

COVID-19 Policy

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY

1st Homecare takes the health and safety of its clients and staff very seriously and continues to take all relevant precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 between them. Measures continue to be taken with regard to visitors to any of 1st Homecare's offices. Outlined below are the key measures that remain in place. These have been developed following the advice, recommendations and requirements published by the Government on its Gov.UK website on COVID-19.

2 CLIENT AND CARE RELATED MEASURES

2.1 Real time health monitoring

1st Homecare has put in place a digital care planning and delivery system, and one of the benefits of this is that it enables us to monitor the health of our clients in real time.

We require our care staff to complete an online "symptom checker" form at each visit, whereby staff report one of the following:

- that the client has no symptoms of COVID-19; or
- has new symptoms (and what these are); or
- has suspected COVID-19 or
- has confirmed COVID-19.

Once completed, the form is submitted online and can be viewed immediately by Office staff, who can then take any appropriate action necessitated by the form e.g. informing the next carer or carers that the client has suspected COVID and therefore enhanced PPE should be worn.

At the beginning of all clients' visit activities shown on our digital care planning app are clear instructions as to the level of PPE that carers are to wear, depending on the COVID status of the client.

In addition, if a client did have new symptoms or suspected or confirmed COVID-19, the carer would ring the Office or On call manager, to report it.

2.2 Client communications

1st Homecare has kept its clients and their families updated on COVID and on the Company's practices and initiatives through letters from management.

2.3 Care Measures

1st Homecare has a comprehensive Infection Control Policy and the thorough practices and procedures already in place within 1st Homecare regarding infection control have continued to apply during the COVID-19 pandemic, with some additional requirements. In summary, key measures adopted by 1st Homecare to eliminate or reduce the risk of infection with COVID-19 include:

- Disposable single-use type iiR (fluid-resistant) mask plus gloves and apron are worn by carers for every visit to a client
- Enhanced PPE worn where a client has suspected or confirmed COVID-19, namely a face shield/visor
- Carers wearing enhanced PPE (visors) when caring for clients returning from hospital/respite or breaks away from home for the first 14 days of their restarted service
- All PPE used when a client is either suspected or confirmed positive for COVID is disposed of in a bag (and tied up), and kept in the property (in a designated place agreed by the client and Company) for 72 hours before being put into the general waste
- Carers ensuring in accordance with the Infection Control Policy that their 1st Homecare tunic (where worn) or clothes are washed frequently and after every visit to a client who is suspected of having or has been confirmed as having tested positive for COVID-19
- Washing hands before and after every visit
- Using hand sanitizers
- Refresher infection control training for staff
- Clear rules on self-isolation and when they can return to work
- Contingency planning – in the form of our Business Continuity Policy and Plan for each office.

3 MEASURES RELATING TO STAFF

3.1 Care Staff

In order to ensure that care staff with any vulnerabilities are protected, we carry out an initial risk assessment on our staff to assess whether they are at any risk from visiting clients who may have or do have COVID-19, and what measures we should take to reduce or eliminate the risk. We thereafter rely on our staff to report any changes to us and would repeat the risk assessment should any changes occur.

Carers wear a disposable single-use type iiR (fluid-resistant) mask plus gloves and apron for every visit to a client, and enhanced PPE (face shield/visor) is worn where a client has suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Additionally, carers wear enhanced PPE (visors) when caring for clients returning from hospital/respite or breaks away from home for the first 14 days of their restarted service

Our carers use Company issued mobile phones when they are visiting clients, and these phones are used only by the carers and not by their family or by any other person, reducing the risk of infection spreading in that way.

Carers collect PPE from the Office, which is in charge of ordering this equipment. They can also collect hand sanitizer from the Offices.

1st Homecare subscribed to twice-weekly home testing procedures for carers until asymptomatic testing was paused by the Government on 31st August 2022. In the event that case numbers begin to rise substantially again, social care staff are likely to be required to re-start routine testing.

Although there is a pause in asymptomatic testing, the need for PPE, infection prevention and control practices (such as hand hygiene etc.) and vaccination remains as key as it was before in managing COVID-19 risks to staff and clients, and 1st Homecare will continue to follow infection prevention and control and PPE measures and guidance and encourage staff to take up COVID-19 vaccinations.

NB: Only **asymptomatic** testing has been paused: the guidance still calls for testing of staff who have symptoms and testing when staff who have tested positive want to return to work.

3.2 Office Staff

Given the nature of home care, there is a need for office staff to be present in the office rather than working from home so that staff are aware of issues coming in, and can deal with them, also, so they can step in to provide care or guidance should this be required.

At each office, there are hand sanitisers for use by staff and any visitors.

Each member of office staff remains responsible for cleaning his or her own workspace and telephone each day and for sharing the cleaning of communal or shared areas.

3.3 Live in care staff

The same rules about PPE that apply to care staff apply to our live-in carer staff when providing care to clients (see paragraph 3.1 above). In the event either the carer or the client tests positive for COVID-19, the client and his/her family (as appropriate) will be asked what they wish to do – in many cases, the live-in arrangement will continue but if the client and his/her family wish, we will take the live-in carer out of the arrangement until the client or carer (whichever of them has tested positive for COVID-19) tests negative. Where the client has COVID-19, it may be deemed not possible to take the carer out (as the client will continue to need care and help), in this case the carer may stay in situ – with the carer's (and if appropriate, family's) agreement – and will wear enhanced PPE for the duration until the client is well again and/or is testing negative.

3.4 Visitors

Visitors to the offices are offered masks and hand sanitiser on entering the Office. Offices have a note on the door about COVID asking anyone who has tested positive for COVID not to enter but to call with any enquiries.

4 TECHNOLOGY

We have implemented digital care planning and delivery system in all our offices with very material benefits for our clients and carers. As mentioned above in this Policy, our carers are now required to complete and submit a COVID-19 symptom checker at each visit to a client, and this form can be viewed by the Registered/Branch Manager and/or Office staff, allowing for action to be taken eg. to alert the next carers visiting the client that they will need to wear enhanced PPE as the client has developed new symptoms. It also allows carers to file reports digitally where they have a concern about the client, leading to more complete records of the client's state of health or mood.

Additionally, as care records are digital, completed by carers on the Company issued phones, carers do not have to handle the Care Book/paper records/ pens that may be left in the folder, and this reduces infection risks. Combined with immediacy of reporting is the fact that carers feel safer as they feel that their concerns are picked up and can be acted on far more quickly by the Office staff. Family or others with authorized access can keep up to date on the client's state of health or mood and also medication administration or assistance information through using the Next of Kin app which can be set up free of charge by 1st Homecare.

5 TRAINING COURSES

We put our staff through induction training on infection control, with an emphasis on COVID-19 during the height of the pandemic, and we continue to ensure carers are kept up to date with their training on infection prevention and control and on the 1st Homecare Infection Control Policy and this COVID-19 Policy, which in turn are kept updated in line with best practice and government guidance .

6 GENERAL

1st Homecare may amend this Policy at any time as may be required and staff shall be informed of such amendments.

CHANGE HISTORY

Issue	Date	Description of Change and Reason
1	December 2020	First Issue
2	January 2021	Second Issue – to add in asking visitors if they have symptoms and also including disposal of PPE where clients have COVID and also ensuring tunics are washed frequently
3	January 2022	Third Issue – minor changes
4	September 2022	Fourth Issue – changes to reflect ongoing practice and the pause to asymptomatic testing

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Name of document	COVID-19 Policy
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Issue	4
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Maintainer	1HC
Owner	1HC
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Review date	As required