

Policy Statement

This policy is designed to inform all staff, service users, family members and visitors about the risks associated with **coronaviruses** and other **infectious respiratory illnesses**. It is essential that all team members understand the implications of these illnesses, particularly when providing care to individuals who may have been exposed.

Understanding Coronaviruses

Coronaviruses is a broad group of viruses that can cause mild to severe respiratory illness, such as common cold. However, certain strains such as SARS, MERS, and most recently **COVID-19 (caused by SARS-CoV-2)**—have led to severe illness and global outbreaks.

These viruses are zoonotic in origin and may spread into humans from different animals such as bats or camels. Human-to-human transmission has led to widespread infections. While vaccines now exist for COVID-19 and help reduce the severity of illness, **there is currently no cure**, and treatment focuses on symptom relief.

Precautionary Procedures

Coronaviruses can pose risks to vulnerable individuals including those who are elderly or immuno-compromised. Even healthy individuals can get severely affected. Therefore TruComfort Homecare applies **universal precautions** during outbreaks. Treating all interactions with appropriate care.

Staff must follow these infection control procedures:

1. **Notification Duty:** If a service user tests positive, the office must notify all relevant staff and report the incident falling under **RIDDOR** (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995).
2. **Hygiene Standards:** High standards of cleanliness must be maintained in line with **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974** and **Public Health Infectious Diseases Regulations 1988**.
3. **Food Safety:** All food prepared must comply with the **Food Safety Act 1990** and related hygiene regulations.
4. **Protective Equipment:** Proper use of **disposable gloves, aprons, and masks** is required. These do not replace regular hand washing and hygiene practices, which are mandatory under **COSHH Regulations 2002**.
5. **Face Masks:** Staff must wear **fluid-resistant surgical masks** at all times during care provision. Masks should be replaced if removed (e.g., for hydration), and must be disposed of safely.
6. **Gloves & Aprons:** New gloves must be worn for each task (e.g., meal prep, personal care). Aprons are required for all close-contact care, regardless of symptoms.
7. **Visors:** When caring for symptomatic individuals, **visors must be worn** and disinfected after each visit.

8. **Waste Disposal:** All clinical waste must be disposed of in accordance of **Environmental Protection Act 1990** and any specific coronavirus-related guidelines (e.g., disposal of PPE, laundry, and household waste).

Diagnosis & Response

Testing Availability:

There is Lateral Flow Tests which are used for routine testing in the community.

If a Service User Shows Symptoms:

- Notify the office immediately.
- Contact NHS 111 for advice.
- The service users may be advised to **self isolate for 7 days** or until symptoms improve.
- If symptoms worsen, seek medical guidance promptly.

If a Staff Member Shows Symptoms:

- They must **test immediately** and inform the office of the result.
- If positive, the staff must **self isolate for 5 days** from symptom onset. All scheduled shifts will be covered.
- To return to work, **two consecutive negative test results** must be submitted to the office.

Training

All staff will be trained in:

- Infection control procedures
- Use & disposal of PPE
- Safe food handling and reporting responsibilities
- COVID-19 and other respiratory/breathing related virus symptoms, transmission, and prevention

Training will be provided at induction and updated as national or organisational guidance changes.