

### **Introduction**

This document confirms contingency plans that WillisPalmer has put in place to ensure business continuity during the Covid-19 outbreak.

This document has been issued to all employed staff and self-employed approved WillisPalmer professionals.

This guidance will be reviewed every 24hrs (and updated accordingly) in line with government advice by the senior management team at WillisPalmer.

### **Background and scope of guidance**

- the novel coronavirus, COVID-19
- how to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections including COVID-19
- what to do if someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in a health or social care setting
- risk assessments for undertaking visits in the community
- actions to take if staff come into contact with someone who is self-isolating or is a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19

### **Information about the virus**

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 become a case.

### **Signs and symptoms of COVID-19**

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection:

- cough
- difficulty in breathing
- fever

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.

### **How COVID-19 is spread**

From what we know about other coronaviruses, spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

Respiratory secretions containing the virus are most likely to be the most important means of transmission; these are produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, in the same way colds spread.

There are 2 main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:

- infection can be spread to people who are nearby (within 2 metres) or possibly could be inhaled into the lungs
- it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching door knob or shaking hands then touching own face). Our current understanding is that the virus doesn't survive on surfaces for longer than 72 hours.

There is currently little evidence that people without symptoms are infectious to others.

### **How long the virus can survive**

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

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

Regular cleaning of frequently-touched hard surfaces and hands will therefore help to reduce the risk of infection.

### **Preventing the spread of infection**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

There are general principles anyone can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- washing your hands often - with soap and water, or use alcohol sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if handwashing facilities are not available - this is particularly important after taking public transport.
- covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in a bin. See [Catch It, Bin It, Kill It](#)
- people who feel unwell should stay at home and should not attend work
- employees should wash their hands:
  - before leaving home

- on arrival at work
  - after using the toilet
  - after breaks and sporting activities
  - before food preparation
  - before eating any food, including snacks
  - before leaving work
  - on arrival at home
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
  - clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
  - if staff are worried about their symptoms or those of a family member or colleague, please call NHS 111. They should not go to their GP or other healthcare environment.
  - see further information and the [Public Health England Blog](#) and the [NHS UK page](#)

### **Guidance on facemasks**

During normal day-to-day activities facemasks do not provide protection from respiratory viruses, such as COVID-19 and do not need to be worn by staff in any of these settings. Facemasks are only recommended to be worn by infected individuals when advised by a healthcare worker, to reduce the risk of transmitting the infection to other people. It remains very unlikely that people receiving care in a care home or the community will become infected.

PHE recommends that the best way to reduce any risk of infection for anyone is good hygiene and avoiding direct or close contact (within 2 metres) with any potentially infected person.

### **Workplace Considerations**

#### **Closure of the workplace and other actions if staff are undergoing COVID-19 testing and they have been in the workplace**

No restrictions or special control measures are required in these settings while a member of staff or resident is waiting for laboratory test results for COVID19. In particular, there is no need to close or send staff home at this point. As a precautionary measure, the NHS are currently testing a very large number of people who have travelled back from affected countries, the vast majority of whom test negative. Therefore, until the outcome of test results is known there is no action that needs to be taken.

#### **What to do if someone with confirmed COVID-19 has recently been in the workplace**

Closure of the workplace is not being considered at the current time as WillisPalmer undertakes essential activity with respect to the protection of children in the community. Staff will be instructed to follow self-isolation guidelines from the government and remain at home if they develop symptoms.

#### **Cleaning the workplace where there are confirmed cases of COVID-19**

WillisPalmer will follow government guidelines in respect of cleaning the workplace so that all surfaces the person has come into contact with will 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.

### **Rubbish disposal including tissues**

All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, continence pads and other items soiled with bodily fluids, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It should be put in a safe place and marked for storage until the COVID-19 test result is available, which will be within 24 hours.

### **Guidance for WillisPalmer professionals undertaking community-based services**

WillisPalmer provides a range of community-based services working with children and their families. Generally, our client group are not in the most at-risk category if they contract COVID 19, however some do fall into this category and others will have close family and friends who are in that group. Therefore, precautions are necessary to minimise inadvertently spreading COVID19.

The following sets out actions and considerations that professionals must take when completing work on behalf of WillisPalmer, this is based upon the UK government principles to delay the spread of the virus as much as possible:

- Any professional who has symptoms (as outlined above), has tested positive for the virus or has been in contact with someone with the virus in the last 14 days must follow the government's advice and self-isolate for 7 days, or if a family member has developed symptoms then self-isolation should be undertaken for 14 days. In these circumstances all visits should be postponed until after the period of self-isolation. Virtual opportunities can be offered if appropriate and the professional is well enough e.g. on Skype, Facetime, Zoom, or telephone contact. Please discuss with your Quality Assurance Consultant if you need further guidance.
- Continue to apply all usual infection control and hand washing principles of soap and water after each client contact as referred to above.
- Avoid handshakes and unnecessary touching – and explain why.
- For clients that are frail, elderly and or with multiple comorbidities discuss the risks and where appropriate offer alternative interventions e.g. virtual opportunities as detailed above.

- Attempts should be made to avoid contact with clients in busy public spaces, e.g. contact observations.
- If a client is self-isolating having developed symptoms appointments should be rearranged for after the period of self-isolation has ended.

Currently advice is 7 days for individuals and 14 days for family groups. In this scenario the WillisPalmer professional must inform their case manager that the work is going to be delayed.

If in doubt or a scenario arises that has not been covered in this guidance please contact Sarah Stowe, Managing Director to discuss on 01206 878178.

See also:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>