

## Homeless rough sleepers and Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020

COVID-19 is an evolving situation. [Government advice](#)<sup>1</sup> is to call 111 and follow Public Health advice for any suspected cases or contacts.

If a case is suspected, Public Health<sup>2</sup> will advise on testing and isolation.

Currently we are in the phase of **taking general precautions**, and the public should follow [NHS advice](#). Health professionals should follow specific [NHS advice](#).

People who are unhoused are more at risk when a public health or natural disaster emergency occurs.

The spread of communicable disease can be swift for people without adequate access to hygiene facilities or a safe home.

Pathway is aware, from UK Public Health authorities, that the current outbreak of COVID-19 spreads in much the same way as flu – through person to person contact; especially through droplets in the air produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The disease can be spread by touching an object that has been infected and then touching your nose, mouth, or eyes. It is believed people are most contagious when exhibiting symptoms.

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Pathway recommends everyday actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the toilet; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- If a homeless hostel user does get diagnosed with COVID-19 we would advise making sure the public health team are well informed about the hostel set up so they can make appropriate provision for isolation and recommendations to protect others.
- Facemasks are crucial for health workers or people who are taking care of someone in close settings suspected of having COVID-19 (at home or in a health care facility).

#### IF YOU ARE:

- Experiencing symptoms – call 111 and follow the advice given.
- An outreach worker or concerned member of the public, consider stocking up on bottles of hand sanitiser or wipes to give to rough sleepers.

If spread occurs, **Pathway** calls on the government to ensure there are adequate contingency plans in place, specifically for homeless people sleeping rough and people housed in hostels, that can be rapidly acted upon. Local authorities will need to provide quarantine accommodation as well as adequate support and advice. Reiterating transmission advice and initiating extra cleaning, and distribution of hand sanitisers to protect others could also become necessary. This would need to be adequately coordinated and funded.

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<sup>1</sup> Coronavirus (COVID-19): UK Government response, <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

<sup>2</sup> NHS UK Chief Medical Officers Public Health Advice, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>