

Interim guidance for dynamic risk assessment for COVID-19 management during extreme heat in adult social care settings and services - issued 14/07/2022

Introduction

High temperatures across England are expected this week (UKHSA Briefing Note 2022/060 Heat-Health Alert Update: Level 3), this weekend and into next week [Heatwave on the way - Met Office](#). Residents of care homes and people receiving personal care may be at risk from heat due to COVID-19 ill-health and COVID-19 restrictions such as self-isolation.

Heat management measures should be considered by care providers and those guiding COVID-19 incident and outbreak management. A dynamic risk assessment model for COVID-19 management during extreme heat should be applied to balance the risks of infection within the setting with the risks posed to vulnerable people by the extreme heat during this period (July 2022).

During incidents and outbreaks, Health Protection Teams and other local partners advising providers on outbreak management should work with individual care providers to consider the specific circumstances of the setting to ensure infection prevention and control (IPC) best practice is pragmatically applied to optimise the well-being of residents and staff. The following principles apply to all settings where personal care is provided including care at home and care homes.

Resident care

Reference should be made to [Supporting vulnerable people before and during a heatwave: for care home managers and staff - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). In addition, the following may be considered

- Enable groups (cohorts) of care home residents to spend more time in cooler areas. It is recognised this is balanced against the risk of wider exposure to infection. Guidance relating to [testing](#) residents and [ventilation](#) should be followed as a mitigation against this. People who test positive or are symptomatic and require self-isolation should be supported to allow more time out of their room in cooler areas including outdoors in shaded areas.
- Cohorting people into groups who have symptoms or have tested positive (these groups should not be mixed) may help to improve resident movement to cooler spaces for longer than would usually be recommended. People receiving care may need additional support to cope with the hot weather; ensure that residents are supported to access water and if possible, ice or cooled drinks. Residents with cognitive conditions such as dementia may need to be prompted to take regular fluids.
- Particular consideration should be given to supporting [vulnerable people who may be more susceptible to consequences of high temperatures](#) for example, those with cognitive or physical conditions which make them less able to recognise or express that they are hot or feeling unwell.
- The care provider should consider the structural mitigations that may be applied to support IPC and individual well-being such as improving ventilation and enabling social distancing where possible if other IPC measures such as a universal masking (for source control) by staff and visitors cannot be tolerated.



- Reference should be made to the [Heatwave Plan for England](#). Fans can be locally risk assessed for use. Fans should be clean before use and be directed to an external opening (window/door) in rooms to improve air movement

Staff care

- Universal masking (for source control) is still recommended but when extreme heat makes this intolerable (due to heat stress), staff and visitors should prioritise wearing a mask for source control when within 1m of a resident at higher risk of severe COVID-19
- Personal Protective Equipment (for staff protection, not source control) such as aprons, gloves and a facemask should be worn as per current guidance [COVID-19 supplement to the infection prevention and control resource for adult social care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Enable regular breaks for staff to rehydrate and to allow movement to shaded and cooler areas. Further advice is available <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/heatwave-how-to-cope-in-hot-weather>

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