

Refugees At Home: Coronavirus Policy Updated 23.09.2020

Coronavirus is a viral infection which causes symptoms similar to 'flu. This has been declared a global pandemic in which large numbers of people are already infected. Measures are currently in place to try to limit the spread of the infection. Current advice suggests that infection with the virus leads to a mild to moderate illness for the majority of people. A small proportion of the population is at risk of becoming more seriously unwell. Those who are thought to be more vulnerable include the elderly and those with underlying health conditions as well as those from BAME communities and pregnant women.

Coronavirus and fears about the infection are impacting on the work of Refugees at Home.

This policy outlines the general principles which will inform our approach to this uncertain and changing situation. Regular updates will be made. Employees and volunteers cannot give advice about Coronavirus: hosts, guests, referrers, volunteers and employees will be asked to consult the NHS and government guidance when thinking through their own response to possible exposure to the virus or the development of symptoms.

There is now different advice in place for different parts of the United Kingdom where the authorities have made a variety of responses to varying levels of severity. **However, across the whole of the UK, if you or a member of your household has symptoms you should self isolate at home.**

As of 14th September, the Rule of 6 now applies across the UK. There are different rules in each nation and these are included below. Penalty notices can be issued if these rules are not followed.

For the purposes of hosting, R@H is working on the premise that a guest does form part of a household.

Current advice from the government in **Wales** is -

- **People should not gather indoors in groups larger than 6 people for social purposes. This does not include children under the age of 11. Everyone within this group of 6 must be part of the extended household or 'bubble'.**
- People must not gather outdoors in groups of more than 30.
- Face masks are mandatory in indoor public spaces and on public transport. Travel should only be undertaken where essential.
- If you develop symptoms you should self isolate and book a test.

Current advice from the government in **Scotland** is that:

- There is a national ban in Scotland preventing households from mixing. The exception is where caring duties are required.
- Up to a maximum of 6 people from two households may meet outdoors but they should still practice social distancing.
- Face masks are mandatory in indoor public spaces and on public transport.
- People are encouraged to avoid crowded places
- Hands and surfaces should be cleaned regularly.
- People should stay 2 metres away from each other where possible.
- If you develop symptoms you should self isolate and book a test.

The advice in **England** is slightly different and now states that:

- People should not gather indoors or outdoors in groups of more than 6 for social purposes. Children are not exempt from this number and are counted towards the total of 6.
- Social distancing should be maintained, with people keeping two metres apart where they are not wearing a mask, and one metre if they are wearing a mask.
- Masks are compulsory on public transport and in public spaces except for those who are exempt.
- You should wash your hands regularly.
- If you develop symptoms you should self isolate and book a test.

Northern Ireland

- There is a national ban on households mixing. The exception is where caring duties are required.
- No one should meet in groups larger than 6, from two households, outdoors for social purposes.
- No one should meet in groups larger than 15 outdoors for social purposes.
- Masks are compulsory on public transport and in public spaces except for those who are exempt. It is not necessary to wear a face mask in a public space that operates a ticket system.

There are local lockdown restrictions in place in some parts of Scotland, Wales and Northern and Central England which will mean bespoke restrictions in some regions. Restrictions in these regions, or any new ones added, should be followed and placements may not be made there during the time these are in place.

Symptoms of Coronavirus

As Coronavirus is a relatively new virus, some of the symptoms have changed as more has been learned about it. Not everyone will experience the same symptoms and some people may feel none at all.

The main symptoms are -

- A new, continuous cough
- A high temperature
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

You may also experience -

- Shortness of breath
- Extreme fatigue

The situation is changing by the day and advice about Coronavirus can be found on the [NHS website](#)

There is also advice available from the government - Government guidance: [Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#)

Hosting

- **We are open to new referrals and are working with our most trusted referrers to ensure guests fully understand the importance of continued social distancing.**
- **Where possible we will try to find options for our guests who need to leave existing placements.**

- **All guests moving into a new household should self isolate for a period of 10 days. Referrers will be asked to ensure the guest fully understands and agrees to this before the move is arranged. Guests will be reminded of this if they need to move between placements and the necessity of this will depend on the hosts.**
- **We are asking all hosts and guests specific questions relating to their health and vulnerability to Coronavirus.**
- It is possible that it will become more difficult to find available hosts for guests who need to move but we will do all we can to help those in need.
- For current placements, hosts, guests and referrers will be asked to update us as soon as possible if someone in the household develops symptoms suggestive of Coronavirus.
- **We will ask all referrers to ensure that guests are aware of the current policy advice and restrictions on movement. If a guest will not abide by these we will end the placement and not make a new one. While there is some easing of restrictions, we recommend continuing to keep movements and interactions with others to a minimum.**
- **Hosts may have different rules for their households, which we will ask guests to respect, so long as they are reasonable.**
- **Guests must not move between friends and their host's home, unless this is something that the host is wholly happy with.**
- **If a guest feels uncomfortable in their current placement and is concerned that social distancing is not being practised by their host, we ask that they let their referrers know. We may be able to find an alternative placement but we cannot guarantee this.**
 - We **ALWAYS** depend on referrers to ask appropriate questions of guests and inform us about any health conditions. This is even more vital at the moment. We are asking referrers to talk about the virus with prospective guests - using an interpreter where necessary. Any information about the guest's health will be shared with their current or any prospective host.
- **We are asking all guests about any symptoms they have experienced in the last 14 days.**
- Hosts will be asked about the same symptoms and any details shared with the referrer and guest. Hosts will be asked if they know themselves to be in one of the vulnerable groups identified by the NHS. These hosts will be discouraged from taking in new guests, unless the household is easily segregated.
- If a guest needs to move between a placement, they will be encouraged to avoid public

transport. Our Placement team will liaise with the relevant referrer to try and facilitate this.

- If a host or guest develops Coronavirus and either the guest or host asks for the placement to end, we will do all we can to assist but will advise **that members of a household should self-isolate on the same premises**. We will not be able to offer further placements to this guest until they have recovered unless we have empty properties available - the availability of empty properties is quite rare. If we are able to offer further placements after this time, the nature of how the original placement ended will be shared with the new host.
- If a host asks that a placement ends as a result of their concern about Coronavirus but not because anyone has the virus, all efforts will be made to find a new host for that guest. As with all placement endings, we cannot promise these efforts will be successful.

Home Visits

Home Visitors will not be asked to visit new hosts in person unless the host has a suitable outdoor space and the host and HV feels comfortable. If a face to face home visit goes ahead, this must be done from outside and a video tour of the property arranged. We recognise the importance of face to face contact when doing a home assessment however continued social distancing is important. Where a new host is offering a suitable option (an empty home or one where any guest could self-isolate for ten days), a virtual home visit will be arranged. Any questions that the Home Visitor is unsure of should be relayed back to the Placement team so we can provide consistent responses for hosts and HVs.

Employees and Volunteers

- Much of the work of those involved with Refugees at Home is undertaken remotely so there is no face to face contact between volunteers, guests, referrers and others.
- Members of the Placement Team will work from home and additional support will be given by the Executive Director and Trustee Operations Group.
- The Placement Team and Volunteers can seek advice from the Executive Director and the Trustee Operations group should they have concerns or questions about how to deal with this situation.