

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Supported Housing: clarity on guidance that applies to supported housing settings

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to provide clarity on the COVID-19 guidance that service providers should follow in sheltered housing settings, and supported living arrangements sometimes known collectively as “supported housing”, including for meeting with people indoors in those settings and the use of communal spaces.

Terminology

In this guidance we are using the following terminology:

Sheltered housing and retirement/amenity housing

These terms are used to describe various types of housing which give people the independence of having their own housing with the security of having an alarm system and/or a warden. Some services have moved to an alarm and responder service only. The flats are usually self-contained units in a complex, which may have communal areas such as residents’ common room or laundry. It is possible to find sheltered housing to rent or to buy.

Extra care housing, housing with care

These terms are used to describe various types of housing for people who require additional support and assistance to live independently but do not need 24-hour support. In its most developed form, extra care housing can be seen as an alternative to residential care (care home) and is often serviced by an onsite care and support team minimising the response time for any care crisis.

Supported living or supported housing

These terms refer to housing with support provided to help disabled people, people with learning difficulties, and/ or mental health problems to live independently within their community. These services are characterised by personalised support either in a single or joint tenancy.

COVID-19 Lockdown Regulations means The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 (as amended).

Supported housing: meeting people at home

The consistent feature of these different living settings is that people are living in their own homes with varying levels of support.

For the purpose of Covid-19 Lockdown Regulations, supported housing settings are considered to be “private dwellings”. This means that those Regulations and associated guidance, including guidance and limits on meeting people indoors at home, currently apply to these settings.

The exemption to this are communal space within supported houses. A communal space is a space which is accessible to multiple households and/ or the general public such as a dining area, café, communal lounge or space. Communal spaces which are used by multiple households can be considered a public space, and the COVID-19 Lockdown Regulations on meeting people indoors and outdoors in public places will apply. Further information on using communal spaces can be found in the communal spaces section of this guidance.

Guidance specific to care homes and their residents during the pandemic, including that around visiting, does not apply to these settings, unless a provider has registered the setting as a care home with the Care Inspectorate.

For clarity, a person who lives in supported housing in a joint tenancy is considered to be part of one household with the other residents of the group tenancy with whom they share the facilities.

For this guidance a joint tenancy is a House of Multiple Occupation, where at least 3 tenants live together with for example shared toilet, bathroom or kitchen facilities.

People living in such settings and any visitors are currently subject to the same rules as the general public for [meeting people indoors](#) and [meeting people outdoors](#) contained in the COVID-19 Lockdown Regulations.

Providers, friends and families should work together to support meaningful contact and socialisation with the individual living in shared supported housing settings. For practical reasons such as the management of the number of households meeting within the private space, friend and family may need to discuss and/ or book visits with the provider.

Throughout all COVID-19 levels, there are exceptions to the rules on meeting with people within private dwellings. This includes

- where the visitor is part of the individual's [extended household](#) (providing the resident lives alone with or without children)
- if the visitor is someone who provides care and support to an individual
- If a visitor is providing emotional support to someone whose wellbeing is at risk including
 - individuals who are isolated because of disability,
 - in a caring situation
 - where they are a parent or carer of a child under one
 - for the provision of paid care arrangements.

This means that in all COVID-19 levels, where a person living in supported housing, whether in joint or single tenancy, is considered to be vulnerable, another person can meet with the individual within their home to provide care and support. This includes

- paid or unpaid
- personal or non-personal care
- emotional support to someone whose wellbeing is at risk including
 - for those who are isolated because of disability,
 - in a caring situation
 - are a parent or carer of a child under one
 - for the provision of paid care arrangements.

Supported housing: guidance for the provision of care and support

Further information to support the provision of care and manage risks of transmission can be found in the guidance detailed in this section:

Infection Prevention and Control

Providers and visiting professionals should follow [infection prevention and control guidance](#) and the [additional guidance on face mask use](#), when providing care and support to an individual whom lives in a supported housing setting.

For clarity supported housing settings are not considered care homes, unless they are registered as a care home through the Care Inspectorate. Guidance specific to care homes, including mask wearing for residents and visitors, are only applicable in settings registered as care homes.

Where this is in a multi-tenancy supported living environment service providers may wish to consider putting in place further protections to support visit by visiting professionals.

Risk Assessments

Providers should also consider [occupational risk assessments](#) within these settings.

Social Workers

Social worker home visits should consider [guidance for safe and ethical social work practice](#).

Unpaid Carers

Unpaid carers should consider measures that may be appropriate as an enhanced layer of protection to the person they are providing care or support to. This may include

- [testing](#),
- [safe and appropriate use of PPE](#),
- enhanced cleaning of touch points,
- hand hygiene
- improving room ventilation by opening windows and doors, where appropriate.

Use of communal areas

There are a variety of different types of communal spaces within these settings, on a detailed analysis some will be public and some will be private. For the purpose of this guidance communal areas are considered to be public areas where they are accessible and can be used by multiple households, including multiple group tenancies, and/ or can be used by the public.

In group settings, a space that can be used by all members of the household, that cannot be used by the public or other households within the supported housing complex, without the permission of those living in the specific household, (or their guardians) should not be considered public. These spaces likely to include shared kitchen or bathroom facilities or lounge areas within a self-contained tenancy(is contained within that specific address). These spaces are considered to be part of the individuals home and therefore are private

spaces. Guidance on [meeting others indoor at home](#) will continue to apply to these specific spaces.

Providers should consider the functionality of the communal area including who accesses it and how it is being accessed to inform the guidance that applies to the space. Communal spaces may have multiple purposes therefore guidance to be applied, where spaces are considered to be public, will depend on the activity carried out within the space at the time of use.

Where the communal area includes a service to provide food and drink (hospitality) to tenants, those visiting them and/ or the general public, the communal area may be considered to be “general hospitality”. Find out more in the [tourism and hospitality sector guidance](#).

Where a communal area is used to host “support services” read the guidance on [one to one support and support groups](#).

Where a communal area is used to support indoor sport and physical activity, specific information for the sport or activity has been created by Sports Scotland. Find out more in the [latest sport and physical activity guidance](#). Service providers may also find the following guidance the [return to sport and physical activity](#) created by Scottish Disability Sport useful.

Where a communal area is used to host group activities to support learning and development, such as arts and craft activities, providers should consider whether guidance on [community learning and development](#) apply.

Where a communal area is available for use by the public the service provider should consider whether guidance [on the use of multi-purpose community facilities](#) should be considered.

When using communal areas such as shared entrances, lifts and laundry facilities social distancing, IPC and face coverings measures should be applied in line with general restrictions.

In all circumstances, providers should carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment to assist with decisions on actions that need to be taken to support the safe use of the communal area. This will include but will not be limited to

- how to manage physical distancing where required,
- infection prevention and control measures to be put in place including enhanced cleaning, ventilation and the promotion of hand hygiene
- assessing capacity of the space
- identification of responsible person

The responsible persons' role is to provide assurance that COVID-19 protection measures and the legal requirements of meeting people/ carrying out activities in public spaces are met. The responsible person may be an employee of the supported housing facility or a volunteer/ employee of the provider managing the space or organising the activity. It is important to identify this person, to ensure the communal space is being used compliantly.

Review

This guidance reflects current regulations for COVID protection level guidance and health and safety laws. It will be kept under review in line with changes in COVID protection levels and feedback from Health and Social Care partnerships, providers, representative groups and people using services will be sought prior to any change.

It is important this guidance is read in conjunction with laws which impose lockdown restrictions (and any guidance made under or about those matters), as these laws will regularly change and be updated. Independent advice should be sought by parties where they feel it necessary. It is important that any bodies who provide or manage any types of housing referred to in this guidance continue to check and comply with all legal obligations on them to be sure those types of housing are safe place to visit and with any health and safety or other obligations in respect of it being a safe workplace. This guidance does not supersede or provide any advice on those matters. Independent advice should be sought on compliance with any of these matters if needed.

We regularly review our guidance. If you have any questions about this document please contact your sector representatives or contact us directly. We will update this guide to provide more information if necessary.