

16th March 2020

The Mungo Foundation: Update on our Organisational Measures for COVID-19

On 12th March the UK government announced that its response to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was progressing from **Containment Phase into Delay**. The Delay Phase is part of a four-step plan from the government to tackle the outbreak of COVID-19, which is spreading throughout the UK. Containment was the first stage, during which officials sought to isolate early cases of the virus and those who had been in contact with infected patients. This phase focused on preventing the virus from spreading further across the country. It is likely that the early stage of the delay phase will include elements of containment, such as isolating those with the infection or those who present with symptoms- as well as individuals who have been in contact with infected patients. The remaining phases outlined in the Government's action plan are: The Research Phase which aims to better understand the virus, through diagnostics and development of drugs and vaccines, with the fourth stage, Mitigation aiming to provide the best care possible for those who have become ill, and supporting hospitals to maintain essential services and ensure ongoing support for people ill in the community.

The Delay Phase is designed to **slow the spread** of the virus - the government believes that if the peak phase of the virus can be delayed to the summer months, that would prove beneficial. On 3 March, the government published its coronavirus action plan, outlining what the public could expect from the government as the virus continues to spread. The document said: "Health services are less busy in the summer months when flu and other winter bugs are not driving GP consultations and hospital admissions. In the 2009 'swine flu' pandemic, school holidays significantly slowed transmission of the virus." The guide says that "lessons learned from previous outbreaks provide a useful starting point for the development of an effective response plan to COVID-19".

What to expect in the delay phase and what this means in relation to TMF contingency measures

During this phase the impact on services and wider society will become clearly noticeable, with increased publicity and public information on the need for good hygiene measures and an emphasis on people with symptoms to stay at home for the full duration of their illness. Other possible measures in the delay phase include **population "distancing strategies"**, such as:

- School closures
- Encouraging working from home if possible
- Restricting visiting to health and care settings i.e. care homes, GP practices
- Reducing the number of large-scale gatherings

Peak phase

It's been estimated that cases of the virus could peak in May or June, according to Wales' chief medical officer, Dr Frank Atherton, who said his "best guess" would be that cases would continue to grow from April, followed by six to eight weeks of a significant increase with the peak occurring around May and June before finally seeing a downturn.

Our Contingency measures:

We continue to implement measures that are proportionate and in line with guidance and information issued by NHS and Public Health Scotland. We are in frequent contact with Health and Social Care authorities. Our priority remains the welfare and safety of our service users, their families and our staff. By enacting our Business Continuity and Pandemic Flu Protocols we are engaged in active risk assessment. We have established a COVID-19 Operational Dynamic Risk Assessment Group (CODRAG). The group is monitoring the situation and meets daily to ensure our contingency measures incorporate up to date guidance.

Drawing from national guidance and recognising the move to “delay” we are now implementing enhanced infection control and prevention measures that include:

1. **The suspension of visiting to our residential care homes, other than visits that are deemed essential- this is in line with COVID -19 guidance for social care and residential settings https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2980/documents/1_COVID-19%20Guidance-for-Social-or-community-care-and-residential-settings.pdf**
2. **The suspension of community based and outreach services. We fully appreciate that the suspension of our community support services will cause discomfort and anxiety and we will work with those who use our services to put in place agreed modes of communication and alternative systems of support i.e. through virtual online appointments; use of telecommunication and social media platforms, as well as phone contact.**
3. **The suspension of building based respite services- dates for this measure will be confirmed with relevant purchasing authorities and through planned coordinated actions with professionals and with families affected by this action.**
4. **From 17th March 2020 our mandatory training courses, and individual and group SVQ sessions will be suspended until further notice. The Training Academy will provide remote support and guidance and will endeavour to provide access to learning programmes, learning tools, virtual training sessions and social care TV to ensure that critical training needs of staff are met. It is anticipated that our SVQ providers will also offer virtual and electronic, support to employees undertaking vocational qualifications.**
5. **Going forward we may need to close some of our services. Should this be the case staff would be relocated to work in other essential services in line with current Contracts of Employment.**
6. **Regional, business and departmental meetings will be suspended with the use of Skype, online and virtual meeting rooms supported in terms of facilitating and maintaining team and colleague communication and contact.**
7. **Risk assessments and measures for compromised and immunosuppressed employees will ensure that compromised employees will not provide support or work in services where COVID-19 is suspected and/or where self-isolating measures have been implemented. Office based and non-care staff will be supported via remote working arrangements wherever possible.**
8. **Travel between and across services will be suspended and kept to business/service critical contact. The use of telecommunication, social media platforms and virtual communication will be encouraged to ensure contact and engagement is promoted across the organisation.**
9. **Infection control measures will be maintained across all our services and offices, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available to staff and advice, guidance and support will be available to teams who are required to deploy barrier methods for service users who are infected or who have symptoms due to potential exposure to COVID-19.**

Symptoms of COVID-19 and NHS Scotland Advice

The health and wellbeing of those we support, our staff and our wider community is our top priority. We are taking our lead from the public health authorities and encourage everyone to follow the advice which has been provided, and which can be accessed via the Useful Links below.

The most recent NHS Scotland advice is that if you develop the following symptoms you should stay at home for 7 days and self-isolate.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of:

1. A new, continuous cough and/or
2. High temperature

If symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, then you are advised to phone your GP or NHS24 (111). For further information please visit the following NHS website: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

The UK Government updated its advice with a clear emphasis on the need for individuals with a diagnosis of COVID-19 or with symptoms of the virus to stay at home for the **duration** of their illness.

The main messages from this advice are:

- If you have symptoms of coronavirus infection (COVID-19), however mild, **do not leave your home for 7 days** from when your symptoms started. This action will help protect others in your community while you are infectious.
- Plan ahead and ask others for help to ensure you can successfully stay at home.
- Ask your employer, friends and family to help you to get the things you need to stay at home.
- Stay at least **2 metres (about 3 steps) away from other people** in your home whenever possible.
- Sleep alone, if possible.
- **Wash your hands regularly** for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser.
- **Stay away from vulnerable individuals**, such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions, as much as possible.

You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999

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Additional Information:

International Travel:

We understand that service users and staff may have planned holidays and breaks over the next three to four months in countries that are now deemed to be high risk or to countries adjacent to areas that are high risk. We consider international travel to be a risk as there is a possibility that individuals may come into contact with the infection, and as such we urge staff to seek travel advice from The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Likewise, where staff are supporting a service user to travel it is prudent that advice

from the FCO is sought, as well as guidance and input from relevant health and social work professionals. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-the-foreign-commonwealth-office-puts-together-travel-advice>

Travel within the UK:

As a social care provider, we recognise that many of the people who receive our services are vulnerable, and as such are at a higher risk from COVID-19. In line with guidance that is moving toward increased social distancing for those deemed to be at increased risk, we strongly recommend that service users are supported to minimise their travel, avoid attendance at gatherings, postpone noncritical health and social care appointments. We encourage the use of telephone and video conferencing, where possible.

Hygiene Measures:

We will continue to follow NHS Health Protection Scotland Guidance- COVID-19: Information and Guidance for Social or Community Care & Residential Settings.

We will continue to place a huge emphasis on hand hygiene and infection control practices. Correct handwashing is demonstrated in this link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-51637561/coronavirus-watch-how-germs-spread>

We have placed posters in key areas within our offices and services, advising staff and service users of the hygiene measures.

We will continue to promote adherence to enhanced measures i.e. disinfecting/ sanitising door handles, banisters, worksurfaces etc in addition to the routine cleaning schedule.

Social Distance:

We will discourage people from shaking hands and will advise visitors of this.

We will encourage service users to limit or reduce their contact with others while being mindful of the impact of loneliness and distress this can induce and exploring ways of promoting a sense connection with family and friends through telecommunication etc.

Self-Isolation:

Employees who how are required to self-isolate should stay home and not present at their service or place of work under any circumstances.

Contact Details:

We encourage our employees to make sure their contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date on their ESS portal.

Absence Reporting:

If you require to self-isolate and stay home please ensure that you follow our absence reporting policy and self-certification, advising your manager of your circumstances.

Useful Links:

https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2980/documents/1_COVID-19%20Guidance-for-Social-or-community-care-and-residentail-settings.pdf

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/wuhan-novel-coronavirus/>

Finally, I want to thank you for taking the time to read this update and for your continued support and cooperation in relation to the measures we are taking to minimise the risk of infection and spread of the virus across our services.

Yours faithfully,

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