

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) - Frequently asked questions for family carers

This guidance is reviewed regularly and was last updated on 20 December 2021.

Please see the following key government Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance:

- [Guidance and measures on how to stay safe and prevent the spread of Coronavirus](#)
- [Guidance for people previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable \(CEV\) from COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance for people who provide unpaid care to friends and family](#)

1. I have been providing extra care for the person I normally care for throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. What can I do to get a break and boost my own wellbeing?

Services that provide breaks (also known as respite) for carers are running, so please contact us or Carers in Hertfordshire for more information. Contact details are at the end.

Carers in Hertfordshire can put you in touch with someone who can support your wellbeing. You can also find lots of information, tips and resources to support you on the NHS [Every Mind Matters](#) website, on websites for organisations like [Mind in Mid Herts](#) and on the [council's website](#).

2. Can I visit the care home to have contact with my loved one?

Care homes are following [Government guidance on care home visiting](#). Care providers are expected to facilitate visits wherever possible in line with the guidance, and to do so in a risk-managed way. The guidance says that every resident can have an essential care giver who can visit the care home more often to offer companionship or help with care. They need to follow the same testing arrangements as staff and PPE guidance if giving personal care.

There is separate [guidance for supported living and extra care settings](#).

We are working with care providers and the [Hertfordshire Care Providers' Association](#) to facilitate visits in line with this Government guidance. The [local framework for care home visits in Hertfordshire](#) outlines the approach Hertfordshire will be taking regarding family and non-essential visitors to care homes. It is available on the [HCPA website](#).

Please also talk to the care setting about other ways they can help you have contact with your loved one. A video call via WhatsApp, Skype or Facebook portal, could be arranged for example.

3. What plans is the Council putting in place to make sure that people who need help and support are kept safe and well?

Our social care staff are here to support people who use our services as usual. If you are worried or something has changed, you can request a social care assessment or a review for the person you care for.

We are also supporting care providers to ensure they can continue to provide care. We are providing financial assistance and support and advice around a range of things, including staffing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), infection control and end of life care. You can see the advice we are giving to providers here: www.hcpa.info/covid-19.

Some services are staying in regular contact with families who may need additional help.

We are also coordinating support through [HertsHelp](#) for people who may need help with getting food and medication and who do not have friends, family or neighbours to do this for them.

4. I am starting to have some challenges and need advice if things get worse

It is important to make plans now in case things change. Please talk to your care providers to check what plans they have in place. You may also want to consider what family carers, friends and neighbours can do to help. In an emergency, you can contact us on **0300 123 4042** to arrange for the care you need.

It is a good idea to complete an 'in case of emergency' contingency plan as it highlights what you do to support your loved one and helps us to understand what support you provide daily. It also helps us to source alternative care and support arrangements if needed. You can find a link to an online version here www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/carers. Alternatively, please call us on **0300 123 4042** if you would like to complete this over the phone.

5. The person I care for used to attend a day service prior to the pandemic, is this now back up and running? How can I get a break?

Please check with the day service about what support they are offering – many services are back up and running. There are also other ways to get a break. Please contact us or Carers in Hertfordshire for more information. Contact details are at the end.

6. Will carers still come if someone in the household is self-isolating with or without symptoms of COVID-19?

Care providers will continue to provide care. They have been given advice and guidance on how to protect you and themselves. If you are self-isolating with or without symptoms, please let them know straight away. They will wear the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and will follow infection control guidance.

You can help them by ensuring you clean surfaces and keep the room well ventilated. If you need urgent assistance, please call us on **0300 123 4042**.

7. What PPE should care workers be wearing?

Care workers have been given strict guidelines to follow on the use of PPE - see [government guidance on PPE](#). There is specific guidance on [PPE for care workers delivering homecare](#). Please tell your care worker if you or the person they are caring for is self-isolating or are unwell.

8. How do I know care homes are keeping people safe? What can I do if I am not confident that this is happening?

Care homes are given a lot of advice and support on how to keep residents safe. They are following infection control guidance issued by UK Health Security Agency, including the use of PPE, testing for residents and staff and policies around visiting.

If you have concerns about the infection prevention control measures, please in the first instance raise your concerns with the manager of the care home. If you are still concerned, please email CareConcerns@hertfordshire.gov.uk

9. I care for elderly relatives and I am now self-isolating. How can I arrange to get food to them?

Please call **HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044**. They can arrange to get food and medication delivered to people who do not have friends, family or neighbours to do this for them.

10. Are social care home visits still going ahead?

The Council will contact you to let you know. In some cases, they may arrange to contact you over the telephone or by video call rather than a visit. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature, new, continuous cough or loss of taste/small), please let them know. If staff do visit, they will follow government guidance on wearing PPE and maintain hygiene standards.

11. The person I care for has dementia or a learning disability and needs to exercise outdoors more than once a day, is this allowed?

Under the national [government Coronavirus guidance](#), people can exercise outdoors if they are not self-isolating.

If someone has a specific health/medical condition that requires them to leave the home to maintain a pattern of exercise, then they can do so. This could, for example, include where individuals with learning disabilities or autism require specific exercise in an open space two or three times each day - ideally in line with a care plan.

There is additional [guidance for people previously considered clinically extremely vulnerable](#) (CEV) from COVID-19. They are advised to consider, alongside any advice from their health professional, whether additional precautions are right for them. This could include avoiding crowded spaces and social distancing.

12. I currently receive a Carers Direct Payment. Will I continue to receive this? How can I use it now as some activities I attend are closed?

Yes, you will continue to receive your Carers Direct Payment. You can use your money flexibly to support your outcomes. If you have any unspent money in your account when your Direct Payment is reviewed, we may ask for that to be repaid as usual.

If you have a Direct Payment, you can call Leonard Cheshire for advice on **01462 439000** or email them on directpayment@leonardcheshire.org.

13. What emotional support can I receive as a carer eg. following bereavement or for my mental wellbeing

Carers in Hertfordshire can put you in touch with someone that can support you. You can also find a lot of information, tips and resources to support you on the NHS [Every Mind Matters](#) website, on websites for organisations like [Mind in Mid Herts](#) and on the [council's website](#).

14. What financial support can I receive as a carer?

See the [government guidance](#) on what benefits and payments you may be entitled to if you cannot work because of coronavirus.

15. Am I still entitled to receive Carer's Allowance during the pandemic?

Carers retain their entitlement to Carer's Allowance during any temporary break in caring as a result of isolation due to infection or contamination with Covid, whether this applies to the carer or the person being cared for. Please look here for more information: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/money

16. As a carer, am I entitled to the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine?

Everyone who is eligible is being encouraged to have the COVID-19 vaccine to protect themselves, their family and the people they care for. The NHS website gives information on who is eligible for the first, second, third (for immunosuppressed, only if eligible) and booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and when and how they can get them. See: www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination

Contact for further information, advice and support

Carers in Hertfordshire

Carers in Hertfordshire can provide information and advice on a range of topics, including bereavement support and maintaining good health and wellbeing.

www.carersinherts.org.uk

Tel: 01992 58 69 69

Email: contact@carersinherts.org.uk

Hertfordshire County Council

If you or the person you provide care for currently use a social care service, it should continue. However, speak to your care provider first or call 0300 123 4042 for other urgent care needs.

HertsHelp is available for everyone and will give advice and support on things like getting shopping, advice on money, help with using the internet and how to find a support

group if you are isolated. You can email info@hertshelp.net, call them on 0300 123 4044 or look here: www.hertshelp.info.

If you need support with your mental health, please contact Carers in Hertfordshire or visit www.mindinmidherts.org.uk.

Please also visit our website for the latest information
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/serviceupdates