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**. The symptoms include:

- **a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back**
- **a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly**
- **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste**

In almost all cases people will make a full recovery. However, **it is particularly important for the following people to be extra careful:**

- People aged 70 or over
- People with a long-term health condition
- Pregnant women
- People with a weakened immune system

Version 8: The information in this document is correct as of the **16/10/2020.** Guidance will keep changing, we will update as frequently as possible.

What are the rules?

The Government has told everyone to **'stay alert and stay safe'** by practicing social distancing to limit the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus, this is difficult if you are homeless.

The restrictions on socialising vary depending on UK country but also across each country. Rules are rapidly changing.
Visit https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae to find out your local restrictions – or check the local news (radio TV, internet, newspapers).

- Try to limit the number of people you see to limit the spread of the virus
- You can travel - you **MUST** wear a face covering on public transport (unless you are exempt)
- You **MUST** wear a face covering in any enclosed space such as shops, banks, museums etc. (unless you are exempt)
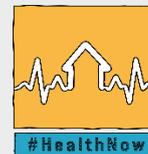- You can view properties to rent

You can be fined for not wearing a face mask and for not complying with local restrictions.

All NHS services for coronavirus are **free for everyone – whatever your immigration status.** 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.

# Using day centres & support services

Most day centres and support services across the country are impacted by the coronavirus so they are **changing how they work**. Each **local area will have different support in place for people who are homeless**, so you will need to speak to a support worker, the outreach team or your local authority to find out more information.

Please note guidance and restrictions vary across the country and UK. Make sure you find out your local restrictions: https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae as things are changing rapidly.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)
People who are rough sleeping

How do I look after myself and my community?

- Follow the **social distancing rules** (see guidance on previous page)
- There is a commitment from the Government to accommodate people who are rough sleeping, but services are different in different towns and cities. Try to contact your local homelessness services or Local Authority to find out more.
- **Don't bed down near to people or share tents with people** that you have not already been sleeping near to
- If you have a dog or another pet, keep it away from other people and other pets
- **Don't share cigarettes, pipes or drink from the same bottles and cans**
- **Wash your hands with soap and water often** for at least 20 seconds. Use public toilets and if there is no soap available use hot/warm running water. It may be useful to carry a bottle of water and soap
- Always wash your hands when you go into and leave buildings or public spaces
- Use **hand sanitiser gel** if soap and water are not available
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve** (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze. Toilet paper will do so try and collect some.
- Put **used tissues in the bin** immediately and wash your hands afterwards.
- **Do not touch** your eyes, nose or mouth unless your hands are clean
- Use your elbows, arms and shoulders to **open doors** instead of your hands
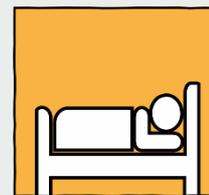
NHS 111 is a **free service** you can contact if you are **unsure about your symptoms**. You can contact it through: **111.nhs.uk or call 111**. You can call NHS 111 free from a mobile or a pay phone. There may be a wait to speak to someone.

What should I do if I have coronavirus symptoms when rough sleeping?

If you have COVID-19 symptoms (see first page) it is a legal requirement to self-isolate. This means you must not leave your accommodation for ANY reason – we recognise if you are sleeping rough this rule cannot be followed.

You must get tested as soon as possible. You can either visit a local test site or order a home test kit for free; the test is a nose and throat swab. To arrange a test visit: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/ or call 119. If you test positive for COVID-19 try to tell anyone you have been in close contact with.

If you or someone you come into contact with has symptoms of COVID-19, self-isolate; but you only need to get tested if you have symptoms. 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.**

If you are in a situation where you or someone around you is suffering from coronavirus symptoms but you cannot self-isolate inside, try to follow these steps:

- **Stay at least 1 metre away from other people**, do not share tents and bedding
- **Stay in contact** with friends, family and support services if you can
- Can someone bring food and drink to you? Could you ask a support worker?
- Can your **pharmacy or prescriber make arrangements to get medication or script to you?** Could a support worker collect for you?
- Do you need **alcohol or drugs**? Can someone bring them to you?