

Coronavirus (COVID-19) response plan

In response to the outbreak of coronavirus, and in order to protect guests, volunteers, staff and the public from infection as much as possible, GrowTH will be implementing the following measures. These measures will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as we learn more about the virus, as we receive advice from other organisations and as the situation changes on a national level.

GENERAL

- GrowTH staff will meet regularly to plan our response to coronavirus, and will communicate with each other via WhatsApp and email as the situation develops.
- Matt will update trustees on a regular basis and seek their advice.
- GrowTH staff will liaise with Housing Justice, other shelters and charities, and Tower Hamlets council, to plan our response to coronavirus.
- GrowTH staff will regularly check the following online advice:
 - Government advice: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>
 - NHS advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
 - Housing Justice advice: <https://housingjustice.org.uk/what-we-do/night-shelters/wns-network-membership/coronavirus-advice-for-night-shelters>
 - Homeless Link advice: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2020/mar/05/covid-19-coronavirus-outbreak>

STAFF

- All staff must work from home and only work in the office or elsewhere if it is necessary.
- Any staff displaying any symptoms of coronavirus (dry cough, temperature, shortness of breath) must not attend the office or shelter, and must self-isolate for at least 7 days. Staff should let Matt know and use NHS 111 online (<https://111.nhs.uk/service/COVID-19/>) if necessary. Depending on the severity of the symptoms, the staff member can either work from home or take sick leave until it is safe for them to return to work.
- Staff will remain in regular contact to ensure work tasks are covered.
- In the current situation, we are simplifying our operations to give priority to ensuring the shelter can continue to run. GrowTH Housing staff may be asked to help with the running of the shelter too, since the shelter and our guests are the most vulnerable. Staff may need to step in to help run shifts at the shelter more regularly than usual.
- Staff must wash their hands regularly and thoroughly while at the office, shelter, or GrowTH flats, especially when they first arrive, and use tissues etc.
- Refrain from shaking hands and hugging.

VOLUNTEERS

- Coordinators have received an instruction sheet and they or GrowTH staff will communicate all information to the volunteers ahead of each shift.
- Coordinators will remind all volunteers that they must not come to the shelter if they are experiencing any coronavirus symptoms.
- GrowTH staff and coordinators are making extra efforts to recruit volunteers who are healthy, willing and able to fill the gaps left by volunteers who have to drop out as a direct or indirect result of the coronavirus pandemic.

SHELTER

- Every guest and volunteer must wash their hands thoroughly (for 20 seconds, with soap) as soon as they enter the shelter venue.
- Each evening, before signing in the guests, the coordinator must explain to volunteers and guests the importance of handwashing, using tissues, and reporting to the coordinator immediately if they are experiencing any symptoms of coronavirus.
- Guests will be told to refrain from shaking hands and hugging.
- To ensure that every guest washes their hands immediately after being signed into the venue, the coordinator will start the signing in earlier than usual, and he/she and one other volunteer will be at the door to explain this during the signing in. Guests will be allowed into the shelter in twos or threes, and another volunteer will direct them to the toilets to ensure they wash their hands.
- A coronavirus information and rules sheet has been and will continue to be given to every guest in the shelter.
- If any guest displays any symptoms, they may not be allowed to enter the venue, in order to protect other guests and volunteers from infection. The situation will be assessed by the GrowTH staff team as a matter of urgency, and measures will be taken to ensure that the guest has minimal contact with others until given the all clear. Depending on the symptoms and likelihood of the guest having coronavirus, we will take measures such as:
 - Isolating the guest in a separate area / room in the shelter.
 - The guest will be told not to go to hospital or a GP surgery, but instead to use NHS 111 online (<https://111.nhs.uk/service/COVID-19/>).
 - In more likely cases, or in the event that a guest tests positive for coronavirus, the guest may be told they cannot stay in the shelter, as the virus would be likely to spread rapidly among other guests and volunteers.
 - In a worst-case scenario, GrowTH may have to decide to close the shelter prematurely or for a limited time.
- GrowTH staff will aim to find suitable alternative accommodation for those guests who cannot stay at the shelter, however this will not be guaranteed.

NEW REFERRALS INTO THE SHELTER

- Staff will use the questions found on GlassDoor's website when taking new referrals into the shelter:
<https://www.glassdoor.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=3ebc6ea4-e880-4844-be0a-29153bd5f8c9>.

3 Last updated: 17/03/2020

- Staff are reviewing if and when to stop taking referrals into the shelter.

MOVING ON FROM THE SHELTER

- The usual 28-night limit to a guest's stay in the shelter has been suspended until further notice. Guests will only be removed from the guest list if they:
 - find alternative accommodation,
 - decide to leave for other reasons,
 - stop turning up to the shelter,
 - are given a red card,
 - the shelter closes.

GROWTH HOUSING

- Growth Housing staff will communicate regularly with all residents and ensure they are well informed about coronavirus and how to protect themselves.
- Growth Housing staff must not meet with any residents who are displaying symptoms, nor enter the flats in which they are staying, unless absolutely necessary.
- Growth Housing staff will try to carry out support meetings with residents via telephone as much as is possible.
- Any residents displaying symptoms will be instructed to self-isolate in their rooms for at least 7 days and clean thoroughly after using the shared bathroom and kitchen. They will be directed to use NHS 111 online (<https://111.nhs.uk/service/COVID-19/>) if necessary.