

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) - Frequently asked Questions for Family Carers

Government guidance for family carers,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care>

[National lockdown rules](#) currently apply in Hertfordshire.

1. I have been providing extra care for the person I normally care for several months. What can I do to get a break and boost my own wellbeing while Covid restrictions are in place?

Services that provide breaks for carers are still running during the restrictions 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 that can support your wellbeing. You can also find a lot of links online to organisations like [Mind](#) which has some great resources and the [council website lists some top tips](#). The [government has issued guidance on mental wellbeing too](#).

2. If I am not allowed to visit the care home, how can I continue to have contact with my loved one?

Care homes are following [Government guidance](#) on visiting.

We are working with care providers and the [Hertfordshire Care Providers' Association](#) to facilitate visits where Government guidance allows and to provide technology and training to support them with remote contacts.

People in care homes and their families should be involved as much as possible in planning and decisions about their health and care, including end of life care. Visits at the end of life are important both for the individual and their loved ones and should continue.

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 that use 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 of the services are staying in regular contact with families who may need additional help. We are coordinating support through HertsHelp to the people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and need extra support with food and medication.

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 which has a reduced service or temporarily closed. How can I get a break?

Please check with the day service about what support they are continuing to offer – many services are back up and running and can stay open during the restrictions. 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?

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 carer workers be wearing?

Care workers have been given strict guidelines to follow on the use of PPE - [government guidance on PPE](#). They will wash their hands when they arrive and leave. Care workers that give personal care will have extra guidance on what PPE they need. See guidance on [PPE for care workers delivering homecare](#). Please tell your care worker if you are 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 Public Health England, including the use of PPE, regular 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, or I am extremely clinically vulnerable. How can I arrange to get food to them?

Please call **HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044** which can arrange to get food and medication delivered to people that 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. They may arrange to contact you over the telephone or by video call rather than a visit. If you have symptoms of Covid (high temperature, new, continuous cough or loss of taste/smell), please let them know. If staff do visit, they will wear PPE and ensure they maintain high standards of hygiene and keep a good distance from you.

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 restrictions?

You can leave your home for medical reasons. If someone has a specific health condition that requires them to leave the home to maintain this, then they can. 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.

In order to reduce the spread of infection and protect those exercising, you should remain at least 2 metres apart from other people.

On top of the [national lockdown rules](#) which apply to everyone, there is additional guidance on shielding for people who are defined on medical grounds as [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) (CEV) to Covid-19.

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 as 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 e.g. 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 links online to organisations like [Mind](#) who have some great resources and the [council website lists some top tips](#). The [government has issued guidance on mental wellbeing too](#).

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

See the [government coronavirus 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 priority access to the Covid vaccine?

The vaccination programme is following [priorities](#) recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). This says that people in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill should be vaccinated alongside priority group 6, if they have not already received a vaccination as part of earlier priority groupings.

There are certain circumstances when you may also be vaccinated alongside the person you care for. This group of people have been identified by GPs and we do not have any other information on this.

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.

<https://www.carersinherts.org.uk/>

Tel: 01992 58 69 69

Email: contact@carersinherts.org.uk

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV)

People who are CEV, or their representative can use an online service to ask for priority access to supermarket deliveries, ask their local council to contact them if they need support that can't be provided by friends, family or other support networks, and to update their details. This service can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support>.

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. You can also get [support from volunteers](#).

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.

