

# Ana Liffey Drug Project

## Briefing Note for Staff regarding COVID-19

This is a briefing note for staff setting out the measures to be taken in relation to COVID-19. Please be aware that this is reflective of the best available advice as at 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, and will be updated when necessary. It is structured as follows:

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### **General Information**

In late December 2019 Chinese authorities identified a cluster of novel coronavirus infections in Wuhan City, China. The name of the virus is SARS-CoV-2 and the name of the disease it causes is COVID-19 also known as the Corona Virus. COVID-19 can be a mild or severe illness.

The symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Fever (high temperature)

COVID-19 can also result in more severe illness including:

- Pneumonia
- Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
- Kidney Failure

The SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 is spread mainly through droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. You could get the virus if you:

- come into contact with someone who has the virus and is coughing or sneezing
- touch surfaces or objects that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on, and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes.

Further information on COVID-19 is available on the HSE website at: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>

### **Mitigation measures**

At Ana Liffey, we work for people who may have compromised immune systems, which puts them in a higher risk category for COVID-19. As such, it is important that we are proactive in working in a way which limits risk. To do this, all staff should ensure they are meeting the following guidelines in the areas of *hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, information and resource provision* and *work practice*.

#### Hand hygiene

Wash your hands regularly. You should wash your hands:

- after coughing or sneezing
- before, during and after you prepare food
- before eating
- after using the toilet
- before and after caring for sick individuals
- when hands are dirty
- after handling animals or waste

Wash your hands with soap and running water when hands are visibly dirty. If your hands are not visibly dirty, wash them with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer.

See HSE hand hygiene guidance at <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

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### Respiratory hygiene

Cover your mouth and nose with a clean tissue when you cough and sneeze and then promptly dispose of the tissue in a bin and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow instead, not into your hands.

### Information and resource provision

- Ensure that posters are displayed prominently in all client areas of the building. Posters are available at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/microbiologyantimicrobialresistance/infectioncontrolandhai/posters/>
- Be aware of the plan for dealing with persons who become ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (see below)
- Be able to speak with clients in an informed way about coronavirus, particularly in relation to hand and respiratory hygiene
- Supply tissues and bins for disposal of tissues throughout the building
- Ensure hand-washing facilities, including soap and disposable towels, are well maintained
- Ensure all hard surfaces that are frequently touched, such as door handles, hand rails, and taps are cleaned regularly with a household detergent such as dilute bleach/ Sodium Hypochlorite 0.1% dilution or other household cleaning products

Please note that there is a shortage of hand sanitiser in Ireland. We are constantly trying to obtain it, but we are not likely to be able to restock in the coming days. In the circumstance where hand sanitizer runs out, remember to wash your hands regularly in a sink with soap and hot water.

### Work practice

- Do not attend any external meetings that are not directly client related.
- Cancel any non-essential planned agency visits.
- Where possible, do all internal communications by phone or email.
- Keep your outlook calendar up to date.
- If you have a work mobile phone, laptop and chargers, make sure you bring them home.

### What to do if someone exhibits symptoms of COVID-19

Remember this **IF...AND...THEN** sequence for what to do if someone presents with symptoms.

**IF...** a person feels unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, high temperature)

**AND...** in the 14 days before they became unwell, they have:

- travelled to Ireland from an area with presumed ongoing community transmission of COVID-19, or
- been in contact with a person who has COVID-19, **or**
- attended/worked in a healthcare facility where patients with COVID-19 were being treated

**THEN...** that person should:

- Isolate themselves (i.e. stay separate from other people if possible 2 metres distance)

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- Phone their GP / or if no GP Ambulance 112 and tell their GP/Ambulance / ED about their travel history and symptoms.
- It is important that they PHONE their GP/Emergency Department first and talk to them rather than arriving at the GP surgery/Emergency Department without contacting them so that they don't put others patients at risk of infection.
- Their GP/Ambulance /ED Doctor will advise them of the next steps over the phone.

Remember that many of the people who access ALDP services may exhibit symptoms for other reasons, so ask whether the person usually has coughs and temperature or has become relatively suddenly ill. Also ask if they have been in contact with anyone who may have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

If someone has no symptoms and feels well, but in the past 14 days has:

- travelled to Ireland from an area with presumed ongoing community transmission of COVID-19, or
- been in contact with a person who has COVID-19, **or**
- been in a healthcare facility where patients with COVID-19 were being treated,

then the Team Leader on duty should be notified as soon as possible, and the person can be encouraged to contact the HSE Live helpline on 1850 24 1850 for advice.

### **Interim HR Guidelines for COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

As this is an evolving situation this guidance is subject to ongoing review and will be updated as further information becomes available.

**1. Where an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) virus then our Sick Leave policy applies.**

**2. Where an employee self-isolates in line with current HSE advice**

- a) If the HSE has recommended that an employee be isolated and the employee is deemed unfit for work and obtains a sick cert including an Illness Benefit Form (IB1) or a copy of a letter from the HSE, if it is not possible to go to their GP, then our Sick Leave policy will apply.

If sick leave is exhausted then please refer to this link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6f81e1-people-who-are-diagnosed-with-covid-19/>

**3. Where an employee self isolates**

If an employee imposes isolation on themselves for precautionary purposes then we will try to be as reasonable as possible but are under no obligation to pay them. We would look at

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remote working, annual leave or unpaid. For advice on state support please refer to this link <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b8135c-people-who-are-not-diagnosed-with-covid-19-but-who-self-isolate/>

#### 4. Where ALDP sends an employee home

If we were to send an employee home from work but nothing had been confirmed with regard to them having COVID-19 (Coronavirus), then we would be obliged to pay them.

In this scenario - where a staff member presenting at work and a manager having a concern relating to the staff members wellbeing in relation the Corona Virus. The staff member is to leave immediately and to contact their GP/the HSE as soon as possible. In this exceptional circumstance, in relation to COVID-19 (Coronavirus), the organisation will pay for the cost of a GP consultation – upon submission of a receipt.

The staff member must provide a certificate from the GP to say if they are fit to work - then they are able to return to work as normal. If not, they will have to follow the GP's/the HSE's advice with regard to the Corona Virus/their health and wellbeing. If the person is signed off sick - the organisations sick leave policy applies as normal.

Staff should ensure that certificates/letters/Form IB1 provided by their GP/the HSE covers the period from the point they were sent home from work.

#### 5. Where a third party decision has been made

If an employee cannot come to work as a result of isolation arising from a 3rd party decision e.g. exposure at a social event.

When advised by the HSE to self-isolate then the organisation should look at the option of remote working. For advice on state support please refer to this link <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b8135c-people-who-are-not-diagnosed-with-covid-19-but-who-self-isolate/>

If a sick cert is provided by the employee then our sick leave policy will apply.

#### 6. Service Closure

Contingency plans are in place for all our services (see below).

We will closely follow HSE guidelines and deal with any service closure on a case-by-case basis.

#### 7. Vulnerable staff

See HSE guidelines: [Interim HSE Guidelines](#)

*While the amount of leave available to staff is the same, we will be as flexible as possible in how we implement leave as the COVID 19 phases develop.*

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### Service operations contingency plan during current COVID 19 phase

Please note that these contingency plans may change with the changing COVID 19 situation. Contingency plans will be reviewed on a weekly basis by the management team and any changes will be communicated proactively to all staff, volunteers and relevant stakeholders.

The below steps are being put in place to minimize risk as much as is possible to our service users, the vast majority of whom have compromised immune systems, our staff and our volunteers.

Key **principles** of service provision to adhere to until further notice:

1. All of our services and programmes will run as normal until we have further notice from the HSE or other government departments.
2. If any of our team identify specific risks in running any of our services or programmes which are not addressed in this document, please alert your line manager and we will risk assess immediately.
3. If our staffing levels are reduced and we cannot run the full range of services, we will run reduced services while we have staff available to attend work. A more detailed outline of this follows below.
4. If an employee needs to self-isolate and is working from home, as outlined earlier in this document, the work tasks and mechanisms of communication with the wider organization will be agreed with their line manager, in line with their role.

Key **steps** for all staff to adhere to until further notice:

1. All team members will wash their hands thoroughly upon arrival at work and regularly throughout the day in a proactive manner.
2. All team members will follow the respiratory hygiene advice issued by the HSE and visible on the Government issued COVID 19 posters which are displayed throughout each building.
3. Do not attend any meetings or events which are not essential. Some examples of non-essential meetings include networking events, agency visits, etc. Meetings such as service user case meetings, MDT meetings and essential service planning meetings (e.g. Prison group planning, Treatment and Rehab meetings) should continue to be attended. If you are unsure about a certain meeting or event, please communicate with your line manager to make a decision on attendance.
4. If you can ring in to a meeting instead of attending, please do so. If you are the meeting organizer, you can use our teleconferencing system. We will circulate teleconference facility details to all staff to aid this.
5. Do not organize any agency visits or onsite visits from third parties to our services at present, aside from any ongoing in-reach work which is essential to our service provision e.g. Limerick surgery.
6. As stock in supermarkets may deplete if imports slow down /cease, please ensure you bulk buy any nonperishable items needed for the services users /offices (e.g. tea bags, peanut butter) now. Please also bulk buy perishable items in smaller bulk e.g. enough milk for a week in advance.
7. All staff outlook calendars and/or meeting books /diaries should be kept up to date with meetings so that we can contact all relevant parties if an exposure to COVID 19 occurs.

Specific **contingency plans** broken down by team in the event of staffing levels reducing:

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### Midwest team

If staffing levels reduce, the team will prioritise the following work:

- Needle and syringe provision
- Limerick city centre outreach
- Case management / one-to-ones in the three counties.
- Allowing access to Dr. O'Donnell in our building for his surgery.
- Managing telephone communications with service users.

If staffing levels reduce to one team member, they will be partnered with a volunteer to complete the above. If this is not possible, they will be supported to work from another agencies building to complete case management, in line with our policies i.e. meet service users in public place for one-to-ones.

### Dublin services team

If staffing levels reduce, the team will prioritise the following work:

- Needle and syringe provision
- Case management / one-to-ones
- Allowing access to service users for nursing support in the clinic at No.51.
- Group work
- Prison programme
- Managing telephone communications with service users.

If staffing levels reduce to one team member, they will work from 48 Middle Abbey Street (or any other Dublin based ALDP office that is open) and will be partnered with a volunteer to complete the above if possible. Otherwise, they will complete case management, in line with our policies i.e. meet service users in public place for one-to-ones.

### ACMT

If staffing levels reduce, the team will prioritise the following work:

- Case management of service users who are currently registered with valid consent.
- Using vehicle to complete work under service user's care plans e.g. driving to treatment.

If staffing levels reduce to one team member, they will work from 48 Middle Abbey Street (or any other Dublin based ALDP office that is open) and will be partnered with a volunteer to complete the above if possible. Otherwise, they will complete case management, in line with our policies i.e. meet service users in public place for one to ones.

### Policy team

The policy team should be proactive in assessing which interagency meetings are essential to their work plans and prioritizing attendance of those over non-essential meetings. This should be the case in general and also if staff levels reduce.

Telephone, teleconference and email communication should be used where meetings cannot be attended.

If staffing levels reduce to one team member, they will work from 48 Middle Abbey Street (or any other Dublin based ALDP office that is open).

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### Central office

The central office team should be proactive in assessing which interagency meetings are essential to their work plans and prioritizing attendance of those over non-essential meetings in general and also if staff levels reduce. Telephone, teleconference and email communication should be used where meetings cannot be attended.

If meetings involving external stakeholders are due to take place in 48 Middle Abbey Street, they should be carried out offsite instead, where possible. As 48 Middle Abbey Street is a building used by vulnerable service users, traffic in and out of the building by non-essential visitors should be minimized.

If staffing levels reduce to one team member, they will work from 51 Middle Abbey Street (or any other Dublin based ALDP office that is open).

### **Wording for inclusion in appointment emails /texts/letters/telephone conversations**

All staff to include the following text in any appointment emails /texts/letters/telephone conversation. As we make most of our appointments verbally with service users, it is important that you say this to service users when agreeing the appointment. You can also print this section off and hand to them :

### For arranging appointments with adults:

Please do not attend this appointment if you are unwell with any of these symptoms:

- High temperature/fever
- Bad cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath.

Instead, please contact us by phone to cancel your appointment and arrange another appointment when you are better.

Please do not attend this appointment if you have been advised to self-isolate or limit social interactions. Instead, please phone us to arrange another appointment.

***Please note that Ana Liffey provides a Freephone number you can contact us on 1800 78 68 28.***

### For arranging appointments with children:

Please do not bring your child to this appointment if you or your child is unwell with any of these symptoms:

- High temperature/fever
- Bad cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath.

Instead, please contact us by phone to cancel the appointment and arrange another appointment when you or your child is better.

Please do not bring your child to this appointment if you or your child has been advised to self-isolate or limit social interactions. Instead, please phone us to arrange another appointment.

***Please note that Ana Liffey provides a Freephone number you can contact us on 1800 78 68 28.***