

# Commencing allocation and letting processes in extra care housing schemes

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**Version 1.0**

Extra Care settings are home for North Yorkshire residents who may be particularly vulnerable and potentially exposed to outbreaks of COVID-19

Our advice to extra care residents, colleagues working in extra care schemes, providers of extra care services and to visitors to schemes, is to:

- 1) Exercise due caution and, if in doubt, take action which puts the health and well-being of residents and staff above other considerations
- 2) Risk assess situations to promote the safety and well-being of residents and staff
- 3) Do all that they can to keep COVID-free settings COVID-free and to reduce and eradicate COVID where there are cases and outbreaks
- 4) Follow the rules: wash your hands, keep a distance of 2 metres (unless delivering hands-on care with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment in place) and take all necessary measures in terms of Personal Protective Equipment

**Extra Care residents and schemes should continue to be shielded as much as possible with outside contact minimised at all times. In line with the document ‘Guidance around visitors to Care Setting in North Yorkshire – June 2020’ schemes should continue to only allow essential visitors and ask that all essential visitors adhere to your infection control policies and confirm that they are not displaying any symptoms associated with COVID prior to their visit.**

On 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020 Government Guidance was updated to allow people to move house should they wish to do so.

As developments of individual apartments Extra Care schemes fall under this guidance, however it is clear that additional safeguards are required to prevent the introduction or spread of COVID-19 into schemes on account of the care model and underlying vulnerability of residents.

Where providers choose to begin the process of moving new residents into schemes this guidance should be viewed as the **minimum** standard for supporting such moves and the guidance should be implemented in tandem with a full risk assessment for each individual and move.

Extra Care remains a key part of how people are supported to live independently in North Yorkshire and the reopening of schemes is an important step in our collective response as we look to support people currently living in the community who may require the additional care and security that Extra Care can provide as well as supporting people leaving hospital.

The following points are some practical steps to help prompt thinking around how lettings can take place safely. The underlying principle is that lettings can take place but social distancing must be adhered to at all times before, during and after a new property has been let.

North Yorkshire Public Health and the Housing, Technology and Sustainability Teams are available to advise and support on any of the issues highlighted within this guidance, in the first instance providers should contact [extracareenquiries@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:extracareenquiries@northyorks.gov.uk) .

This document sets out the general guidelines and principles which should be applied when planning and delivering a move as well as more detailed steps which should be considered at each stage of the process. This document also sets out the PPE standards required by Public Health England at the present time.

Alongside this guidance a risk assessment should be completed for each individual move to capture any particular risks such as health conditions or locations of the apartment to be occupied as set out in the document below.

## 1. Testing

The Housing Market Development Team and Public Health are currently working with NHS partners to develop a testing pathway which will ensure that all new residents allocated a place within Extra Care will be able to access testing in their own home prior to moving. This system is currently in development and this document will be updated to reflect the new arrangements once they are in place. Wherever possible moves should not take place until this full NHS supported testing route is in place. Section 2 onwards can be used to begin planning for future moves for when testing becomes available.

Should a move be deemed necessary in the interim period the following process should be followed to allow all new residents to receive a COVID test as part of their move.

## Testing Procedure

At the point of allocation and / or offer of an apartment the new resident should be made aware of the need to be tested for COVID-19 as part of their move. Consent for the test and for the sharing of information to facilitate this should be sought immediately following allocation.

Once a move in date is confirmed the Housing Market Development Team should be informed via [extracareenquiries@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:extracareenquiries@northyorks.gov.uk) or by calling 01609 535173 confirming the person's name, move date and that they have consented to the test and sharing of information.

On the move day a test will be delivered by NYCC courier to the scheme manager. The person should complete this (and be supported to do so if necessary) and immediately return to the courier following all accompanying instructions.

The new resident should be supported to self-isolate from the point of moving until the test result is confirmed (usually within 48-72 hours).

Where the test returns negative the new resident will not be required to further self-isolate and should be supported to integrate into the scheme in line with current infection control guidance.

Where the test returns positive the new resident should self-isolate for 14 days and should be supported with all necessary care and support in line with current guidance.

## 2. General Guidelines

- Residents of extra care facilities should be considered as a vulnerable population who are at high risk of more significant health consequences from COVID-19. As such these settings (and the individuals within them) should be shielded as much as possible from all but essential external contact or other potential sources of infection.
- Regular and effective handwashing is vital in controlling the spread of COVID-19. Please ensure that you wash your hands regularly with soap and water and for longer than 20 seconds. If handwashing facilities are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- The number of visits/amount of work done should be kept to an absolute minimum – essential work and visits only
- All moves need to be carried out in the safest way possible. For this reason, we recommend that any contractors, removal companies etc. are given a time window during which they can carry out their work. Extra care residents need to be notified of that window and asked to stay at home if possible.
- Contractors, removal companies etc. should use alternative ways of accessing properties where possible (side doors for example). After their work is finished, any communal areas need to be cleaned (door handles, lift buttons etc).

- Face coverings can be used (and can be advised) by family members supporting a tenant, by staff (non-healthcare staff) and by prospective tenants if social distancing cannot be maintained. They should also adhere to handwashing protocols as outlined above.
- Where possible, moves should be conducted at a quiet time to minimise contact in communal areas.
- Please note that extra care facilities will be closed to new admissions if there is an outbreak in the facility.

### **3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):**

PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment such as face masks. Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.

When managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE. The exception is clinical settings, like a hospital, or a small handful of other roles for which Public Health England advises use of PPE.

You may see health and care workers wearing PPE (surgical mask, apron, gloves and potentially eye protection) when they are delivering close, personal care to residents. This is advised because of the specific risks associated with healthcare work which will not be relevant for the majority of workers outside of clinical settings.

Workplaces, therefore, should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. However, all non-healthcare workers need to be particularly vigilant in observing social distancing (keeping 2 meters distance at all times). This is very important for two reasons; firstly because it will ensure everyone's safety and secondly because it will mean that, if there are any COVID-19 cases in the setting, workers who have adhered to social distancing at all times, won't need to self-isolate.

However, there are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms.

A face covering can be very simple and may be worn in enclosed spaces where social distancing isn't possible. It just needs to cover your mouth and nose. It is not the same as a face mask, such as the surgical masks or respirators used by health and care workers. Supplies of PPE, including face masks, must continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.

#### **4. Process for new Residents:**

##### 1. Void Inspection:

- To be carried out in the normal way but complying with current PPE standards (following Government guidelines).
- Ensure adherence to handwashing protocols before and after the inspection.

##### 2. Works to void:

- Works to be ordered through the usual organisations processes.
- Contractors to provide a copy of their companies COVID-19 Risk Assessment
- Contractors to follow all H+S recommendations whilst on scheme including complying with the current PPE standards and Government guidelines on the use of PPE. If no other PPE is appropriate, a face covering can be used but is not mandatory.
- Number of contractors on the scheme to be kept to the minimum required to carry out the work.
- Residents to be made aware of when contractors need to be in the property so they can minimise contact.
- Social distancing to be adhered to at all times. If social distancing is not possible, a face covering should be used.
- Safe access to the scheme to be assessed – is there a close external door that can be used to ensure minimum interaction in main communal areas?
- Enhanced cleaning in communal areas to be kept in place including the areas used by the contractors.
- Full clean of the property to be carried out by the scheme cleaner – including complying with the current PPE standards and Government Guidelines on the use of PPE.

##### 3. Nominations (to be followed if appropriate for the scheme):

- Review of the current allocation progress list should be carried out to take account of applicants' changes in circumstances, particularly the accommodation element of the scoring process to consider people who may have been inappropriately placed into residential care settings.
- The standard allocation process should still be adhered to at all times.
- Nomination panels will meet virtually until Government guidelines suggest it is safe to recommence standard allocation meetings in person. Housing providers will be responsible for sending electronic appointments to all panel members.
- Applicants who choose not to take up an apartment because of the situation with the COVID-19 epidemic should not be disadvantaged by the offer being counted as a refusal, and will therefore retain their current position on the progress list. The next priority person in the same dependency level will be contacted to offer them the vacant apartment.
- Housing applications and care assessment will still need to be completed to support the application process. The housing provider will advise the panel how this will work for each organisation. Care assessments should not be shared electronically, but read from during the virtual meeting.

4. Assessments (as appropriate for the resident or scheme):

- Home visits – visits should be completed remotely, where at all possible; this should be the default position, unless there are technical or capacity barriers.
- Scheme Managers should suggest a virtual meeting with the prospective resident/and a relative if possible on a smart phone or tablet. (This will allow an assessment of current living conditions).
- If a home visit is absolutely necessary – the Scheme Manager will enquire if the applicant has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 or if a household member has a confirmed diagnosis or symptoms, or if they are currently considered to be in the Clinically Shielding groups. If so, the latest Government guidelines published on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 states that *“Landlords should avoid moving tenants who are showing symptoms of coronavirus or self-isolating. There may be exceptions to this (e.g. safety reasons) and in these scenarios landlords should speak to the local Public Health team about appropriate infection control measures before taking any action.”*

*And that “Landlords should also avoid moving residents who are shielding because they have been notified they are in the clinically extremely vulnerable group. If a home move is required, the landlord should speak to the local Public Health team for advice on appropriate measures to protect the resident”.* These Government guidelines should be adhered to at all times to reduce the risk of cross infection to existing residents.

- If you need to go to the home of an applicant, as a last resort, PPE or a face covering can be worn in line with current Government guidelines and social distancing has to be adhered to at all times. If the person you are visiting is shielding (is in the extremely vulnerable group) then you should wear a surgical mask, disposable gloves and a disposable apron to protect them and you should also adhere to social distancing. Ensure adherence to handwashing protocols.

5. Offer of property:

- If appropriate and practicable, at the point of initial offer we should include, where possible, a virtual video of the scheme and communal areas and of the flat on offer, verbally explaining on the video what is being seen.
- Viewing – wherever possible this should be completed in a remote or virtual way, if this is not possible due to technical constraints this can be done on scheme advising all to wear a face covering.
- Regardless of whether a face covering is worn, social distancing needs to be maintained as much as possible and handwashing protocols need to be followed by all.
- Restrict the number of relatives attending with applicant to 1 – there must be no more than 2 people in the property at one time.
- Escort resident to the property observing social distancing. Staff can wear a face covering if they want. They must adhere to handwashing protocols.
- When showing a resident around a property, managers should be advised not to enter the apartment with them to ensure social distancing can remain in place.
- The property should be cleaned thoroughly after each viewing, before any other people enter the property.

- It is expected that the new tenants isolate for 14 days from admission unless the new resident has been tested and confirmed and COVID free as outlined in Section 1 or unless a risk assessment completed by the care services Registered Manager identifies this is not necessary. The outcome must be shared with the Housing Manager where different to Registered Manager

6. Acceptance of the property:

- When possible sign up to be carried out on the day of moving in to restrict the number of visits to the scheme.
- Carry out sign up in a sufficiently large space.
- Sign up to be carried out using a face covering if the member of staff, the family member and the applicant are happy to wear one. Social distancing needs to be maintained throughout. If the office where sign ups normally happen is too small for social distancing to be maintained, then an alternative room or outdoor place needs to be used.
- Restrict the number of relatives that attend to 1 – there must be no more than 2 people in the property at one time.
- Ensure social distancing is adhered to by all present e.g. if electronic tablets or devices are being used for sign up purposes, the tablet should be placed on a table and step away before the resident reviews information or signs.
- Use of the tablet for signature – ensure touching of the tablet by the applicant is kept to a minimum. Both the applicant and the member of staff need to wash their hands before and after sign up.
- If making payments to head office are required, ensure resident / family member uses their own phone, not office phones.
- Issue organisational guidance on social distancing practices within the scheme.

7. Applicant's contractor/family preparing the property

- Anyone who needs to attend the flat for delivery of goods, measurements /carpet fitting etc. to be done by pre-arranged appointments. Only essential maintenance and visits should be allowed.
- All contractor's/family members can use face coverings, whilst in the property/communal areas. Contact with other residents should be minimised by informing them of the day and time of the move so that they can stay at home.
- Number of contractors on the scheme to be kept to the minimum required to carry out any work
- Safe access to the scheme to be assessed – i.e. is there a close external door that can be used to ensure minimum interaction in main communal areas?
- Social distancing to be adhered to at all times.
- Enhanced cleaning will be carried out in communal areas to which contractor's/family members have had access, including the apartment.

8. Moving in:

- If sign up is to take place adhere to point 7 above.

- Removal company by appointment only - a face covering can be worn if appropriate/tolerable. A maximum of 2 people will be in the property at one time. Handwashing protocols need to be adhered to.
- There will be a restriction of 1 person/family member to support the resident moving in and they will be asked to follow handwashing protocols. They can wear a face covering if they wish.
- Safe access to the scheme to be assessed – is there a close external door that can be used to ensure minimum interaction in main communal areas?
- Social distancing to be adhered to at all times.
- Enhanced cleaning will be carried out communal areas to which contractor's/family members have had access, once the move in is complete.
- Inform residents of the move as well as precautions taken. Plan timings so that neighbours can be kept away from movers / family etc.

9. The resident:

- Resident meets staff and are shown around their new home – face coverings can be used by all, social distancing needs to be maintained as much as possible. Handwashing protocols need to be adhered to.
- Their welcome box is there for them, if applicable.
- Ensure that they feel welcomed and relaxed and advise them of the social distancing measures that are in place within the scheme.
- The new resident to be asked again to ensure that they self-isolate for 14 days (or in accordance with current Government guidelines) once they have moved in.
- Issue organisation's guidance on COVID-19 practices within the scheme
- Scheme Manager/Registered Manager to discuss wellbeing e.g. ensure they are well and that they have medication and food, or if they need food delivery from the restaurant (Extra Care).

10. Visits from essential carers:

- Any essential carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit unless they have any of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These visits should comply with the requirements set out in the introduction to this document.
- Essential carers coming to your home should follow advice on good hygiene: wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds on arrival to your house and often while they are there (or use hand sanitiser), avoid touching their face, catch any coughs or sneezes in a tissue (or their sleeve), and put used tissues immediately in the bin and wash their hands afterwards. They should keep 2 metres away where close or personal contact is not required and where this is possible.
- The following principles should apply:
  - Only essential visitors/contractors
  - Focus on hand and respiratory hygiene and make sure facilities available
  - Social distancing at all times.

**The latest government guidelines on moving can be found here:**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak#social-landlords>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/884165/Domiciliary\\_guidance\\_England.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884165/Domiciliary_guidance_England.pdf)

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