

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic poses a risk to Elim's residents and staff as well as our ability to deliver our services. This Policy outlines Elim's organisational approach to the coronavirus, covering communication, risk management and continuity planning.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Elim staff and will inform operational and strategic decision making. The Policy will remain in place for the duration of the pandemic.

Elim's standard operating policies and procedures will continue to remain active throughout the pandemic, however we recognise that in certain circumstances, e.g. recording staff sickness, greater managerial discretion will be required. In some areas, e.g. arrears management, it may be necessary to implement interim policy and procedure. In either case, we will communicate with all relevant stakeholders to advise.

Policy Statement

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, there will be three key aims behind every aspect of our work:

- We will seek to follow government advice
- We will prioritise the health and wellbeing of our staff, residents and other stakeholders, whilst ensuring that risk is managed proportionately
- We will seek to ensure continuity of service delivery wherever possible.

Related documents

This policy is supplemented by the following documents:

- **Elim Business Continuity Plan**
Organisational document with information to allow business continuity in a variety of circumstances and crises. Among other information, contains contact information for staff members and information regarding IT continuity.
- **Elim Covid-19 Risk Management and Continuity Plan (Elim Covid-19 Plan - ECP)**
Identifies specific risks related to C-19, with information on risk management and guidance for business continuity.
- **Elim Covid-19 Risk Register (over-arching)**
- **Individual Scheme Continuity Plans (SCPs)**
Contains risk, risk management and continuity information relating to specific supported housing sites.

Information

Authoritative sources of information will be Government and NHS websites. The following websites will be reviewed regularly by designated members of staff and information communicated to staff and residents as required:

- <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> This website also contains sector specific advice from Homes England etc.
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Where appropriate, advice will be taken from specialist teams within the NHS or government, e.g. Homeless Health Care Teams or local authorities.

We will also continue to review guidance and instruction provided by our regulator and the National Housing Federation.

Communication

We will communicate proactively with staff, residents and key stakeholders throughout this pandemic. The ECP will provide detailed information about communication with residents, staff and other key partners, e.g. contractors and commissioners. We will publish an organisational risk management plan on our website.

In our communication, we will acknowledge that a 'one size fits all' approach may not always be appropriate. For example, we are conscious that we work with certain groups of residents – homeless people and the Gypsy and Traveller communities – who are less likely to utilise health services. The ECP and SCPs will detail specific actions to be taken to communicate with these groups and manage any unique risks.

We are also aware that some of our residents and staff may be at higher risk from the effects of Coronavirus and possibly lack support networks that may be required in the event that they are required to self-isolate. We will seek to identify these individuals from data held, e.g. flagging data, and our organisational customer knowledge, though we accept that there may be many people at higher risk that we will not be aware of. The ECP and SCPs will detail specific actions to be taken to communicate with these people. In each case we will offer support insofar as it is practical to do so.

The 'Plan to Rebuild'

During the week commencing 11th May, the government began to lay out its plans for the easing of lockdown. This was a response to the country passing the first peak of the pandemic and the need to boost economic activity. Full details of the government's 'Plan to Rebuild the UK' can be found [here](#).

This organisational policy remains active and regularly reviewed throughout the period of easing lockdown and the key objectives of the policy remain:

- To ensure that Elim observes Government advice to reduce the spread of Covid-19.
- To prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents, staff and wider communities.
- To seek to ensure continuity of our service delivery wherever possible.

The easing of lockdown represents a new phase of the pandemic for the country and for Elim, and it will bring new challenges. The government's plans are conditional – they have specified a series of tests for easing lockdown measures that they will use to inform their decision making. As the data changes, social and business restrictions may increase or decrease, requiring us to be adaptable individually and organisationally. In the context of our key objectives, this brings new considerations.

Observing Government Guidance

Our approach to following government guidance will not change but, recognising that guidance may change on a more frequent and unpredictable basis, we will be more vigilant. The Plan to Rebuild three steps to easing lockdown measures:

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Reviewed by DP 15th May 2020

Reviewed by DP 30th June 2020

Phase 1: Where the UK found itself throughout most of March and the whole of April, with lockdown restrictions at their most stringent.

Phase 2: Smarter controls. Where the government will gradually replace the existing social restrictions with smarter measures that balance its aims as effectively as possible.

Phase 3: Effective treatment. Eradication of the virus altogether is unlikely but rolling out effective treatments and/or a vaccine will allow us to move to a phase where the effect of the virus can be reduced to manageable levels.

Progression through these phases is contingent on the data produced by a number of tests detailed in the plan. It is quite feasible that any easing of social restrictions could be followed by another restriction. At any given time, Elim will be actively planning for progression/regression for the immediate next phase in social restrictions. In practise, this planning will involve (but not be restricted to):

- Ensuring that staff/residents are aware of the implications of changes to social restrictions on their work/service.
- Maintaining contact with key partners, e.g. contractors, so that we are aware of the implications on them of changing social restrictions, and vice versa.
- Regular review and amendment of the Covid-19 related documents referenced above.

All significant changes to our operation will be risk assessed, with management plans put in place to ensure we are able to deliver the three key aims at the top of this Policy.

Longer Term Considerations

Although the immediate challenges of Covid-19 are more operational in nature, we acknowledge the likelihood of longer-term impact and risks related to the pandemic. These financial and strategic matters will be considered on a regular basis at board, exec and managerial level within the organisation.

Alistair Allender
Chief Executive
June 2020

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