# Sussex Nightstop Covid-19 Operating Policy

### 1. Context

Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic on the 11 March by the World Health Organisation and this status remains. The subsequent measures introduced to control and mitigate the impact of the virus have been wide ranging and by necessity have been most interruptive to activities that require close contact with offers, including those in the home setting.

Accessing a private room, a hot meal, and washing facilities along with social company within a home-setting is the very core of the Nightstop service and in many regards requires people to be within close physical proximity. Additionally, the procedural processes that underpin the safe set-up and management of this activity such as client assessments and volunteer recruitment draw heavily upon face-to-face contact whether 1-2-1 or in group settings such as volunteer training.

Sussex Nightstop takes seriously its duty of care towards the sustainability and integrity of the Sussex Nightstop enterprise as well as all those involved in accessing and delivering the service and is therefore necessarily adapting services to mitigate against the risks posed by Covid-19 whilst meeting our overall aim of providing access to a safe, non-judgemental, inclusive place to stay for people who are homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

### 2. Purpose and Scope

Given the prevailing risks of Covid-19, the purpose of this policy then is to outline the variations and adaptations in approach to the operational delivery of Sussex Nightstop services with the express objective that services are delivered in a way that both safeguards stakeholders from the risks of Covid-19 as far as reasonably possible and that meet the statutory and legal requirements and recommendations of the relevant authorities to this issue.

Whilst some approaches outlined within this policy may be beneficially adopted post-Covid the immediate scope of this policy applies to operations in the context of the current Covid-19 environment where the pandemic remains active and without suitable controls such as a vaccine.

Whilst in this 'current' environment this policy will supersede related Sussex Nightstop policies where variations to delivery exist with respect to Covid-19.

In all other respects the over-arching service thresholds within which Sussex Nightstop operates with regards to clients remains the same, being a service suitable for clients with low/medium threshold of need.

### 3. Authorities and supporting policies and documents

Covid-19 mitigating service adaptations adopted by Sussex Nightstop will be based on a full risk assessment of the Nightstop placement activity[1] as specifically informed by information and guidance from the following authorities:

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[1] SNS Covid-19 RA – Placements (06.08.2020)

- UK Government Covid-19 Guidance – lockdown and easing measures applicable to England[2]
- Public Health England Covid-19 Guidance
- De Paul UK Nightstop Guidance – updated to accommodate Covid-19

Access to local expertise in the management of Covid-19 within homelessness settings (such as the NHS Infection Control Lead for Homelessness Settings Brighton & Hove) will be made use of in determining suitable local adaptations where necessary.

Covid-19 adaptations will be informed and supported by existing organisational risk management approaches outlined in the current Sussex Nightstop Risk Management Policy and related procedures and guidance documentation including:

- Sussex Nightstop Client Risk Assessment Framework
- Sussex Nightstop Safeguarding Policy
- Sussex Nightstop Volunteer Health and Safety Policy
- Sussex Nightstop Volunteer and Client Handbook Guidance

## 4. Responsibilities

3.1 Sussex Nightstop Board of Trustees maintain overall responsibility for our risk assessment and management and will appoint Trustee leads to support the development of risk assessments across operational delivery with specific regard to Covid-19.

3.2 Sussex Nightstop Director holds responsibility for working with the Board of Trustees and to advise upon risk in a timely manner with regards Covid-19.  The Director will maintain policies and procedures that support risk mitigation as required and ensure that the responsibilities within them are communicated to those with a responsibility to implement them. The Director will also identify any necessary training and support to assist this.

3.3 Sussex Nightstop Staff and others who broker a Nightstop placement have specific responsibility for integrating into and carrying out any approved Covid-19 adaptations as apply to their role in the management of clients and volunteers and related service activity.

3.4 Sussex Nightstop Volunteers have a responsibility to be aware of the policies and procedures that are used to minimise and avoid risk, to work within those policies and procedures at all times, and to report ALL events which present as a risk.

## 5. Principles

Whilst delivering services in a Covid-19 environment Sussex Nightstop;

- Will work within a 'staged' approach to the offering of services, utilising the set of decision-making questions to move between stages and ensure that we are operating with the necessary authority to do so
- Will place prevention at the forefront of our approach to risk-management; integrating and implementing Covid-19 screening questions throughout service activity and producing accessible guidance outlining clear and reasonable actions for all stakeholders to take
- Will reduce face-to-face contact within operational processes as far as possible without compromising safety; introducing further checks and balances where our risk assessment demands them
- Will make any reasonable adjustments where possible to support all stakeholders to meet the requirements asked of them in relation to the new Covid-19 conditions
- Will be prepared and ready to pause the service should circumstances dictate that course of action

## 6. Covid-19 service adaptations

There are four main ways in which services will be Covid-19 adapted:

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do#clinically-vulnerable-groups-and-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-groups-and-care-homes 22.09.2020

6.1 The placement - Based on a risk-assessment process utilising current Government and Public Health England guidance, guidance from our umbrella organisation De Paul and with review from our local NHS Clinical Lead on Infection Control in Homelessness settings Sussex Nightstop will be moving away from the current night-by-night placement offer adopting instead a 'consecutive nights' approach where the 'most' number of nights a client can stay in the same household will be sought and a request of volunteers made to offer consecutive night hosting (up to a maximum of 7). We will work to the 'ideal' minimum stay of 4 nights but will utilise 2 nights where necessary.

This approach supports the safety and well-being of all of our hosts and guests whilst retaining the greatest flexibility wherein hosts may continue to volunteer balanced against the known risks to people from rough-sleeping should we not be able to place.

The Sussex Nightstop Hosting Role (Covid-adapted) will be adapted accordingly.

To further reduce risk of infection transfer, Sussex Nightstop will also introduce a 'Daystop' offer whereby guests will be able to stay at a host home during the day with a host present at all times. 'Daystop' will be subject to the same terms and conditions as Nightstop whereby clients will not be key holders and with zero tolerance to drugs and alcohol. Daystop will be supplementary to a Nightstop placement where possible but will not be a mandatory requirement of a Nightstop placement continuing.

6.2 Safeguarding those who are vulnerable - Nightstop has a duty of care to wellbeing and safety of volunteers and guests.

- Volunteers (prospective and existing) and others in their household including any 'support' bubble (as defined by government guidance) who fall into groups that are deemed to be at higher levels of risk from COVID-19 (as currently defined by the clinically vulnerable and shielding lists) will not be allowed to volunteer in a hosting capacity (or other roles that require a level of in-person contact such as driver and chaperones) until such time authorised guidance suitably allows.

- Clients who are deemed to be at higher levels of risk from Covid-19 will be able to access Nightstop, will be regarded as being priority for placement and will have suitably enhanced levels of infection control implemented during the host placement.

6.3 Infection Control

Screening for Covid-19 – both vulnerability to and symptoms of – will be integrated into all parts of service delivery including:
- Client assessment
- Prospective volunteer host application
- Placement set up
- Ongoing daily placement check-ins with hosts and clients

Volunteers and Clients will be supplied with infection control packs including face covering, hand sanitiser, and disinfectant wipes or access to ensured and client and guest guidance will stipulate infection control measures they are to adhere to including but not limited to:
- Pre-placement cleaning with removal of clutter and soft-furnishings to sufficiently do so
- Regular handwashing and hand sanitisations
- Maintaining of social distancing at 2m where possible
- Use of face covering where 1m distance can't be maintained
- Wipe down of bathroom surfaces with disinfectant wipes after use

Any individual either evidencing or declaring Covid-19 related symptoms, instructed by track and trace to self-isolate or known to have been in contact with a suspected Covid-19 case will be prohibited from accessing or providing the Nightstop hosting service until the requisite self-isolation periods and any other requirements from GP/Public Health England have been met. Should this occur whilst the client is staying in placement the individual will be referred back to the referring agency and a concurrent referral to the Care Hub made with the request to find alternative accommodation.

6.4 Management of services remotely - A high degree of Nightstop client and volunteer processes utilise face-to-face contact with staff members.

Sussex Nightstop will transfer face-to-face activities:

- Staff will be facilitated and supported to work at home until such point a suitably Covid-19 safe work environment is secured and where service delivery requires it
- Video-call technology and online training platforms will be adopted as far as practically possible.

Where the transfer of activities in this way is seen to impact on the assessment of risk or compromise quality control mitigating activity will be put in place the details of which can be found in Appendix 1.

### 7. Guidance and support

Sussex Nightstop will refresh all relevant guidance for volunteers and guests in clear and accessible language and circulate accordingly.

Confirmation of understanding and agreement with be sought from all parties.

Guidance will be referenced and revisited with volunteers and guests on an ongoing basis and compliance with the scheme conditions with respect to Covid-19 monitored.

Sussex Nightstop reserves the right to withdraw a Nightstop placement or opportunity of Nightstop hosting where individuals are found to be not complying.

### 8. Volunteer engagement and consultation

As per Sussex Nightstop Volunteer Policy we will maintain clear and transparent communication with hosts with respect to changes relating to Covid-19 and provide opportunity for consultation and feedback from Nightstop volunteers on changes where possible.

### 9. Other Nightstop activities

The delivery of Nightstop services includes activity that, whilst outside of direct service delivery, fundamentally contributes to the success of the service overall including volunteer celebration and recognition events, volunteer recruitment activity, talks, presentations and other profile-raising activity, participation at national Nightstop events. These activities are traditionally face-to-face.

Nightstop will look for suitable alternatives to these activities that meet with current Covid-19 guidance as issued by Public Health England and any face-to-face opportunities will be subject to a satisfactory risk-assessment before implementing.

### 10. Staff management and welfare

All reasonable care will be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of staff engaged in the delivery of Sussex Nightstop services.

Sussex Nightstop will:

- keep everyone updated on actions being taken to reduce risks of Covid-19 exposure in the workplace suitably under-pinned by clear and transparent risk assessment processes
- continue to facilitate a 'work-from-home' approach with office site working limited to a 'needs must' basis and where risk assessments allow
- ensure that staff have access to equipment, guidance and support both to maintain safe working practices and staff well-being
- implement any necessary adjustment to data protection practices as relate to 'home working'
- maintain up-to-date information on staff health as relates to Covid-19 and will risk assess an individual's return to the work place on that basis
- make sure everyone's contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date
- make sure managers have guidance on how to spot symptoms of coronavirus and are clear on any relevant processes, for example sickness reporting and sick pay, and procedures in case someone in the workplace develops the virus
- will observe and implement the policies outlined in the Sussex Nightstop Staff Handbook and will make necessary adjustments to these policies where Government guidance on Covid-19 dictates – as outlined in Sussex Nightstop Epidemic Policy.

Where work is required 'on-site' (including office site and volunteer homes) Sussex Nightstop will:

- risk assess the office site and will adopt the 'YMCA YAC Work Place risk assessment' as a basis for this assessment
- adopt any suitable activities to mitigate risk including making sure there are clean places to wash hands with hot water and soap, provision of hand sanitiser and tissues and guidance on the wearing of face coverings or gloves where required
- prepare and issue clear procedural guidance to all staff on carrying out 'on-site' activities

Nightstop Staff will:

- operate within this policy and implement all associated Covid-19 operating procedures at all times
- advise line management at first opportunity of any Covid-19 related symptoms or other request to self-isolate so that appropriate next steps may be implemented

If employees do not want to go to work Sussex Nightstop will:

- listen to any concerns staff may have and will try to resolve genuine concerns to protect the health and safety of their staff
- consider any request from the employee to take the time off as holiday or unpaid leave reserving the right to refuse such a request
- If an employee refuses to attend work, it could result in disciplinary action

## 11. Responding to a Covid-19 risk

Sussex Nightstop will remain up-to-date with and meet all statutory requirements with regards to responding to a suspected Covid-19 risk. We will:

- inform the relevant health authority of any suspected Covid-19 case and seek further guidance from that authority as to next steps
- gather information on and notify as far as possible anyone who we are reasonably aware may have had contact with suspected case e.g. those who have attended the Sussex Nightstop office site
- close the Sussex Nightstop office site where applicable
- notify YMCA DLG YAC building management immediately or the relevant building manager where the case occurred off-site to Nightstop
- ensure that staff with possible exposure to Covid-19 case are tested and observe current guidance with regards to self-isolation
- obtain assurance that all procedures in relation to making safe the environment where the suspected case occurred are met including deep clean of office site, for example, before re-populating

## 12. Working with others

Sussex Nightstop will remain in regular contact with all stakeholders in communicating updates and changes to the service as related to Covid-19 and will seek regular updates from others upon whom our work depends with regards to referral pathways and premises.

## 13. Monitoring and review

Monitoring and review of this policy will be the responsibility of the Sussex Nightstop Trustee Board as discharged to the Quality Control sub-group with support and input from staff and Trustee co-risk assessors as required and consultation with volunteer stakeholders as required.

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| Policy prepared by: | Alison Marino |
| Approved by Board on: | 10 August 2020 |
| Policy operational on: | 10 August 2020 |
| Next review date: | 10 February 2021 |

| **Associated policies and procedures:** |
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| Sussex Nightstop Covid-19 Risk Assessment - Placements |
| Sussex Nightstop Emergency Epidemic Policy |
| Sussex Nightstop Office Access Procedures during Covid-19 |
| Volunteer and Client Handbooks |
| Client Risk Assessment |
| **Version control**: |
| 23.09.2020 - Updated to reflect Gov Uk guidance released 22.09.2020 |
| https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do#clinically-vulnerable-groups-and-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-groups-and-care-homes 22.09.2020 |

**Appendix 1:**

| Clients | Current delivery | Delivery adaptation in respect to Covid-19 |
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| **Client processes** | Extensive client data is gathered from the point of referral including name, address, equalities data, description of housing circumstances, detail relating to physical and mental health, criminal record information where applicable and detail relating to substance use where applicable. | Screening for Covid-19 integrated into Sussex Nightstop Client Risk Assessment template and integrated throughout client management (see below). <br><br> Status in relation to Covid-19 recorded on Sussex Nightstop client database (Salesforce). |
| | A face-to-face assessment of clients currently forms a key part of the client risk assessment utilising a standardised client risk assessment template alongside Police and Community Safety checks and supplemented by further reference checks where required. | SNS will utilise real-time video technology as means for assessment. <br><br> Clients will be assessed by video call wherever possible and failing that by telephone. <br><br> Two references for each guest applicant sought. <u>One satisfactory reference MUST be secured prior to placement</u> that suitably confirms they meet Nightstop criteria ideally from an individual in a professional capacity who has known the applicant for a minimum of 6 months or in any event can demonstrate sufficient knowledge to answer the questions with insight. In the absence of a 'professional' referee, two references from 'others' suggested on Nightstop list will be sought. <br><br> Client ID documents will be obtained in electronic copy utilising phone or email messaging. <br><br> Client consent and agreement to conditions will be accepted by text message from client to coordinator or verbally where is not possible. |
| | Client support and management takes place through face-to-face meetings often daily, but at a minimum twice weekly. | Client support will continue throughout the length of the engagement with the service. <br><br> Where clients can not be met face-to-face, video technology will be used for daily check-ins and in any event (whether staying or not) clients MUST be video-called a minimum of twice weekly <br><br> Ongoing Covid-19 screening of clients MUST be undertaken throughout the placement and within EVERY check-in call with a client following a night stay with a Host Household |
| | Clients may access host households by all means of transport with use of public | SNS will support clients where possible to access alternative arrangements to public transport including the use of a reputable taxi firm using Perspex screen and face coverings |

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| | transport encouraged and supported. | |
| **Volunteer Processes** | Extensive volunteer data is gathered from the point of enquiry including name, address, details of those in household and equalities data. | Data collection (for new enquiries and existing hosts) includes Covid-19 related fields including: <br> - The ages for all hosts and all others in the household and 'support' bubble <br> - Covid-19 health screening (as relates to government guidance on clinically vulnerable lists) for hosts, and all others in the household and 'support' bubble <br><br> Screening for Covid-19 integrated into daily check-in calls with hosts. <br><br> Status in relation to Covid-19 recorded in Sussex Nightstop excel spreadsheet and volunteer notes. |
| | Volunteer recruitment currently includes: <br> - Home-based interview with 2 members of staff <br> - Home-assessment by 1 staff member <br> - Group training in shared setting <br> - Home-based FIT interview | SNS will utilise video technology where possible to reduce home-based activities. <br><br> Initial interview to be carried out by video call. <br><br> Home assessment questions, including Covid-19 screening, will be asked in advance of visit with site time reduced to 30 minutes. Pre-visit Covid-19 guidance will be issued to prospective volunteers to ensure social distancing. <br><br> Training for prospective hosts will be carried out utilising a suitable video-conferencing platform and will incorporate specific guidance on hosting in Covid-19 circumstances. <br><br> FIT interviews will be carried out via video-call unless there is further verification of the home-setting being sought by staff where in the interview will take place at the host home with pre-visit Covid-19 guidance issued to receiving party to ensure social-distancing. |
| | Quality control of volunteer host pool is currently underpinned by: <br> - Ongoing host support through post-placement check-in calls <br> - 1-2-1 supervisions by telephone or home-visit <br> - 2 yearly refresher training in group settings | SNS will transfer host supervision and training events to video-call or online conferencing platforms. <br><br> All volunteers will be issued with a Volunteer Handbook updated with Covid-19 guidance. <br><br> All hosts will be required to complete training on 'Hosting in Covid-19 circumstances' before hosting either 1-2-1 or in a group setting online. |
| | Host availability currently gathered by weekly text message issued on Monday | Host availability to be sought on a Wednesday using Doodle (or suitable platform) enquiring of availability for upcoming 2 week period. |