



**Community
Southwark**

Coronavirus and Other Infectious Diseases Plan

This Coronavirus and Other Infectious Diseases Plan covers Community Southwark's policy and processes around infectious disease, in particular, the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. It will cover:

- What is COVID-19
- What we can do 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 a workplace setting

It will lay out the process for:

- Workplace safety precautions.
- Employee travel restrictions.
- Provisions for stranded travelers unable to return home.
- Mandatory medical check-ups, vaccinations or medication.
- Mandatory reporting of exposure, such as employees reporting to employers and employers reporting to public health authorities.
- Employee quarantine or isolation.
- Facility shutdowns

The information and advice in this policy had been taken directly from Government and Public Health England advice as found on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19> as well as the World Health Organisation.

If you have any other concerns or issues, however minor, please talk directly to your line manager and/or the Office Manager so the we can support you as best as we can.

This policy will be updated as required with relevant Government and Public Health advice.

What is COVID-19?

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020.

The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 to 14 days. This means that if a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, they have not been infected.

The virus is spread when droplets from an infected person's mouth or nose get into your eyes, mouth or nose.

The Symptoms

Common signs of infection include:

- respiratory symptoms
- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath and breathing difficulties.

In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death. ([WHO](#)). Generally, these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. ([GOV.UK](#))

The symptoms will develop within 14 days of exposure to someone with COVID-19

What we can do to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections including COVID-19?

Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include:

- regular hand washing
- covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing
- thoroughly cooking meat and eggs
- avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing: 0.5 – 2m will keep you safe from large droplets
- Try not to touch your own or loved ones faces

** Please note that Public Health England do not recommend face masks for the general public to protect themselves from infection, as there is no evidence of benefit from their use outside healthcare environments. If you do wish to wear a facemask, remember the virus could be on the outside of the mask so be careful not to touch it and your eyes, mouth or nose.

How long any respiratory virus survives will depend on a number of factors, for example:

- what surface the virus is on
- whether it is exposed to sunlight
- differences in temperature and humidity
- exposure to cleaning products

Viruses can last between 24 and 72 hours on objects and surfaces. The only effective way to get rid of them is to clean them. So:

- Use antiseptic wipes on your keyboard, phones and desks
- Carry antiseptic handwash for when on public transport etc.
- You may wish to keep a cup, glass, cutlery etc. at your desk

Under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 72 hours.

Public Health England (PHE) recommends that the following general cold and flu precautions are taken to help prevent people from catching and spreading COVID-19:

- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze. See [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it](#)
- put used tissues in the bin straight away
- wash your hands with soap and water often – use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available. See [hand washing guidance](#)
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

If you are worried about symptoms, please call NHS 111. Do not go directly to your GP or other healthcare environment.

Further information is available on the [PHE blog](#) and [NHS.UK](#).

In the workplace

If a Community Southwark employee feels unwell with the above symptoms and has recently travelled any affected countries, the following steps should be followed:

- the unwell person should be removed to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.
- if possible, find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door, while in the office in Cambridge House, this will be Rm4.4 or the sick room in Cambridge House.
- open a window, for ventilation
- the individual who is unwell should call NHS 111 from their mobile, or 999 if an emergency (if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk) and explain which country they have returned from in the last 14 days and outline their current symptoms.
- whilst they wait for advice from NHS 111 or an ambulance to arrive, they should remain at least 2 metres from other people.
- they should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in a bag or pocket then throw the tissue in the bin. If they don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.
- if they need to go to the bathroom whilst waiting for medical assistance, they should use the larger disabled toilet on level Four – open the window, wash hands and clean surfaces.
- A note will be out on the door to warn of possible infection

If the member of staff has not come back into the workplace, they should:

- self-isolate at home case and follow the [home isolation advice sheet](#)
- call NHS 111 and explain which country they have returned from in the last 14 days and outline their current symptoms.
- call into Community Southwark to explain
- they will be actively followed up by the Health Protection Team
- if they develop new symptoms or their existing symptoms worsen within their 14-day observation period they should call NHS 111 for reassessment

- if they are unwell with cough, fever or shortness of breath they will be tested for COVID-19
- if they are unwell at any time within their 14-day observation period and they test positive for COVID-19 they will become a confirmed case and will be treated for the infection
- the 14 days of self-isolation will be recorded as sick leave.

By law evidence of sickness is required after seven days of sick leave. However, as advice on COVID-19 is to isolate and not to go to a GP or Hospital, Community Southwark will not require medical evidence of this kind for sickness related to the Coronavirus.

Paid sick leave will start from the first day of absence.

When individuals in the workplace have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19

If a confirmed case is identified in your workplace, the local Health Protection Team will provide the relevant staff with advice. These staff include:

- any employee in close face-to-face or touching contact
- talking with or being coughed on for any length of time while the employee was symptomatic
- anyone who has cleaned up any bodily fluids
- close friendship groups or workgroups
- any employee living in the same household as a confirmed case

Contacts are not considered cases and if they are well, they are very unlikely to have spread the infection to others:

- those who have had close contact will be asked to self-isolate at home for 14 days from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case and follow the [home isolation advice sheet](#)
- they will be actively followed up by the Health Protection Team
- if they develop new symptoms or their existing symptoms worsen within their 14-day observation period they should call NHS 111 for reassessment
- if they become unwell with cough, fever or shortness of breath they will be tested for COVID-19
- if they are unwell at any time within their 14-day observation period and they test positive for COVID-19 they will become a confirmed case and will be treated for the infection

Staff who have not had close contact with the original confirmed case do not need to take any precautions and can continue to attend work. (GOV.UK)

Precautions to take in the workplace

Community Southwark advises that employees take the precautions set out above, such as washing hands and cleaning desks, to reduce the chances of infection.

Once symptomatic, all surfaces that the person has come into contact with must be cleaned including:

- all surfaces and objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids
- all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones

Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time in (such as corridors) but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected.

If a person becomes ill in a shared space, these should be cleaned using disposable cloths and household detergents, according to current recommended workplace legislation and practice.

Travel Ban

Unless recommended by Public Health England, we will not be putting a travel ban in place. We advise all staff to ensure they wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after being on public transport and avoid touching their faces on public transport.

Carry hand sanitiser to wash hands in case of no access to water.

Office Closure

Community Southwark does not expect any office closures and will remain open unless otherwise recommended by Public Health England.

In the event of an office closure, all staff will be able to work from home and should follow the working from home guidance.

Staff have Office 365 available to all. If a staff member does not have access to a computer or the internet at home, please inform the Office manager so a laptop and dongle can be arranged.

Official publications (UK)

All official publications will be regularly updated, and the GOV.UK collections are likely to be extended. So, check the links below regularly.

- *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Latest information and advice.* Department for Health & Social Care and Public Health England; updated daily at 2pm. Covers number of cases; risk level; returning travellers; information about the virus; summary of action taken by the government; diagnosis and analysis; further information. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>
- *COVID-19: Guidance for non-clinical settings.* Gov.uk collection. With links a number of other publications: *Guidance for employers and businesses; Guidance for social or community care and residential settings; Guidance for educational settings; Guidance for staff in the transport sector; Decontamination in non-healthcare settings.* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-guidance-for-non-clinical-settings-and-the-public>
- *COVID-19: Guidance for health professionals.* Gov.uk collection, with (not surprisingly) a large number of links, including *Background information; Infection prevention and control; Guidance for primary care; Guidance to assist professionals in advising the general public; Guidance for healthcare providers who have staff with relevant, travel, healthcare or household contact history; Guidance for first responders.* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>
- *Travel advice: Coronavirus (COVID-19).* Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Guidance for British people travelling and living overseas. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>
- *Coronavirus (COVID 19): Immigration guidance.* Home Office and UK Visas & Immigration. Currently covers Chinese nationals in the UK; non-Chinese, non-EEA nationals in the UK normally resident in China; information for Chinese or third country nationals in China; British nationals in China who need to apply for a passport; and licensed tier 2, tier 4 or tier 5

sponsors with absences due to coronavirus. Includes telephone and email details for the coronavirus immigration helpline. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-immigration-guidance-if-youre-unable-to-return-to-china-from-the-uk>

- National Health Service coronavirus information and advice. Covers overview; advice for travellers; common questions. Includes an online advice questionnaire at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- National Health Service coronavirus information and advice for clinicians <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/eprr/coronavirus/>
- Department for Health and Social Care Twitter Feed: https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

World Health Organisation

- *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak*. Covers: protect yourself; your questions answered; travel advice; situation reports; media resources; technical guidance; global research. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- *Rolling updates on coronavirus disease (COVID-19)*. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>
- *Myth busters*. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

Other Organisations

- Small charities Coalition special briefing to help small charities think through some of the issues that Coronavirus may mean for their organisation. <https://mailchi.mp/smallcharities.org.uk/coronavirus2032020>
- Southwark Council advice on staying healthy and coronavirus: <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2020/feb/coronavirus-in-the-uk-tips-for-staying-healthy>