

Delivering high quality person centred support during COVID

About this briefing

The COVID pandemic has encouraged many practices to embrace technology, to good effect in many cases. None the less, there are certain settings and groups of individuals for whom a degree of in person, one to one support is vital to achieve desired results.

As an assertive model of outreach and engagement, Housing First is an example of this kind of support for a client group experiencing the most complex disadvantages in their lives. This briefing uses the examples of Riverside's Housing First services in Medway and Manchester to explore how person centred services can deliver high quality support whilst keeping staff and customers safe.

What is Housing First?

The Housing First England network coordinated by national charity Homeless Link describes Housing First as a 'housing and support approach which:

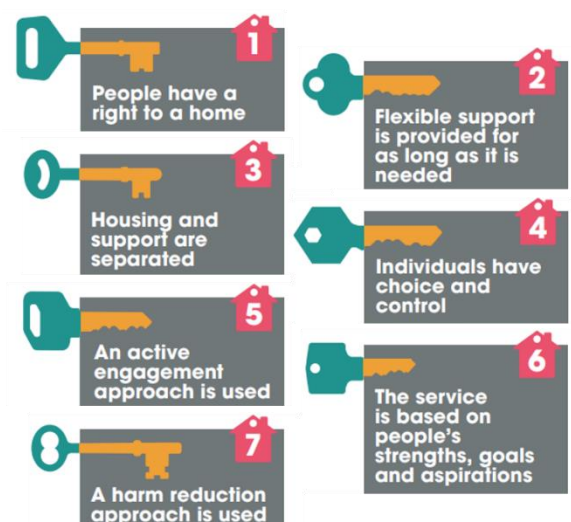
- Gives people who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs a stable home from which to rebuild their lives.
- Provides intensive, person-centred, holistic support that is open-ended.
- Places no conditions on individuals; however, they should desire to have a tenancy.

The Housing First approach was first developed in New York by Pathways to Housing in 1992. It has since been widely adopted in the USA and become central to the national homelessness strategies in Canada, Denmark, Finland and France, demonstrating widespread success.'

Housing First approaches have been trialled in England since 2010, with a growing number of local areas establishing Housing First services to meet identified need. Although many services may take a housing-led approach, a Housing First service must show high fidelity to the Principles of Housing First.

For more information on the Housing First model go to <https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/about-housing-first>

Principles of Housing First



Riverside's primary involvement with high fidelity Housing First programmes in the UK is in:

- The *Greater Manchester* National Government Pilot, where we are the largest support provider covering the City of Manchester.
- *Medway Council* in Kent, which is in close collaboration with the Local Authority and other support agencies, with funding from the MHCLG Rough Sleepers Initiative. Over two years, the Medway Housing First programme has a 100% tenancy sustainment rate, with 50% of customers already migrating onto permanent/long-term tenancies.
- *Guildford Borough Council*, where our recently launched service is funded through our internal 'Riverside Investment Fund' social impact bond.
- *Liverpool City Region*, where we are a major housing provider for the second of the three National Government Pilot's launched in 2019.

How have our Housing First services supported customers during COVID?

Self-isolation and social distancing have proven difficult for everyone in the UK during lockdown. For those in temporary accommodation or who have recently been homeless have access to far less of the diversions and entertainments that will help others through it. With additional needs and poor mental health likely to be additional challenges individuals involved with Housing First programmes are facing, there are additional challenges to staying indoors, following government guidelines and staying safe.

To support customers during COVID, our Medway Housing First team adopted several specific responses to help meet residents various needs:

Facilitating contact with customers

- Switching to face to face/video calls whilst visits are reduced (including purchasing of smart phones and credit for those who didn't already have access to the appropriate technology)
- Setting up gmail accounts on purchased phones to enable quicker communication and
- Downloading relevant apps including facebook, whatsapp and messenger
- Sharing pictures as well as texts about what customers have been up to, experienced during their day, the meals they are eating etc
- Meeting outdoors with customers and conducting support work while on a walk or sat in the garden

Identifying positive activities to help people self-isolate and manage risk

- Purchased dvd's, computer games and arts and crafts for customers to help with boredom/ self-isolation during lockdown
- Supported customer to clear their garden of weeds and be more accessible so they could have a usable, safe, outdoor space

Practical Support for customers self-isolating

- Completed a monthly food shop on behalf of a customer with them on the phone as staff member walked around, making use of more flexible internal procedures concerning use of company credit cards to do so
- Collected medication on behalf of customers according to new internal procedures and to avoid relapse
- Collected lockboxes from the Drug & Alcohol team and dropped off with customers so they could safely store medication

- Additional support to check benefit claims are maximized, bills are paid and income otherwise stable.
- Use of discretionary spending to support customers

Examples of discretionary spending to support customers during COVID

DVD's, computer games and arts and crafts - £21.50

Aerial and Freeview box - £60.00

Purchased 4 mobile phones and top up's to enable WhatsApp video calls - £169.96

1 year internet package for customer from Virgin including TV package - £394.88

Customers have also been assisted to connect with broader community assistance initiatives such as Medway Random Acts of Kindness Facebook group. This has helped them be able to meet practical needs and contribute to the up swell of goodwill and community feeling which has emerged during COVID.

To deliver these responses, internal flexibility has been vital for the Medway Housing First team. Multiple changes to the team and approach been adopted to enable this, including:

- Adapting on call support so there is someone available 7 days a week
- Making staff available for intensive support following receipt of a diagnosis for a health condition threatening to derail positive activities the individual was involved in
- Increased communication and involvement with family members to help relationships improve and deepen during a difficult period for all
- Use of personalization budgets to address debts being called in during the pandemic
- Additional negotiations with neighbours and landlords to successfully arrange re-location for a couple threatened by eviction
- Involvement with multiagency meetings including with DWP, 'Blue Light' agencies, health or mental health providers, and other organisations supporting complex needs.

“The support I get from Housing First is someone who listens to me, rather than pushes, someone who hears what I say rather than someone that leads me into what they want to hear”

Medway Housing First customer

How are our Housing First services adapting to safety considerations during COVID?

In Greater Manchester our Riverside Housing First team provide the support in the City of Manchester for customers as part of the GM Housing First programme, one of the three nationwide Government funded pilots.

GM Housing First is an assertive model of outreach and engagement with a complex client group for whom interpersonal relationships are key. The restrictions on ability to interact in person with customers was a significant challenge during COVID, and the aim as the service returns after is to be able to deliver as high-fidelity a model as possible, including with as much face to face support as is safe.

To support staff to do so, the team developed a service wide risk assessment supported by individual safety plans for each individual to identify the support they personally need and how to keep them and staff safe while still providing the required support.

Following the work completed on the Risk Assessment, the document and approach was shared with the wider GM Housing First project managed by partner Great Places housing association. Slow remobilization has since been possible across providers and teams are now moving away from crisis driven work to planned support as per usual

practice. This will also position the Housing First teams well for new referrals which may need to be made to service from emergency accommodation set up for rough sleepers during COVID as part of the Everyone In initiative.

Service Wide Risk Assessment

The service wide risk assessment broke down the sole hazard into 4 areas where staff and customers may be at risk of infection – everyday activity, face to face contact, while travelling, and if in an office environment. Following standard risk management processes, the risk could then be evaluated as High/Medium/Low, control measures identified and the ‘residual risk’ with these in place reassessed.

Hazard	Risks Identified	Risk Evaluation	Control Measures	Residual Risk
Biological hazard (specifically COVID-19)	Risk of infection during everyday duties	[H/M/L]		[H/M/L]
	Risk of infection during face to face contact			
	Risk of infection while travelling			
	Risk of infection while in an office environment			

To complete the table, the Service Manager listed:

- The reasons why a staff member may need to visit a customer
- What preliminary contact might reasonably be involved wherein the risk of infection could be assessed
- Procedures to follow if/when entering a customer’s property

Completing the risk assessment also identified what precautionary measures needed to be taken across the services. This includes the provision of PPE in line with National Guidance, general hygiene rules to be followed, approach to testing and tracing and requirements for disclosure of any positive tests by staff and clients.

Individual Risk Assessments

Individual Risk Assessments will be completed by the customer’s Housing First Worker alongside the customer, to understand the risk to them and others of contracting COVID from interactions and build appropriate support plans according to their specific circumstances.

The Assessment provides a framework to identify:

- Particular health needs the customer has
- Likely activities involved with support the customer
- Their home or space they are in and how safe this is for others to visit

Appendixes

GM Housing First Service Wide Risk Assessment

[Service Specific Information]

Task /Job			
Persons at Risk			
Date of Issue			
Review Date			

Hazard	Risks Identified	Risk Evaluation	Control Measures	Residual Risk
Biological hazard (specifically COVID-19)	Risk of infection from the Coronavirus during everyday duties			
	Risk of infection from the Coronavirus during face to face contacts with customers			
	Risk of infection from the Coronavirus while travelling			
	Risk of infection from the Coronavirus while in an office environment			

[National Guidance as of 18/6/20]

<p>Provision of PPE</p>	<p>Staff or volunteers visiting a customer in their own home will be provided with any required PPE equipment for any activity that cannot be conducted while maintaining a 2 meter distance, as per government guidance, and social distancing rules must be applied at all other times. People must not undertake activities that require PPE if it is not available.</p> <p>You will provided with a supply of the following PPE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposable gloves • Disposable Aprons • Fluid Repellent Surgical Masks (FRSM), which you should wear in any situations specified above. <p>In addition hand sanitiser and anti-bacterial wipes will be provider for all staff.</p> <p>It is essential that staff are aware of how to put PPE on accurately (donning of PPE) and taking it off (doffing of PPE). This is demonstrated in the attached guidance COVID-19: personal protective equipment use for non-aerosol generating procedures - GOV.UK</p> <p>All used PPE needs to be stored securely within disposable rubbish bags. These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely, and kept separate from other waste. If there is an outside bin at the customer's property, place this in there. If not dispose of at earliest opportunity in line with government guidelines.</p> <p>There is some evidence that the virus can stay on fabrics for a few days, although usually it is shorter. Therefore it is advisable that staff wash their clothes regularly Covid-19 Staying safe outside your home</p> <p>National guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Other people's homes - Working safely during coronavirus • Staying alert and safe (social distancing) - GOV.UK • COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE) • COVID-19: personal protective equipment use for non-aerosol generating procedures - GOV.UK • COVID-19 Working safely during coronavirus • Covid-19 Staying safe outside your home • Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19
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	<p>COVID-19: PPE as required by national guidance (20 March 2020)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Scenario</th> <th colspan="4">PPE</th> <th colspan="2">Additional items</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Apron</th> <th>Gloves</th> <th>Fluid repellent surgical mask</th> <th>Eye protection</th> <th>Disposable bags (for waste)</th> <th>Hand Hygiene (hand washing or hand sanitiser)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Well staff visiting well clients</td> <td>x</td> <td>x</td> <td>x</td> <td>x</td> <td>x</td> <td>√</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Well staff providing close personal contact* to ill clients (registered residential care and nursing homes, supported living, home care providers)</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>√ (where risk of splashing)</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Well staff helping ill clients but NO close personal contact (hostels and day care centres)</td> <td>x</td> <td>x</td> <td>x</td> <td>x</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Well staff cleaning areas where ill clients are/have been</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> <td>x (unless visible bodily fluids)</td> <td>x (unless visible bodily fluids)</td> <td>√</td> <td>√</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* Close personal contact such as washing and bathing, personal hygiene, contact with bodily fluids</p>	Scenario	PPE				Additional items		Apron	Gloves	Fluid repellent surgical mask	Eye protection	Disposable bags (for waste)	Hand Hygiene (hand washing or hand sanitiser)	Well staff visiting well clients	x	x	x	x	x	√	Well staff providing close personal contact* to ill clients (registered residential care and nursing homes, supported living, home care providers)	√	√	√	√ (where risk of splashing)	√	√	Well staff helping ill clients but NO close personal contact (hostels and day care centres)	x	x	x	x	√	√	Well staff cleaning areas where ill clients are/have been	√	√	x (unless visible bodily fluids)	x (unless visible bodily fluids)	√	√
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General hygiene and safety rules	<p>To be followed at all times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washing your hands properly with soap and hot water for 20 seconds is preferable to sanitising, so take the opportunity to wash your hands whenever possible • Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue (NOT YOUR HANDS) when you cough or sneeze • Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash / clean your hands afterwards • Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth • Always clean your hands before eating, drinking or smoking • Always wash your hands before leaving home and returning from work • All Risk Assessments relating to the work activity should be referred to • Contact your Line Manager for guidance if you are unsure 																																									
Testing and tracing	This is currently being developed nationally and will need to be reviewed and incorporated according to Public Health England and internal guidelines.																																									

MANDATORY REQUIREMENT – SUITABLE PPE/RPE MUST BE WORN SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS TASK/JOB (mark with an x where applicable)				
Hard Hat	Safety Footwear	Goggles / Visor	Ear Defenders	Overalls
Respiratory Equipment	High Vis	Safety Harness	Other	Disposable apron Gloves / Gauntlets
Face Mask (optional)			Hand Sanitiser & Handwash, anti-bacterial wipes	Disposable Gloves

Appendix B: Individual risk assessment template

Customer Name	
DOB	
Address	
Phone number	
High Risk or Shielding letter received?	
Following social distancing guidelines?	

Public transport needed?	Y/N
HF worker	
Secondary worker	

Essential Activity	RAG	Any alternative actions or adjustments ?
Street Outreach		
Home visits		
Admin tasks e.g signing documents		
Tenancy viewings and sign ups		
Delivering essential items		
Support going to appointments		
Multi agency meetings		
Shopping		
Welfare checks		
Practical tasks within the home		

Within the home	
Outside space available to use?	
Which room is best to maintain 2m distance?	
Other people likely to be present?	

RAG

Activity cannot be carried out as the risk cannot be mitigated with control measures in place

Activity requires a dynamic risk assessment before being carried out, as the risk is fluctuating and the control measures in place may not be sufficient

Activity can be carried out as the risks have been mitigated with the control measures in place