **will change** the way they are working, and this may have an impact on you.
- You don't need to stop using day centres or other services however **try to reduce the time you spend there** and **maintain physical distance** from other people.
- **If you have symptoms of COVID-19 you should not go to support services like day centres.**
- **If you have been using a support service or day centre and develop COVID-19 symptoms then contact them and let them know your situation and needs.**
- GP practices and other services are likely to have their own policies for managing coronavirus and may close, cancel appointments or not allow walk-in patients.

All NHS services for coronavirus are **free for everyone regardless of their immigration status** in the UK. This includes coronavirus testing and treatment, even if the result is negative. **You will not be reported to the Home Office for coronavirus testing or treatment.**

## More information:

NHS Guidance:

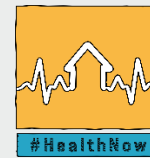
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Drug Treatment and COVID-19:

<https://www.release.org.uk/blog/drug-treatment-and-coronaviruscovid19>

Harm reduction and covid-19 for people who use drugs: <https://www.talkingdrugs.org/covid19-harm-reduction-for-people-who-use-drugs>

**Version 1: The information in this document is correct as of the 17/03/2020. Guidance is likely to change and we will update as frequently as possible.**



### Looking after yourself & your community

To limit the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus follow these steps:

- **Wash your hands with soap and water** often (especially when you go into buildings such as day centres or libraries) – do this for at least 20 seconds. Use public toilets where you can. If there is no soap available use hot/warm running water. It may be useful to carry a bottle of water and soap.
- Use **hand sanitiser gel** if soap and water are not available – this may be available from services.
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve** (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze. Toilet paper will do the job so collect enough for yourself when you can find it.
- Put used **tissues in the bin immediately** and wash your hands afterwards.
- **Avoid close contact with people who have symptoms of coronavirus.**
- Only travel on public transport **if you need to.**
- **Avoid social activities and areas with large groups of people** (see section on day centres and support services).
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

### What to do if you have symptoms when rough sleeping

The NHS recommends isolating yourself for 7 days if you have either:

- **a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back.**
- **a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly.**

If you are rough sleeping, **we realise self-isolating will be a challenge.** We recommend that you contact support staff from a day centre, outreach team or local support service and let them know your situation. **You should avoid going to the service in person as this will increase risks for yourself and other people.**

**Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.**

You can contact NHS 111 for urgent advice if you are unable to get support from local support services or if:

- you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms.
- your condition gets worse.
- your symptoms do not get better after 7 days.

NHS 111 is a free service you can contact if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do. You can contact it through:  
111.nhs.uk or call 111. You can call NHS 111 free from a mobile or a pay phone. There may be a wait to speak to someone.

### Important considerations if you are feeling unwell

If you are in a situation where you or someone around you is suffering from coronavirus symptoms but you cannot self-isolate inside please consider the following things:

- **Avoid close contact** with others including sharing tents and bedding.
- **Stay in contact** with friends, family and support services by phone or through the internet.
- If you need **food or drink, think about where these are coming from.** You may need to make arrangements for it to be dropped off to you. Contact a support worker or service for help.
- If you need **drugs or alcohol,** consider how these can be delivered to you.
- If you need **medication/scripts, then let your prescribing service or a support worker know.** You will need to make arrangements for having this dropped off.
- If you have a dog or another pet, try to keep it away from other people. Avoid interacting with other people's pets.
- **Don't share cigarettes, pipes or drink from the same bottles and cans.**