

Supporting Young People (aged 16-25) in Supported Accommodation during coronavirus (COVID-19)

This document aims to provide advice and examples of operational good practice for local authority (LA) Children's and Housing Services staff and providers of supported accommodation, on how they can work with young people who are struggling to comply with social distancing and/or self-isolation requirements. This document draws upon the experience of MHCLG's Youth Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST) advisors who have been engaging with local authorities and the sector on the challenges young people in supported accommodation are facing during coronavirus (COVID-19). This document sets out suggestions of how you can support young people based on examples of local practices that Youth HAST advisors have come across. We have used these to put together questions and answers that may be helpful for other local authorities and housing providers to consider when putting in place additional support for their young people in supported accommodation. It is not official guidance and does not supersede or replace any existing Government guidance on social distancing and self-isolation.

1. How do we identify young people who need additional support to adhere to coronavirus (COVID-19) guidelines on self-isolating and social distancing?

- You could complete a review of all young people who are in supported accommodation to assess their specific needs and identify those who may be particularly vulnerable as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) and social distancing guidelines. Do this in collaboration with the young person's support worker and for all care leavers, with their Personal Advisers.
- It might be helpful to repeat this review regularly and frequently depending on how coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance develops.
- Use the review to evaluate a range of factors for the young person, including:
 - o their contact plan and methods of communication;
 - o their access to their support provider and other key individuals;
 - o their accommodation; and,
 - o their health and wellbeing.
- Question 3 in this document provides examples and suggestions for support in each of the above categories.

2. How can we help young people to remain at home or in accommodation safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)?

You could ensure the young person understands the importance of self-isolation and social distancing by:

- Speaking with the young person (either virtually or face to face depending on how you are currently providing services) to share information and awareness on the importance of self-isolation and social distancing.
- Explaining what this means in plain language including what they need to do to comply and what the consequences to them could be if they don't.
- [Rise Above](#) have published resources specifically designed for young people that they might find helpful.

You could also focus on understanding any challenges that young people are experiencing and identify how they can be best supported during coronavirus (COVID-19). It might be helpful to ask the young person:

- How they are coping, including what they are doing to remain calm and keep themselves occupied while at home, and find out what they are struggling with? Are they worried about their health or the health of their friends or relatives?
- Are they struggling with the behaviour of those in their accommodation, in their 'services' or in their community?
- If in shared accommodation, how are they managing with the use of shared spaces such as kitchens and bathrooms? Are these facilities adequate to support good hygiene and hand washing?
- Do they have a daily routine and structure?
- Do they have a support network that is virtually accessible: do they have a phone or tablet device and connectivity so they can stay in touch with friends, relatives, educational settings and others in their virtual support network? If not, consider if you are you able to support them to be able to have access?
- Have you considered whether the young person can access a device through the support that Government announced on 24 April for eligible young people, which provides devices and internet connectivity/data to help young people avoid social isolation? More information can be found [here](#).
- How are they accessing shops for essential items?
- Are they able to do any form of daily exercise e.g. a walk?
- If the young person was/ is employed, are there any changes to their employment which are impacting them?
- Do they know how to access support immediately, including if they are feeling stressed, anxious or have very low mood? (see resources section below)

3. What can we do to support young people in Supported Accommodation during coronavirus (COVID-19) with self-isolation and social distancing and what additional support is available?

Contact plan and communication:

- You could arrange with the young person a coronavirus (COVID-19) specific contact plan according to what they need, including their need to feel cared for. For example, this could include face-to-face daily contact for young people where a risk, clinical or safeguarding, is identified following a risk assessment, or periodic weekly calls and messages for those more able to manage.
- As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues, you could use regular check-ins to identify if there is a changing need for additional support.
- Highlight to the young person the importance of social distancing, and how their effort to achieve this will help the national effort.
- You could seek to arrange access to a phone or tablet so they can communicate with friends/family and service providers/ support groups, if they currently do not have any digital devices or connectivity. They may be eligible through the Government scheme described [here](#).
- If they have access to a device, signpost the young person to useful information specifically aimed at young people (see resource section below).

Access to the young person's support provider and other key individuals:

- You could identify the young person's support provider/s and who their key worker and point of contact is (including their Personal Advisor if they are a care leaver) and ensure that the young person knows how to contact them during coronavirus (COVID-19) e.g. telephone or video call.
- If the young person is supported by other services or professionals, such as a Care Coordinator or Tutor, or health professional identify if and how their support is continuing.
- If the young person needs help with shopping, medication or exercise, identify who is the best person to assist and how.
- Identify approved local volunteers that might be able to help.

Accommodation:

- When assessing what support young people will need to meet social distancing rules it will be helpful to clarify:
 - o if the young person is sharing with anyone;
 - o the type of space available; and
 - o the proximity of the accommodation to essential services and outdoor areas.
- If a young person is not on a licence agreement and is worried about paying rent or eviction, explain to them the additional measures in place to support residents to prevent legal action and eviction over the coming months (see resources)
- If a young person becomes at risk of eviction, careful consideration and planning will be needed to consider how they will be kept safe during this period. Arrange a meeting with all professionals involved to identify sustainable solutions with a contingency plan and carefully work through this with the young person, to support them to understand and have the opportunity to access additional help and services.

Health and wellbeing:

- You could review the young person's health needs and how they may be impacted by the Government's coronavirus (COVID-19) shielding guidance for vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that the young person knows that physical, mental health, substance use and sexual health support continues to be available during coronavirus (COVID-19) although it may take place virtually.
- Ensure that the young person knows how to contact health and wellbeing services (including physical and mental health, substance use and wellbeing services) and understand how they are being delivered during coronavirus (COVID-19).
- If the young person is feeling isolated and alone, ask them what support they feel would help them and identify local support that is accessible from the Local Authority, provider and community.
- If they are using alcohol, drugs or nicotine that they understand the harm reduction advice provided by [FRANK](#) and that they know that they can still get support from services for people who use drugs and alcohol.

You could also establish key local partners and services to engage with young people such as:

- The Police – information sharing sessions with the local Police to support their understanding and awareness of the law positively and helping young people to keep safe.
- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – find out and share information on how DWP are supporting young people to ensure they are aware of their benefits entitlements and are supported to claim what they need.
- Local Commissioners – discuss with local commissioners any additional needs or services to support young people safely.
- Local online and phone services – establish local services available virtually and work with providers to share links and access points via social media and notices.
- Healthcare professionals - for example GPs or school nurses.

Ideas for further support:

- Set up themed groups with young people to establish positive activities and social events together using electronic devices and packages
- Identify local volunteering opportunities for young people.

Resources:

- **Rise Above** <https://riseabove.org.uk/>
- **#Iwill Campaign** <https://www.iwill.org.uk/coronavirus-response-resources#yp-resources>
- **YoungMinds** have resources on self-isolation and social distancing. They also have a crisis messaging service, which you can access for free 24/7:
 - Save the Crisis Messenger number on your phone. Text YM to 85258 for free 24/7 mental health support if you are having a mental health crisis.
- **Princes Trust** <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/coronavirus-response/resource-centre>
- The government has published:
 - [information on what you need to do during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).
 - [support available for renters](#)
- **Citizens Advice** have also published [information and advice on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).
- **FRANK** - drinking and taking drugs during the outbreak - <https://www.talktofrank.com/news/coronavirus>