



## **Infectious Diseases Policy**

To provide clarity regarding Mind in Croydon's approach to managing the implications of infectious diseases/pandemic whilst it is ongoing, including the responsibilities of staff and volunteers.

Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 Under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 **any person who knowingly exposes others to an infectious disease is guilty of an offence, either by being infected themselves or by exposing clients to risks from other clients.**

### **1. Policy**

Mind in Croydon's approach to managing issues relating to infectious diseases/pandemic and associated restrictions is guided by the following principles:

- We will prioritise keeping our staff, volunteers, clients and carers safe and protecting their mental wellbeing;
- We will seek to provide people with the support they need, including through the use of alternative mechanisms to deliver services;
- We will work in accordance with legislation and Government guidance;
- We will be led by our organisational strategy, vision and values in making decisions;
- We will provide staff, volunteers and clients with clear, open, up to date information;
- We will apply principles of fairness, equity, inclusion and respect so that individuals or groups are not unfairly disadvantaged;
- We will continue to learn from our experiences of home working and remote delivery and continue to apply practice which has proven effective;
- We will prioritise people having opportunities to connect in person where possible.

We may need to issue amendments to the procedures outlined below at short notice based on changes in the progression of a pandemic and the Government's response to this. We also may as an organisation continue to follow key guidelines that have been agreed by the senior management team – see Appendix One.

### **2. Procedures**

In current circumstances please see Appendix One for current organisation guidelines on Covid-19.

#### **2.1 Service Delivery**

Please reference the guidance in section 2.3 to minimise the spread of an infectious disease when undertaking in-person service delivery.

##### **2.1.1 Individual Support**

Staff should offer a choice of in-person support or remote support to all clients receiving One-to-One support in those services that are not specifically online/telephone support services.

Where clients choose to be supported by phone and online, as far as possible remote individual support will mirror the support available in person. Each team will have online resources to access from Synology.

### **2.1.2 Group Support**

Services should consider the needs and preferences of clients when making decisions about whether group delivery should take place in person or online. It is expected that for many services a combination of these approaches will be appropriate.

## **2.2 Attendance in Work Premises**

Staff are expected to work from the office base detailed in their contract of employment. In addition, managers can agree ad hoc working from home days provided this does not become a regular pattern or expectation and does not affect the service of our clients.

Staff are expected to attend team meetings and other important meetings in-person, as well as engaging in opportunities for collaboration with colleagues.

Exceptions to this guidance will apply when Government guidance to work from home is in force.

## **2.3 Minimising Spread of an Infectious Disease**

### **2.3.1 General Infectious Disease Safety Measures**

Mind in Croydon staff and volunteers should follow Government and public health guidance regarding hand washing and sanitising.

Wherever possible rooms being used for meetings should be ventilated.

Staff and volunteers should ensure that they operate within the guidelines at all times.

### **2.3.2 Social Distancing**

Mind in Croydon will issue guidance regarding social distancing as required. As a general principle when there is a risk of infectious disease (Covid-19) transmission, staff and volunteers should avoid being in close proximity where possible and should consider wearing face coverings where this is not possible.

### **2.3.3 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

When indicated by risk assessments conducted at an organisational or service level or when otherwise mandated by the Government, staff and volunteers are expected to wear appropriate PPE for their interactions with clients and colleagues.

### **2.3.4 Preparing for meetings**

Prior to the delivery of in-person support the staff member or volunteer involved should send the client the 'Infectious Disease In-Person Support Guidelines' outlining their responsibilities (See **Appendix 2**).

Staff must ensure the meeting room where they are meeting the client has been sanitised and that seating is placed at a distance.

### **2.3.5 Testing for an infectious disease**

If there is an infectious disease, Mind in Croydon staff and volunteers will need to:

- follow government guidelines on what tests are available for the specific disease, ordering online, from pharmacies or kept on MiC premises to be used if required;
- comply with Government and organisational guidance regarding taking Tests prior to attending the workplace;
- self-isolate in accordance with Government guidelines in place at the time or adhere to SMT's guidelines.

### **2.4 Self-Isolating**

Mind in Croydon staff and volunteers must follow Government guidance on when and how to self-isolate. Staff and volunteers who are required to self-isolate and who are not well enough to work due to infectious disease symptoms should take sick leave and report this to their managing (following the sickness reporting procedures). If you are well enough to work, you should work exclusively from home and in agreement with their manager.

### **2.5 Caring for Dependents**

Infectious diseases and associated Government restrictions (in particular the closing of schools) can create particular issues for people with responsibility for caring for dependents. We want to provide staff with options and flexibility in these circumstances and will consider offering (please note that all options must be approved in advance by your line manager):

- Flexible Working Hours – For most staff it is possible to do at least some of their work outside of their normal working hours, and we are happy for people to do this, with agreement from their manager on when they will be working.
- Annual Leave – We will seek to be flexible where staff want to take annual leave at short notice. It might be that people want to take just a few hours annual leave rather than whole day and combine this with working flexible hours.
- Unpaid Leave – For any normal working hours people are unable to cover by working flexibly or taking annual leave, staff can request unpaid leave.

Other approaches may be introduced depending on the circumstances. In the event of a lockdown that closes schools, staff in client-facing roles may also be eligible, as critical workers, for their children to attend school.

### **2.6 Vaccination**

Mind in Croydon encourages all staff and volunteers to receive an approved infectious disease vaccination through the NHS, including any booster vaccinations they are entitled to.

Staff and volunteers working in Mind in Croydon CQC registered services, or another service regulated by the CQC, whose role ordinarily involves having any in-person contact with clients, will be required by law to be fully vaccinated (currently defined as having received two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine), unless they have a medical exemption.

There may be requirements to ensure those staff and volunteers working in CQC registered services will need to have the required vaccine or vaccines by a given date. If those who are required to be vaccinated by law as a condition of deployment will need to provide evidence to the HR department of their vaccination status (either fully vaccinated or exempt) before a specific date, if currently employed. New staff will need to provide this evidence before they start working for the organisation, as a condition of their offer of employment.

Any staff or volunteers for whom this is a requirement, who fail to provide this evidence will be invited to discuss this with their manager and a representative from the HR department. If possible, the staff member may be offered redeployment to a role for which vaccination is not a requirement. If this is not possible, staff being subject to action which may lead to dismissal if on a permanent or fixed-term contract.

### **3 Links to other policies**

- Absence from work
- Equity and Diversity
- Flexible Working from Home
- Health & Safety
- Lone Working
- Stress at Work

*Reviewed and Approved by the Board of Mind in Croydon – August 2022*

## Appendix One

### Current Covid-19 Advice Agreed by SMT

July 2022

In the last few weeks Covid has been increasing.

Mind in Croydon's ongoing advice to staff and volunteers is that if you feel unwell with Covid-like symptoms, go home and take a **Lateral Flow Test**. If you are positive, you should self-isolate until you test negative on two consecutive days, no sooner than Days 5 and 6 after your positive test. If you test negative, you can then stop isolating and return to work. If you continue to test positive, you should stay at home, but you should return to office-based duties by Day 10.

For many of us, particularly those who have had both vaccinations and the booster, the illness is not likely to be severe. If you have tested positive but feel well enough to work, and you are able to do your job from home, you may work from home with the agreement of your line manager. **But** this does mean that you must be able to work your full hours at home.

If you are not able to do your hours, you will be considered as off sick and statutory and/or contractual sickness absence provisions will apply.

If you are recovering from Covid and need a phased return to work, please talk with your line manager as soon as possible so that this can be discussed and agreed with HR.

Anyone who test positive for Covid will need to report a Covid-19 rapid lateral flow test result to their line manager. You can do this by logging on to: <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>, once you have completed the form, please can you screen shot the result or email this to your line manager. You will need to do this for all the tests you take.

Currently you can get free lateral flow test kits from: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests> by using the information below:

*Why do you need a test?*

You've been asked to take a test because you work for the NHS, or an NHS-commissioned independent healthcare provider, or in adult social care.

*What is your area of work?*

You work in the adult social care sector.

*What is your job title?*

Mental Health Worker.

## **Appendix Two**

### **Infectious Disease In-Person Support Guidelines**

We at Mind in Croydon take people's welfare very seriously and the protection of infectious decisions. During this period of time, we need to ensure the safety of our clients, staff and volunteers.

If you are invited to a One-to-One meeting or Group meeting at one of our Mind in Croydon premises, we ask you to follow the following guidance:

- Let the person who you are meeting know if you are vaccinated or not (the reason for this is that if you are not vaccinated, we may want to consider putting in place extra protection for you, e.g. you using PPE).
- Arrive 5 minutes before you meeting as we will not be able to allow you to wait onsite.
- Upon arrival we would like you to be wearing a mask or plastic mask shield.
- You will be asked to sanitise your hands.
- Sign in using a pen from the non-used pen box and once done place the used pen in the used pen box.
- You will then be shown to the room you will be meeting your support worker
- The room you will be meeting in will be fully sanitised and where you sit will be one meter away from where your support worker will be sitting.
- If you are meeting in a group, this will be in a room that has space to social distance, please wear your mask at all times.
- Upon leaving, please ensure you sign out by using a pen from the non-used pen box and once done place the used pen in the used pen box.
- Sanitise your hands.

We very much want to embrace face-to-face meetings with our clients and hope you will respect our guidelines. Thank you.