

Groundswell

Out of homelessness



CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

England lockdown 2: guidance for people experiencing homelessness

What should I do if I think I have COVID-19 symptoms?

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 or in shared accommodation, 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.**

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**

How can I prevent coronavirus?

The key message is:

- **Hands** – wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- **Face** – wear a face covering in public spaces
- **Space** - stay 2 meters apart from people you don't live or bed down with

This guidance is based on national restrictions that came into place for England on 5th November until at least 2nd December.

Am I more at risk because I'm homeless?

If you are clinically vulnerable you are at higher risk of severe illness if you catch COVID-19. Clinically vulnerable are any of the following groups (the same people who are instructed to get an annual flu jab):

- People **aged 70 or over**
- People with **chronic mild to moderate respiratory diseases** (e.g. asthma, COPD, bronchitis)
- People with **chronic heart disease**
- People with **chronic kidney or liver disease** (e.g. hepatitis)
- People with **chronic neurological conditions** (e.g. Parkinson's, MS, motor neurone disease, cerebral palsy)
- People who have a **weakened immune system** (e.g. because you take steroid tablets)
- People who are **seriously overweight**
- People who are **pregnant**

In many local area's people who are homeless are included in the 'clinically vulnerable' category, regardless of illness or age.

How is lockdown 2 going to affect me?



What can I still do?

- Attend **work or volunteer**, if it cannot be done from your accommodation
- Go to the **shops or a takeaway restaurant** for food and drink
- Get **medical care** – visit a **GP, dentist, hospital or pharmacy** (although some services may move to the phone or online, so do check)
- Go to the **bank** and the **Jobcentre** (some services may move online, make sure you check)
- **Attend a support group** like AA or NA (they are able to operate for up to 15 people), although some may close or move online
- Attend a **place of worship** (if they are open)
- **View properties for accommodation**



Can I be outside?

- You can still go **outside in public spaces** with anyone in your household or with one person from another household - this could be going for a walk or sitting on a bench for a chat and a coffee
- **Public toilets will still be open**



Can I go to work, college or university?

- You can still **go to work** if you cannot work from home
- **If you are clinically vulnerable (see first page) you should not go to work** – you may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA). Ask a support worker about this or contact the Jobcentre Plus.
- If you are in education such as a college or university, they can stay open – check directly with them.

What about travelling?

- **You can travel:** to work, volunteering, for medical care, to go to the bank or Jobcentre, to the shops for food or drink, to view or move to accommodation, to attend a support group or to attend a place of worship.
- Unless you are exempt, you must **always wear a face covering on public transport** (e.g. busses, trams, trains, tubes and taxi's). **Local charities and support groups may be provide you with a face covering.**
- **Do not travel if you have COVID-19 symptoms**, have been in contact with someone who does or have been told to self-isolate – **you can be fined.**



Anything else I should know?

- You should avoid meeting with people who are not part of your 'household' (unless it is one person in an outside space). **The rules are complicated if you are homeless, as it is likely you do not have a specific 'household'.** For example, it is not clear whether hostel accommodation is considered a 'household' in government guidance.
- Check with staff about steps that are being taken to keep people safe in your accommodation.
- Guest accommodation providers (e.g. hotels, B&B's) will be closed to the public but have been told to work with their Local Authority to provide accommodation to people without a home, they have also been given extra funding. **The accommodation options will vary in each local area. If you are rough sleeping speak to a support or outreach worker, a local charity or your Local Authority to find out more. If you are rough sleeping you can call StreetLink on 0300 500 0914.**
- **Libraries** have been told they can stay open – remember you can **access IT equipment** there.