



**Cartrefi
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Cymru**

**Community
Housing
Cymru**



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Housing Associations: A guide



Updated: 1500hrs 18th March 2020

New or amended information to the previous day will appear in red

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1. Context

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to cause significant disruption to the operations of Welsh housing associations due to impacts on workforce, tenants and ability to deliver services.

As of 0800hrs 17th March, a total of 1950 cases have been confirmed across the UK and 60 people are confirmed to have died from the virus. The number of cases is likely to be a significant underestimate due to a scaling back in testing of suspected cases.

There are 149 cases confirmed in Wales. However, testing for the virus has now been scaled back other than in hospitals and clinical settings. It is therefore likely that number of cases will be a significant underestimate.

During a press conference at 1700hrs 16th March, the Prime Minister announced a change in approach to combatting the spread of COVID-19. This includes guidance that:

- Anyone showing the symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate along with their entire household for a minimum of 14 days. Those living alone should self-isolate for a minimum of 7 days
- All unnecessary social contact should be avoided, including visiting pubs, restaurants and theatres
- All unnecessary gatherings should be avoided
- Unnecessary travel should be avoided
- People should work from home, if they can
- In Wales, those with very serious underlying health conditions will be contacted by the NHS this week (w/c16th March) and guided to self-isolate for 13-16 weeks

People over 70, pregnant women and/or with underlying health conditions ([listed here](#)) should pay particular attention to this advice.



Welsh schools will close from the end of Friday 20th March, following action from Welsh Government.

This resource has been created for housing associations to support with their preparations around, and response to, the outbreak of COVID-19. We hope it will also help HAs to form guidance for their own audiences including tenants.

Please note this resource is a consolidation of official guidance, and is not guidance created by CHC.

2. Core Guidance

[Daily statement from Public Health Wales](#) (updated 1100hrs)

- Latest position regarding testing and response to the virus

[Key information from Public Health Wales on COVID-19](#) (updated regularly)

- Number of cases
- Advice for the public
- Advice for healthcare professionals
- Guidance for schools
- General information on the virus

Please note, due to high traffic the PHW website may be inaccessible from time to time.

[Welsh Government resources](#) (updated regularly)

- general information
- specific guidance for
 - education sector
 - social, community and residential care sector
 - businesses and employers

[UK Government COVID-19 resources](#) (updated regularly)

- general information (if not available through Welsh Government resources)
- additional guidance (if not available through Welsh Government resources)

3. Communication with tenants, staff & general public

Community Housing Cymru has formed a specific [Yammer group](#) for the sharing of information on approaches to the COVID-19 outbreak. This group is accessible by staff nominated by each member housing association. If you would like access to this group, please ask permission from your chief executive, and then contact Bryony Haynes on bryony-haynes@chcymru.org.uk. An additional shared resource exists with access for nominated staff from each housing association to detail their response to the outbreak.

For communications colleagues, the [PR Group](#) is being utilised to share practice. If you would like to join this group please contact Rebecca Goodhand on rebecca-goodhand@chcymru.org.uk.

Here is an [example of public communication from a housing association](#) aimed at consolidating existing guidance for tenants and the public.



The contents of this document should provide content for communications and will be updated regularly.

We will also be sharing up to date UK Government and Public Health Wales guidance from our CHC Twitter handle (@CHCymru) daily.

When developing questions for tenants prior to contact with staff, housing associations may wish to have regard to a combination of the [new guidance on self-isolation](#) and, additionally for travel questions, the [withdrawn guidance on returning travellers](#).

4. Cases of COVID-19 amongst your workforce or exposure of your workforce to COVID-19

[Welsh Government guidance](#) for businesses and employers lays out what to do if a member of staff is believed to have contracted the virus or staff have been in contact with a case. This includes:

- Somebody becomes unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19
- Somebody with suspected COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace
- Somebody with confirmed COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace
- When individuals in the workplace have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- Cleaning offices and public spaces where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

If the setting is a social, community or residential care, [separate guidance is available](#)

We are aware that the guidance for a staff member having suspected COVID-19 currently advises limited action until a case is confirmed through testing. Due to the restriction of testing to mainly hospital settings, it may be that multiple unconfirmed COVID-19 cases may occur in your workforce before any are confirmed. We are seeking urgent clarity from Welsh Government on this guidance and seeking further advice.

We note that [guidance for individuals returning from affected countries](#) has been withdrawn by Welsh and UK Governments. This is in favour of the new [universal guidance on self-isolation if symptoms are present](#). However, housing associations may wish to continue to have regard the withdrawn guidance, which is still visible, in addition to the new guidance.

5. Movement of Staff

We are working with Welsh Government on assurances of exemptions for essential staff members in the event of severe travel restrictions in Wales.



6. COVID-19 and care/support settings

[Guidance for social, community or residential care settings has been issued by Welsh Government.](#)

[A suite of guidance is also available from UK Government on the impact of COVID-19 in non-clinical settings.](#)

This guidance documents above will assist social, community and residential care employers in providing advice to their staff on:

- the novel coronavirus, COVID-19
- how to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections including COVID-19
- what to do if someone with suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in an health/social care setting
- what advice to give to individuals who have travelled to specific areas, as outlined by the UK Government
- risk assessments for undertaking domiciliary visits or providing care in residential settings
- actions to take if staff come into contact with someone who is self-isolating or is a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19.

We are aware of the potential impact on the care & support workforce due to sickness/self-isolation. We are seeking urgent clarity on expedited registration process of additional care workers.

We are working with Welsh Government, Cymorth Cymru and healthcare professionals on the development of guidance for providers of services to people who are homeless. We expect this guidance shortly.

CHC are also members of a working group dedicated to updating guidance for social care settings and we expect updated guidance shortly.

For any specific inquiries relating to the delivery of social care and COVID-19, Welsh Government have a dedicated inbox:

SocialCareCoordination@gov.wales

CydgysylltuGofalCymdeithasol@llyw.cymru

If appropriate, please copy rhea-stevens@chymru.org.uk into any queries to assist with our tracking.

We note that [guidance for individuals returning from affected countries](#) has been withdrawn by Welsh and UK Governments. This is in favour of the new [universal guidance on self-isolation if symptoms are present](#). However, housing associations may wish to continue to have regard the withdrawn guidance in relation to returning travellers, which is still visible, in addition to the new guidance.

7. Availability of supplies to essential services

We are working with Welsh Government to gain assurances on the availability of supplies (food, toiletries, medicines etc.) to essential services and vulnerable people.

We have received assurances from Welsh Government that attempts are being made to secure supplies, including hand sanitiser, for essential housing services.



8. Delivery of services to tenants affected by COVID-19 including those self-isolating

We are working with Welsh Government and the HSE to obtain developed guidance on the delivery of services to tenants' homes.

Currently, the [guidance for social, community or residential care](#) may provide interim advice. [UK Government advice on home care visits](#) provides some transferrable guidance.

Welsh Government have developed [FAQs for social landlords](#).

An example of guidance produced by a housing association for staff visiting homes is available in our [Yammer group](#)

9. Flexibility in compliance due to inability to access homes

We are working with Welsh Government and the HSE to obtain guidance for housing associations on the approach to H&S compliance in the situation that significant numbers of homes cannot be accessed for testing/inspection due to the outbreak. This document will be updated as soon as we receive this and the change communicated.

10. Flexibility in grant & funding processes

We are working with Welsh Government to confirm the situation with regards to ongoing and future grant and funding processes.

We have raised specific issues including:

- The need to suspend wet signatures on applications
- Relaxation of monitoring for certain grants (including Housing Support Grant)

11. Managing isolation in schemes with communal spaces

[Welsh Government guidance for social, community or residential care settings](#) lays out guidance for the isolation of residents in these settings. In lieu of guidance for other settings, this guidance could be considered.

Latest UK Government guidance on [social distancing](#) and [self-isolation](#) should also be considered.

12. Delivery of services to rough sleepers (including day centres and hostels)

We are working with Welsh Government and expert partners to develop detailed guidance to support those delivering hostels and day centre services to rough sleepers.

In the meantime, [UK Government have issued basic guidance for these service types](#).

This guidance includes actions to take if someone suspects or is confirmed to have COVID-19. This guidance may also be of some use to similar areas such as housing association receptions.



13. Advice for providers of floating support/home care

Whilst more specific guidance is developed, existing [UK Government guidance on the provision of home care](#) may be of use

This guidance may also be useful when developing guidance for any staff needing to visit tenants' homes

14. Further FAQ

[A frequently asked question page has been published by Welsh Government for landlords.](#)

If you have any specific questions you believe should be answered by guidance, please do not hesitate to contact Will-Henson@chcymru.org.uk

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