

# Sharing good practice during COVID

## About this briefing

Riverside Care and Support provides support and accommodation to over 10,000 people in nearly 100 Local Authorities across the UK. This includes retirement living, extra care, and to meet the full spectrum of housing needs for people who are homeless.

To ensure best practice during a time of rapid change and identify potential solutions to common challenges, Riverside's Improvement Team worked with Operations colleagues to create an internal Community of Practice amongst frontline staff. Three workshops were held in May 2020 focusing on specific topics which emerged in discussions with colleagues.

This briefing captures some of the reflections, challenges and ideas which were explored in these workshops.

## Topic 1: Encouraging social distancing

### What are the issues?

Disregard for social distancing within the service or in external areas, e.g. garden, even when the customer is meant to be shielding. Customers going out to meet friends, not social distancing.

### What can we do about it?

#### Open and honest conversations with customers

- Explain risks to customers for themselves and others
- Explain to customers that the restrictions are from the government and apply to everyone – this isn't a Riverside policy for them alone.
- Encourage colleagues to have more conversations with customers on a chat only basis, where possible, to build bonds and be there for customers to confide in if needed.

#### Making it real

- Ask customers to think about family/friends of their own who may be vulnerable. How would they feel if they were not social distancing or people around them were not and potentially exposing them to risk?
- Visual reminders, e.g. Markers on the floor, official posters (click the link below for some examples)
- Examples at: <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/stay-home-save-lives/resources/>
- Staff wearing PPE also sends a powerful message of the seriousness of the situation.

### Person centred solutions

- What would motivate the individual to comply with current measures? E.g. several customers in one service asked to re-start a cooking group that had been in place previously so this was done with one household in each group so the activity could be managed safely.

### Keeping in touch using technology

- Encourage customers to keep in touch via phone, messaging, online, e.g. social media/video calls where possible.

### UPDATE Digital inclusion project:

Riverside have made funding available for £50k of hardware to ensure customers who have lost access to scheme Wi-Fi and/or devices during the COVID pandemic could still have access to the internet. All services have been surveyed to understand who is affected, and invited to apply for however many devices they need. Working with our IT and procurement colleagues, we've now purchased the 250 devices and 4g contracted services needed to plug the gap. Potentially underutilized repairs and maintenance operatives have mobilised to get the tech out to the services and the delivery should be complete by 3 July. Schemes are using the devices in a variety of ways, including for innovative health access projects in partnership with GP surgeries and public health in the Manchester emergency hotel accommodation.

### Activities to alleviate boredom

- Accessing funding (internally from own budgets or using CHT) to purchase items which may help customers to alleviate boredom. *E.g. many services have purchased books, radios, TVs, arts & crafts, jigsaws, puzzles etc.*
- Other ideas include: buying materials for customers to redecorate their rooms, ordering hair dye so everyone can replicate the NHS rainbow, getting customers to cut each other's hair (when they are in the same household), and cooking together and sending meals out to the community. Having a store of equipment such as Xbox 360s (donated) ready to stop boredom. Doing a mural of a garden on the back wall of the property.
- Useful resources/links for activities:

<https://www.justcolor.net/>

<https://www.challengethebrain.com/>

<https://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages/adult-coloring-pages/>

<https://www.beano.com/categories/quizzes>

<https://www.kensquiz.co.uk/>

<https://www.iwill.org.uk/coronavirus-response-resources#org-resources>

### Shift patterns

- Thinking about how shift patterns can engage/influence customers. As an example younger people are sleeping in much later than usual so the staff at one service are programming activities for 10am onwards when customers are ready to do so.

### Physical barriers

- One service has made extra distance by adding a table at reception as customers are wanting to stand and chat with colleagues when bored.

## Topic 2: Managing addictions and substance misuse

### What are the issues?

Potential risk of methadone abuse if scripts have been increased, e.g. weekly rather than daily. Addictions worsening as a result of current situation.

### What can we do about it?

#### **Changes to Methadone prescriptions**

- Where prescriptions, e.g. methadone, have been lengthened, this may present an increased risk to the customer. This risk should be highlighted to the local drug treatment service. Guidance on what to do and how to do it can be found in the Opioid Management (Methadone) temporary procedure. [Riverside's temporary procedures are available on our website at [www.riverside.org.uk/coronavirus/partners-and-commissioners/](http://www.riverside.org.uk/coronavirus/partners-and-commissioners/)]
- Several services have already raised issues and had on-going conversations with their local services during this period to highlight any risks with scripts being lengthened and some have sent across risk assessments, resulting in the original script being kept in place.
- Another service was able to arrange delivery of a customer's script where the individual was self-isolating and there was no-one else able to pick it up.

#### **Make referrals**

- Continue to work with customers in the same way as normal wherever possible and continue to make use of specialist services, e.g. most specialist services are still running and referrals can be made for customers to access support.
- Feedback from some Riverside services indicate a much quicker response and improved availability of appointments than before possible due to less referrals being made.
- Multi-agency work is also vital to ensure we are aware of potentially dangerous substances in circulation during this period and communicating this to customers so they are aware of the risks.

#### **Manage challenging behaviour** (e.g. making threats, being aggressive, coughing and spitting at others)

- Consider multi-agency conversations involving appropriate partners as well as the customer(s) to explain the seriousness of the current situation and the potential result of their actions, on themselves and their tenancy as well as potential harm to other people.
- When working with young people, some services talked to commissioners and the local authority about what behaviour was appropriate in order to remain at the scheme during this difficult time– this helped to focus the young people's minds this was a serious issue and gave reassurance to colleagues.

### Topic 3: Staff health and wellbeing

#### What are the issues?

Coronavirus is happening to staff as well as customers, who have to deal with all the same challenges in their own lives and changes to work practices alongside more difficult situations in the workplace.

#### What can we do about it?

##### **Trauma & Reflective Practice**

- Some colleagues have been through some very traumatic experiences, where peer support usually takes place naturally, this is not the case where people are lone working.
- Reflective practice sessions in person are not practical in some services
  - Where it is practical, make time to make it happen.
  - Where it isn't practical in person, make time so it can happen virtually.

##### **Lone Working and Floating Support**

- Where colleagues are working remotely (e.g. floating support) it is important for Managers to check in with colleagues every day, even just for a chat to keep spirits up.
- Appreciate the added stress colleagues are under, be mindful of this and keep an eye on colleagues.
- Colleagues concerned about returning to work after a period of working from home. People Services are advising colleagues on individual circumstances, up and down the country. Where colleagues are concerned, they may find the national guidance shared in regular emails from Riverside's Director of Operations to be reassuring.
- Colleagues asked for guidance on collecting shopping for customers – there is also a temporary procedure which has been shared on this they can refer to have confidence in what they should do.
- Floating support colleagues need guidance on when they should be going out and seeing customers again. Current advice is still to work from home, but there may be times when a face to face intervention is necessary. In these cases, advice should always be taken from your line manager.
- Where customers can't go out, find out about any local schemes to help customers, hubs in most areas, can be found on Facebook, from local commissioners, GPs.
- Team meetings on Blue Jeans – these have lifted spirits of colleagues.

##### **Areas to focus on if there is a 'second wave'**

- Be flexible in dealings with customers.
- Think creatively about activities that would help everyone to get through it.
- Peer pressure is a powerful tool in helping people to get through it – those that refused to self-isolate/distance etc. were put under considerable pressure from other customers.
- Recognise 'quiet times' in accommodation based services that enable colleagues to get through paperwork.
- Taking the time to praise each other and appreciate each other.
- Recognise that we need to respond to emotional needs as well as developmental and practical needs, this makes it easier to connect with customers.