

# COVID-19: ADVICE FOR CARERS AND YOUNG CARERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Updated 04 February 2021 @ 09:00

This document offers advice to people who, without payment, provide help and support to a family member or a friend who may not be able to manage without this help because of frailty, illness or disability. Carers can be adults caring for other adults, parents caring for ill or disabled children or young people who care for another family member.

## Key Messages



- **Follow** public health **advice**.
- Carers, people with care and support needs and people coming into the home of a person with care needs should follow **hygiene and infection control** guidelines.
- **Plan for contingencies** and check with your Trust what the emergency plan is. See section 'planning ahead for an emergency' in this document.
- **Make the most of networks** now to plan for "what if?". Speak to family, friends and neighbours, and your local community organisations.
- Make sure you have **key information** to hand about the person you care for.
- **Make the most of technology** that can keep you in touch with the person for whom you care, or keep them in touch with others.
- This new situation for carers can be confusing and demanding, even tough. **Support is available** to help you to get through this.
- **Remember** to use the **Coronavirus Take 5 message** each day:

[Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing](#)

As of January 2021, NI has moved into its third surge of the pandemic with continuing and further restrictions being placed upon us all in order to get through this next stage. It is imperative that everyone follow government guidelines in order to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe. If you are struggling in your caring role, are new to caring or your circumstances have changed, **please seek support and do not suffer in silence**.

The latest NI government regulations and restrictions are available at:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-what-restrictions-mean-you](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-what-restrictions-mean-you)

## Coping during the winter months

As we see the numbers of infections rise and restrictions reintroduced, it is important to continue to follow the guidance in order to remain safe during the winter period.

Continue to take the advice of the Public Health Agency to help all of us stay safe.

To limit the spread of COVID-19 the World Health Organisation has recommended that everyone should avoid the Three C's:

- **Closed spaces with poor ventilation**
- **Crowded places with many people nearby**
- **Close-contact settings such as close-range conversations.**

Please remember this as you continue to care for your family members, friends or neighbours.

**Everyone who is eligible for a free flu vaccine should take up this opportunity and help protect themselves and those around them this winter.**

If you were born on or before 5 October 1954 you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills. This is known as a '**Winter Fuel Payment**'. To find out how to apply, telephone **0800 731 0160** (or 0800 731 0176 for deaf or hearing-impaired callers) or go to:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/winter-fuel-payment-centre](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/winter-fuel-payment-centre)

The Department for Communities is providing a one-off **Covid-19 Heating Payment** for those in receipt of Pension Credit, or in receipt of certain disability benefits at the higher rates, in recognition of additional costs arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

To find out more go to:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-and-benefits](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-and-benefits)

In this edition we have provided further advice that we hope you will find helpful. If you are concerned about anything, please contact the [Carers NI advice line](#) which has extended opening hours during COVID-19. If you receive services provided by the HSC Trust, contact your **named worker**.

## What's New in this Update?

<b>Page Number</b>	<b>Sections updated</b>	<b>What's New</b>
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## Introduction

This information provides advice and support for **(unpaid) carers, young carers and family members**. It pulls together already existing sources of information into one place and signposts carers to others who may be able to help. All links provided throughout this document are from reliable sources.

As the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic continues, this document will be regularly reviewed to update the information and advice.

**Always ensure you are reading current COVID-19 information from reliable sources as guidance may change frequently.**

This advice contains links to the **.gov.uk** website. The information contained in these links is very useful but you should be aware that, on occasions, it includes further web links to information specific to England.

A number of resources on COVID-19 in British and Irish Sign Language are available via this link:

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public)

**The Public Health Agency website has all the relevant information relating to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) in Northern Ireland. This includes advice on social distancing, self-isolation, what to do if you think you have symptoms of COVID-19, looking after someone who is clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable and more. It can be accessed here:**

[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

## Planning ahead for an emergency

You might find this tool useful to help you plan during the COVID-19 period. It was developed specifically for Northern Ireland for emergency planning:

[Planning for emergencies tool](#)

It is vitally important that you have an emergency plan in place in the event that you become ill and are unable to provide care.

- If you don't have one, speak to your **named worker** about getting one in place.
- If you already have a plan, check with the Trust that it is still workable due to COVID-19 (and review periodically).
- Be prepared for the person being cared for needing to be admitted to hospital (have a bag packed, include a list of medication, contact details for their carer and family members).
- Know who your **named worker** is and what arrangements are in place for cover if they are off work.
- This plan may help you to record vital information in the event of an emergency. Keep it up to date and share with your **named worker** and other family members. This will help significantly if your family member needs to be hospitalised or if you become unwell.
- It might be worth giving neighbours and friends of the individual 'In case of Emergency' numbers and also placing these in personal items (e.g. handbag, purse, wallet) of the individual. This is particularly useful for people with dementia who may try to go out for exercise but become displaced or confused.

[Carers UK - Planning for emergencies](#)

## Vaccinations

### COVID-19 Vaccination

On 30 December 2020 it was agreed that some carers would be prioritised to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has listed priority groups as follows:

1. residents in a care home for older adults and their carers,
2. all those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers,
3. all those 75 years of age and over,
4. all those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
5. all those 65 years of age and over,
6. all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality,
7. all those 60 years of age and over,
8. all those 55 years of age and over,
9. all those 50 years of age and over.

Group 6 includes those who are 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.

The first phase of the NHS Covid-19 vaccination programme has started. When it is the right time you will receive an invitation to come forward. Details on how carers will be called for their vaccination is still being finalised. This advice will be updated once details are confirmed.

To find out the timescales for the rollout of the vaccine, the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Phased Plan can be accessed [here](#)

Further information on the COVID-19 vaccine is available at the following links:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020)



## Seasonal Flu Vaccination

The current population groups eligible for a free flu vaccination are everyone aged 65 and over, pregnant women, those aged under 65 years of age in clinical “at risk” groups, all children aged 2 to 4, all primary school pupils, and health and social care workers in both the independent sector and the public sector.

From 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 all people aged 50 to 64 years old by 31 March 2021 are also now eligible for the free flu vaccine via community pharmacies and GP practices.

Those in a clinical at risk group include anyone who has any of the following medical conditions:

- a chronic chest condition such as asthma;
- a chronic heart condition;
- chronic liver disease;
- chronic kidney disease;
- diabetes;
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment such as steroids or cancer therapy (people living in the same house as someone with lowered immunity may also need to be vaccinated);
- a chronic neurological condition, such as stroke, multiple sclerosis or a condition that affects your nervous system, such as cerebral palsy;
- are seriously overweight (BMI>40); -
- any other serious medical condition – check with your doctor if you are unsure.

Vaccination should also be offered to:

- a. household contacts of immunocompromised individuals i.e. individuals who expect to share living accommodation on most days over the winter
- b. Those who are in receipt of a carer’s allowance, or those who are the main carer, or the carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill.

Additional vaccine has been secured this year which will allow Year 8 pupils in the first year of secondary school, and for household contacts of those who received shielding letters during the COVID-19 pandemic to receive the free vaccine. Household contacts of those who shielded can request vaccination via their GP.

There is emerging evidence that co-infection with COVID-19 and flu may lead to a more severe illness. Reducing the pressure caused by seasonal flu will help

preserve the capacity of the health and social care system to manage any future waves of COVID-19 as well as reducing the risk of co-infection in vulnerable people.

**Everyone who is eligible for a free flu vaccine should take up this opportunity and help protect themselves and those around them this winter.**

**The flu vaccine does not protect you from COVID-19. As you are eligible for both vaccines you should have them both, but normally separated by at least a week.**

Further information on the flu vaccine can be found [here](#)

## Physical and emotional wellbeing

COVID-19 has impacted on us all, leading to unprecedented changes in our everyday lives. The restricted living conditions and daily challenges we face can lead to feelings of stress and other difficult emotions.

Health and Social Care (HSC) in partnership with ORCHA (Organisation for Review of Care and Health Apps) has developed a library of high quality, convenient Apps to support health and social wellbeing during these difficult times.

The Apps included in the library provide useful support and information on how to manage stress and improve wellbeing, sleep management, staying fit and nutrition.

You can access the Apps Library via your smart phone or PC at:

<https://apps4healthcareni.hscni.net/>

The resources below are designed to help promote positive mental health and wellbeing both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and have some useful tips and advice on looking after your wellbeing:

[Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing](#)

The Minding Your Head (MYH) website has a range of information and resources to support and enhance your mental and emotional wellbeing, and information on how to help others and how to access help and support when needed:

[www.mindingyourhead.info](http://www.mindingyourhead.info)

Tailored information and self-help guides from local mental health and wellbeing charities are available at the COVID-19 Virtual Wellbeing Hub at

[www.covidwellbeingni.info](http://www.covidwellbeingni.info).

Age NI has teamed up with Lady Mary Peters to develop an exercise programme aimed specifically at keeping older people moving during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland/information-advice/coronavirus-covid-19/movewithmary/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland/information-advice/coronavirus-covid-19/movewithmary/)

The Healthy Living Centre Alliance's Warm, Well and Connected programme offers support to carers through free workshops and programmes on a range of topics such as mindfulness, stress, exercise and cooking classes. Details of classes and how to register can be found at the following link:

[www.hlcalliance.org/](http://www.hlcalliance.org/)

An excellent resource for people who are isolated or vulnerable can be found on the SCIE website:

[www.scie.org.uk/support-for-people-who-are-isolated](http://www.scie.org.uk/support-for-people-who-are-isolated)

A new free online stress control class is available through YouTube. To access these classes go to:

[www.ni.stresscontrol.org](http://www.ni.stresscontrol.org)

There are a range of crisis response helplines in Northern Ireland for adults or children who are experiencing distress or despair.

Helpline services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to listen and help, **in confidence**. The Helplines NI website provides a directory of over 60 helpline services operating across Northern Ireland. The helplines provide information, support, advice and guidance on a wide-range of health and wellbeing needs. The website also includes details of both national and local Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific helplines:

<https://helplinesni.com/>

People living in Northern Ireland can call Lifeline on **0808 808 8000**. Deaf and hard of hearing Text phone users can call Lifeline on 18001 0808 808 8000. Calls to Lifeline are free to people living in Northern Ireland who are calling from UK landlines and mobiles.

Lifeline: phone **0808 808 8000**

Website: [www.lifelinehelpline.info/](http://www.lifelinehelpline.info/)

Samaritans: **phone 116 123**

Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

ChildLine: **phone 0800 1111**

Website: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **Listening Ear Service**

The **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's** Listening Ear Service provides a confidential listening service to carers within the Belfast Trust area, providing reassurance and comfort as well as relaxation and mindfulness advice. If you would like to speak to someone you can refer yourself by contacting the Carer Support Service on:

Telephone: **028 9504 2126**

Email: [CarerSuppSvc@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:CarerSuppSvc@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

The **Southern Health and Social Care Trust** has a contract in place with Carers Trust to provide support, advice, activities and training, along with opportunities to meet with other carers. If you need to talk to someone, the service has trained and experienced outreach workers who can provide a listening ear and will respond to your needs by signposting you to services and programmes which may support you in your caring role. This service is available Monday – Friday 9-5pm.

Please call **07826 930 508** if you need support in the Southern Trust area.

Within the **South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust** various listening ear services are available to carers. An out-bound telephone support service called Good Day Good Carer has been introduced during the COVID-19 period to provide carers with ongoing support, a listening ear service, information and advice, and a link to other support services. Carers can also avail of AGE North Down and Ards Good Morning Call which provides daily calls to those aged 50 and over who live alone and require support or a listening ear service. Similarly, Good Morning Colin Telephone Service offers daily calls to carers and citizens over 65 years of age in the Colin area who feel isolated and vulnerable and require a listening ear service. The South Eastern Trusts Carer Support provides a listening ear service for carers, offering information, signposting and referrals to other HSC Trust's voluntary and community supports.

To find out more information about any of the above services within the South Eastern Trust, please call Carer Support on **028 4372 1807**.

## Support for you in your caring role

If you are new to a caring role during COVID-19 it is very important that you contact your local Trust (see contact details at end of this Advice) and identify yourself as a carer. This will allow the Trust to be aware of you and your situation and give you access to various support and help provided by the Trust.

If the person you care for is already in receipt of services and you have any concerns about them, contact the **named worker** who will be best placed to give advice and support.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) has developed a series of videos about looking after someone at home. They cover subjects such as nutrition, preventing ulcers, mouth care, preventing falls, behaviours etc. These videos can be accessed here:

[www.scie.org.uk/carers/informal-carers](http://www.scie.org.uk/carers/informal-carers)

### Can care workers continue to deliver care?

**Government advice is that people who need care and help should continue to receive it. Domiciliary care workers and community-based health and social care staff have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and will follow strict guidelines about hygiene in order to keep you safe.**

At present you may leave your home to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person, or to provide emergency assistance, but make sure you keep up to date with the restriction as they are continually under review: [COVID-19-Restrictions](#)

### If the person you care for needs to go to hospital

If the person you care for needs to go into hospital, the information contained in the link below will give you guidance about supporting the person whilst they are in hospital:

[COVID-19: Regional Principles for Visiting in Care Settings in Northern Ireland](#)

The visiting guidance was updated recently to reflect Level 4 surge.

### Carer's Assessment

As a carer you are entitled to a Carer's Assessment so that the Trust can identify your needs. During COVID-19 (Coronavirus) the Trust may need to contact you by phone or using video (e.g. Skype, Facetime etc.) to discuss your situation. Talk to your local Trust and/or Carer Co-ordinator about this.

For children's services please note that each case will be on the basis of an individual assessment of need and may reflect the capacity of the service to respond during the current situation. Priority will be given to cases where children are at risk or family breakdown is likely.

For more information on Carer's Assessments visit:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/assessments-carers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/assessments-carers)  
[www.carersuk.org/Factsheets/Assssments.pdf](http://www.carersuk.org/Factsheets/Assssments.pdf)

## **Self-Directed Support – Direct Payments**

If you, as a carer, are in receipt of services, Direct Payments can be used to 'buy-in' care and support rather than using Trust arranged services. If you choose to have your assessed need in regards to care and support provided via Direct Payments you can discuss this with your **named worker** or your local Trust's **Carer Co-ordinator**. Contact details are included at the end of this document.

[Direct Payments User Guide - April 2020](#)

More detailed guidance on using Direct Payments during the COVID-19 pandemic is available here:

[www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-direct-payments](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-direct-payments)

You can access the links below for further information and help:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk - Direct Payments](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk - Direct Payments)

[Centre for Independent Living NI](#)

Please note that Direct Payments is just one option in how you can choose to have your care and support needs met. The individual in receipt of services and/or their legally authorised person can choose how your assessed need is met. This can be through Direct Payments, Managed Budgets, Trust Arranged Services or a mixed option. Your care and support will be reviewed and any change in your circumstances will be discussed and the existing provision revised.

During the assessment process, Trusts will seek to engage with families regarding their specific circumstances and will try to be as flexible as possible in responding to your needs, looking at how support and care provided by family, community and the Trust can support you in achieving your outcomes.

## **Carer's Allowance**

If you are new to caring or are looking after someone and do not receive an allowance, you may be entitled to some financial support, called Carer's Allowance.

It is paid by the Department for Communities. Information on the allowance can be accessed here:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk - carers allowance](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk - carers allowance)

Existing carers will continue to be paid Carer's Allowance when they have temporarily ceased to care for a severely disabled person due to either of them self-isolating or being infected with coronavirus.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, emotional support can also count towards the 35 hours a week you spend caring for someone who is ill or has a disability.

### **Additional financial support during COVID-19**

You may also be entitled to additional financial support if you have been affected by COVID-19. Details on Discretionary Support, Discretionary Support Self Isolation Grant, Universal Credit Contingency Fund Short-term Living Expenses Grant, Short-term Benefit Advances, Social Fund Budgeting Loans and Social Fund Sure Start Maternity Grants and how to apply can be access via this link:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/extra-financial-support](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/extra-financial-support)

### **Carer's Cash Grant**

Following a Carer's Assessment your key worker may be able to apply for a Carer's Cash Grant for you to meet a need identified via your assessment. The application will be dependent on funds being available and, if successful, you will be required to provide evidence in the form of receipts of how you have spent the grant.

### **Voluntary/community support**

The **Freephone COVID-19 Community Helpline** number is **0808 802 0020** or you can e-mail: [covid19@adviceni.net](mailto:covid19@adviceni.net) or text: ACTION to **81025**.

There is a **Family Support Hub** in your area and their work is continuing. They can provide access to a wide range of services including foodbanks, advice on parenting and children's issues, and money matters. Details of services are available on:

- The Family Support NI website [www.familysupportni.gov.uk](http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk)
- Children & Young Peoples Strategic Partnership website [www.cypsp.hscni.net](http://www.cypsp.hscni.net) or
- NI Direct website [www.nidirect.gov.uk - support hubs](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk - support hubs)

### **Short breaks**

Residential Short Breaks services for children with disability continue to provide a limited service as capacity remains restricted by the public health guidelines and social distancing requirements. Families who had been utilising those services

previously should continue to link with their **named worker** in regard to any change in either their circumstances or needs of the young person.

It is important that you also look after your own health and well-being for your own sake and to enable you to continue caring. If you are concerned about your situation you should speak to your **named worker**.

Do look at the section above called [Physical and emotional wellbeing](#) about coping during this difficult period.

### **Short breaks including residential short breaks for children with disability and those with complex health needs**

Short break services are recognised as an important aspect of support, especially to families caring for disabled children. Services will strive to seek a balance between maintaining this support and ensuring the health of the person being cared for is not further compromised.

Details of support and the role of Family Support Hubs is noted above.

### **What if I need medical supplies?**

If you or the person you care for normally receives medical supplies from the Trust or through your GP prescription to your community pharmacy, or from your district Nurse, this will continue. **This process has not changed.** Those who are on regular prescriptions are being advised to order in good time and if there are difficulties to contact your **named worker**.

### **Local pharmacy/prescriptions**

If you are unable to collect a prescription from the community pharmacy you should:

- ask someone to do this on your behalf, such as a friend, neighbour, family member or local support network (this is the best option, if possible);
- If this cannot be arranged some community pharmacies may be able to arrange to deliver your prescription to your home.

To check if your pharmacy offers a prescription delivery service, please contact your pharmacy directly.

### **Grocery shopping**

The priority online food delivery service for people who were previously shielding has been suspended with effect from 30 July and is not accepting any new registrations. For those who registered to use this online food delivery service before 30 July you will be able to continue using the service after this date.



Volunteer Shopping Cards are available from various supermarkets, including Sainsbury's, Lidl, Asda and Marks and Spencer. Cards are pre-set with a specific amount of money and can be purchased by the cared for person via telephone or online. Cards can be posted out or emailed and printed off and given to the carer to carry out shopping duties. This can be a safer way to shop as it eliminates the need for cash or the exchange of bank details or bank cards.

### **Carer's ID Card**

A Carer's ID Card is available from Health and Social Care Trusts to all *informal (unpaid) carers* in Northern Ireland who are known to the Trust and in receipt of services. The Carer's ID Card provides proof of carer status and can be shown to Police Officers when carrying out essential travel or additional exercise during periods when travel may be restricted. The Carer's ID Card will also allow carers access to priority in-store shopping hours similar to key workers and essential workers. Carers can avail of priority shopping hours at any of the following stores throughout Northern Ireland: ASDA, Co-op, Lidl, Iceland, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's. Check with your local store to find out how the retailer can help you with access to priority in-store shopping.

Speak to your Trust's Carer Co-ordinator (contact detail at the end of this advice document) if you have not received a card but think you are eligible.

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

If you provide direct hands on care, for example personal care and toileting, you should be provided with disposable gloves and disposable plastic aprons. Fluid-resistant surgical masks (face mask) and eye/face protection can be provided following a risk assessment which determines that there is a risk of contamination with splashes, droplets of blood or body fluids.

A risk assessment should also consider the Covid-19 status of the individual being cared for; are they displaying symptoms or waiting a test result?

Where carers consider there is a risk to themselves or the individuals they are caring for, they should wear a fluid resistant surgical mask with or without eye protection. Please note that the fluid resistant face mask should be replaced if it becomes damaged, soiled or uncomfortable. After you have provided care directly to the individual, you should remove the face mask (and any other PPE), dispose of the PPE, wash your hands thoroughly and maintain a social distance of 2 metres or more.

You may not be required to wear PPE in certain circumstances, for example, if you are a part of a household bubble. If you are not a part of the household bubble,

gloves, apron, fluid resistant face mask and possibly eye protection (if there is a risk of splash) should be worn when providing direct hands on care. A face covering will be required when within 2 metres of the individual even when not delivering direct personal care.

If you are concerned or in doubt please take advice from your **named worker** who may be able to address your concerns or sign post you to the correct advice and guidance.

**PPE will be provided by your local Trust and you will not be charged.** As a carer you should contact your **named worker** to secure access to PPE or contact the relevant Carer Support Service referenced in the contacts section of this document. Likewise if your needs change or you are new to the caring role, again please contact your **named worker** or the relevant Carer Support Service.

If you require PPE due to the nature of the care you give, the Trust will give you the relevant advice on how the PPE should be used and disposed of.

Trusts must ensure that all **Direct Payment recipients** have a **named worker** in their Trust to contact about the need for PPE provision. In this situation the Direct Payment recipient should not be charged for the provision of PPE from Trust stocks.

## COVID-19 Testing

Everyone in Northern Ireland with symptoms of COVID-19 is eligible for a free test.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature); OR
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); OR
- a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste.

Further information including how to book at test is available at:

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19)

## COVID-19 Contact Tracing

### PHA Contact Tracing Service

If you receive a positive test result for COVID-19, you will be contacted by the PHA's Contact Tracing Service in the first instance by text message, asking you to enter your close contacts online using the HSCNI Digital Self-Trace service.

This is so PHA contact tracing can warn your close contacts as quickly as possible that they might have become infected and give them guidance.

More information is available at:

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/contact-tracing](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/contact-tracing)

### Stop COVID NI App

Stop COVID NI is a free health service app for your mobile phone. It will help us to protect each other and slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Using the Stop COVID NI app along with the existing public health measures will help us all stay safe.

The app tells you automatically if you've been near someone who tests positive. It also tells others if you test positive, but will never know or share your identity or location.

Most people spreading the virus don't know they have it. So the more people using the app, the more lives we save.

More information including how to download the app is available at:

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/stopcovid-ni-contact-tracing-app](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/stopcovid-ni-contact-tracing-app)

## Working carers

You may be a carer who also has a full time or part-time job. Juggling your caring and working role can be difficult in normal times. Trying to do this during COVID-19 may place additional stress upon you. It is vital you seek the support of other family members where possible, and even more important to take time for yourself.

Keep in touch with the **named worker** who will be best placed to give advice and support.

Remember the [Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing](#) messages each day to help you and your family get through this.

## **Employment rights**

All employers have been asked to be flexible with their staff during COVID-19 (Coronavirus). Employers have a 'duty of care' for staff and, in practice, this means taking all steps they reasonably can to support the health, safety and wellbeing of their staff. If you need to take extra time off work because you have caring responsibilities, you should check your employer's policy on Carers/Caring for Others and discuss your situation with them.

The Law Centre has produced useful information about your employment rights:

[Law Centre NI - employee rights - Covid-19](#)

Guidance on Statutory Sick Pay:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk) - Statutory Sick Pay

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) - Statutory Sick Pay

The Equality Commission for NI also have help and advice on employment issues if you are a carer and are being asked to return to work:

[www.equalityni.org//Caring-responsibilities-and-returning-to-work](http://www.equalityni.org//Caring-responsibilities-and-returning-to-work)

## **Benefits**

For advice and assistance on other benefits such as housing, Universal Credit etc., please access the NI Direct website:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk) - information on benefits and financial support

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk) - benefits and pensions/make the call

Extra financial support may be available from the Finance Support Service if you have been affected by COVID-19. To find out what's available go to:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/extra-financial-support](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/extra-financial-support)

## **Are you a young carer?**

A young carer is someone aged between 8 and 18 who cares for a parent, sibling or relative. This may be due to disability, a mental health condition, long-term illness, or drug or alcohol addiction.

A Young Carers Service will continue to be provided:

- in the Southern, South Eastern and Belfast Trust areas by Action for Children:  
Contact Aisling Reynolds, email: [niyoungcarers@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:niyoungcarers@actionforchildren.org.uk)
- in Northern and Western Trust areas by Barnardo's:  
Contact Eileen Maguire, email: [MagherafeltAdminMailbox@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:MagherafeltAdminMailbox@barnardos.org.uk)

**For further details please see the Contacts section at the back of this document.**

Referrals to the Young Carers service will continue in the usual way and in line with the regional guidance to HSC Trusts which identifies processes for:

- The assessment and identification of Young Carers,
- The provision of services to Young Carers,
- Young Carers entitlement to a Carer's Assessment.

Both Barnardo's NI and Action for Children Young Carers services will continue to process referrals to their service in the usual way and will offer 1-2-1 support, assessment and reviews.

During the current crisis, the Young Carers Services will continue to maximise the use of phone, text, Skype, and any other means which are safe and acceptable to young carers and their families.

### **Useful information for young carers**

We have gathered together some information below to help support young carers to understand the current situation surrounding COVID-19 that we hope you will find useful.

For the latest news about Coronavirus for young people, CBBC Newsround - [www.bbc.co.uk/newsround#more-stories-2](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround#more-stories-2)

The charity Young Minds have written a blog about what young people can do if they are feel anxious about Coronavirus - [www.youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/)

There is lots of support surrounding young people's mental health on the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust website. They have free resources which you can download to support your wellbeing - [www.cwmt.org.uk/](http://www.cwmt.org.uk/)

There is also a PDF workbook from Mindheart to download and print out, which you can use to colour or write down your thoughts about how you are feeling - [www.mindheart.co/descargables](http://www.mindheart.co/descargables)

The Mix is a charity that provides free, confidential support for young people under 25 via online, social and mobile. The Mix can help you connect with other carers, celebrate your work, learn new skills and find the support and information you need - [www.themix.org.uk/search/young+carers](http://www.themix.org.uk/search/young+carers)

### **Attending school**

All mainstream education providers are closed until the half term break in February 2021. Schools are required to provide remote learning at home for pupils rather than face to face teaching in school. Vulnerable children and children of key workers will have access to schools for supervised learning and special schools will remain open as usual. This situation will last no longer than necessary, and will remain under review.

The Department of Education has published [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Guidance for School and Educational Settings in Northern Ireland](#). The guidance sets out what steps schools should take to help staff and pupils stay safe when in the school environment.

Information about attending school is in Section 7 of the guidance. In line with the guidance, once restrictions permit a physical return to school, all pupils should attend school even if they live with someone who is vulnerable or who is clinically extremely vulnerable and was previously shielding.

The guidance will be kept under review and should be checked on a regular basis.

Additional advice for schools and teachers relating to young carers at school can be accessed [here](#).

## **Caring for someone who is Clinically Extremely Vulnerable**

This a difficult and worrying time for those who are more clinically vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19, and for those who care for them. Information and advice for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and those who are vulnerable is available on the NI Direct website at:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for 'clinically extremely vulnerable' and 'vulnerable' people | nidirect](#)

From 26 December 2020, anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable and is unable to work from home is advised not to attend the workplace. This advice will be in place for six weeks initially with a review after four weeks.

This is not a return to shielding as it was previously. People who are clinically extremely vulnerable do not need to remain indoors and can go outside for exercise if they are able to do so, in line with restrictions and guidance that are in place, and observing social distancing.

This advice applies to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable only. If you live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable and work, you can continue to attend the workplace if you cannot reasonably work from home. Anyone attending a workplace outside their own home should continue to stringently follow the guidance on social distancing, face coverings and hand hygiene.

## Caring for those with learning disabilities and Autism

Lifestyle changes such as social distancing and self-isolation can be particularly difficult for those with learning disabilities and Autism. Support for families/carers of people with learning disabilities through the Coronavirus restrictions can be found here:

[bild.org.uk/Coronavirus-resources-for-use-by-families](http://bild.org.uk/Coronavirus-resources-for-use-by-families)

[scie.org.uk/learning-disabilities-autism](http://scie.org.uk/learning-disabilities-autism)

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/staff-health-and-0#supporting-people-with-learning-difficulties-and-or-autism](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/staff-health-and-0#supporting-people-with-learning-difficulties-and-or-autism)

Carers who have a family member with a learning disability or autism may need to leave their homes several times a day for exercise or medical needs; this may include travel beyond their local area. To support these circumstances the Health and Social Care Board has shared a template letter with the Health and Social Care Trusts which is available, upon request, from the relevant Trust area. Families who would like a copy should contact their key worker in their local Trust.

Guidance on providing unpaid care to adults with learning disabilities and autistic adults can be found at the following link. While some of the guidance contained duplicates what is already in this document, these are useful:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-providing-unpaid-care-to-adults-with-learning-disabilities-and-autistic-adults](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-providing-unpaid-care-to-adults-with-learning-disabilities-and-autistic-adults)

A great resource for children and young people or those caring for children and young people can be found here:

[www.cypsp.hscni.net/resource-pack-for-children-young-people/](http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/resource-pack-for-children-young-people/)

## Support for Carers and Young Carers of Deafblind people

Sense NI has established a new carers group open to carers of all ages who care for Deafblind people.

For more information, or to request a copy of Sense NI's dedicated carer's newsletter, *Sense of Purpose*, contact: [nienquiries@sense.org.uk](mailto:nienquiries@sense.org.uk)

## Caring for someone with a Dementia

Caring for someone with a dementia is particularly stressful, both emotionally and physically, as the person with the dementia may require continuous support and supervision. If the person you care for is involved with Trust services, keep in touch with the **named worker** who will be best placed to give advice and support.

For information about Dementia (including information booklets):

[www.NIDirect.gov.uk/dementia](http://www.NIDirect.gov.uk/dementia)

[www.hscboard.hscni.net/dementia/](http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/dementia/)

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications?keys=dementia](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications?keys=dementia)

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications?keys=delirium](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications?keys=delirium)

It is important for everyone, including people with a dementia, to keep active during this pandemic. The following links provide useful suggestions:

[www.playlistforlife.org.uk](http://www.playlistforlife.org.uk)

[musicmemories.bbcrewind.co.uk](http://musicmemories.bbcrewind.co.uk)

[www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/coronavirus-activity-ideas-people-living-dementia#content-start](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/coronavirus-activity-ideas-people-living-dementia#content-start)

A number of Apps have been developed which provide support through self-monitoring and self-management of care for people living with a dementia. These are available at:

[apps4dementia.orcha.co.uk](http://apps4dementia.orcha.co.uk)

The Royal College of Psychiatrists have created a useful webinar entitled, '**Supporting carers and care staff to understand and respond to changes in behaviour in people with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic**'. This can be downloaded from the following link:

[www.northerntrust.hscni.net/services/dementia-services/clear/](http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/services/dementia-services/clear/)

This link also includes the guide used by all Trusts on "How to support people with Dementia during COVID-19":

There are several charities offering support and help for dementia carers:

- Age NI
- Alzheimer's Society



- Carers NI
- Dementia NI
- Together in Dementia Everyday (Tide)

Further details can be found in the Contacts section at the end of this document.

## Distance caring

Know the contact number of your relative's GP and **named worker** within the Trust and ensure they have your contact details as next of kin. Check that the current domiciliary care package is being maintained. Make sure the emergency planning tool is up to date [Planning for emergencies tool](#)

Consider setting up a rota/schedule for regular phone calls to keep in touch or using technology such as WhatsApp or Facetime to keep your family and friends connected over long distances.

It is currently advised that only necessary travel should be undertaken. You may have to isolate for 10 days on return from travel outside of Northern Ireland. More information is available at:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/coronavirus-covid-19/travel-advice-and-guidance](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/coronavirus-covid-19/travel-advice-and-guidance)

## Palliative and End of Life Care

Caring for someone with palliative and end of life care needs can be emotionally and physically demanding and especially so during COVID-19. Where the person you are caring for has palliative or end of life care needs, services and care will be planned and delivered to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to meet these needs and continue to support you in your caring role.

Information to support people with palliative and end of life care needs and their family and carers, as well as information on palliative care services and support, can be found at the Palliative Care in Partnership website via the link below:

<https://pcip.hscni.net/>

Other sources of advice and support are also available including:

[www.macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus)

[www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/coronavirus](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/coronavirus)

## Bereavement Support

It is recognised that experiencing bereavement during COVID-19 will be especially difficult. Information and support have been developed which includes advice on dealing with grief as well as practical information on dealing with those aspects of a death that may be different during the pandemic period. Contact details for Bereavement Coordinators within each Health and Social Care Trust are also provided should you need further guidance and help.

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/covid-19-bereavement-resources](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/covid-19-bereavement-resources)

Cruse Bereavement Care provides free support, advice and information for adults, children and young people. They can be contacted via their National Freephone Helpline: **0808 808 1677**. Contact details for local services can be found on the Cruse NI website at:

[www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/local-services/northern-ireland/northern-ireland](http://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/local-services/northern-ireland/northern-ireland)

## Help with Technology

Are you struggling a bit with technology? Are you having problems with your tablet, laptop or phone, or would simply like more information?

Libraries NI has developed a series of fact sheets and Zoom-based sessions to help you. You can also phone on **028 9039 5989** (Mon - Fri 9:15am - 4:45pm) with a brief description of how you need IT help and library staff will phone you within 48 hours with free, helpful advice.

[www.librariesni.org.uk/resources/digital-support/](http://www.librariesni.org.uk/resources/digital-support/)

## Interpreting services

Since the outbreak and spread of COVID-19, many Health and Social Care services and essential information sources have switched to telephone contact only, creating significant challenges for deaf people and others who use sign language. A free, temporary service has been established to enable the Deaf community to communicate effectively via telephone and secure video link.

A free interpreting service provides the Deaf community in NI with access to:

- NHS111 services during the COVID-19 pandemic via a video relay system.

- All other Health and Social Care services including GPs via either a video relay system or video remote interpreting.

Further information can be found at the following link:

[www.hscboard.hscni.net/interpreting-service-bsl-isl/](http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/interpreting-service-bsl-isl/)

## Contacts

### Online information and contact numbers for carers support in each Trust

Each Trust has organised a programme of supports and activities for carers in your area. Details can be obtained from:

#### Northern Trust

Telephone Carer Hub: [028 2766 1210](tel:02827661210) (available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

E-mail: [carers.coordinator@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:carers.coordinator@northerntrust.hscni.net)

Carer Hub can be accessed at the following link:

[northerntrust.hscni.net/services/carers-service/](http://northerntrust.hscni.net/services/carers-service/)

[www.carersdigital.org](http://www.carersdigital.org) resources for the Northern Trust only can be downloaded and easily accessed and connection to other carers through the carers chat forum. Carers create their own personal account and download the Jointly app for free using the code DGTL2770.

#### Belfast Trust

The Belfast Trust Carers Support page:

[belfasttrust.hscni.net/service/carers-services](http://belfasttrust.hscni.net/service/carers-services)

Telephone Carer Service: [028 9504 2126](tel:02895042126)

Email: [CarerSuppSvcs@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:CarerSuppSvcs@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

#### Southern Trust

The Southern Trust Carers Support page:

[southerntrust.hscni.net/health-wellbeing/community-development-and-user-involvement/carers-information/](http://southerntrust.hscni.net/health-wellbeing/community-development-and-user-involvement/carers-information/)

Telephone: [028 3756 6284](tel:02837566284)

Email: [carers.coordinator@southerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:carers.coordinator@southerntrust.hscni.net)

### Western Trust

The Western Trust Carers Support page:

[westerntrust.hscni.net/service/carers-support-service/](http://westerntrust.hscni.net/service/carers-support-service/)

Southern Sector (Fermanagh/Omagh/Castledearg)

Telephone: [028 6634 4163](tel:02866344163) or Mobile: [075 2589 8985](tel:07525898985)

Email: [Cathy.Magowan@westerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:Cathy.Magowan@westerntrust.hscni.net)

Northern Sector (Strabane/L'Derry/Limavady)

Telephone: [028 7135 5023](tel:02871355023) or Mobile: [078 1015 6551](tel:07810156551)

Email: [GeraldineAnn.McLaughlin@westerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:GeraldineAnn.McLaughlin@westerntrust.hscni.net)

### South Eastern Trust

The South Eastern Trust Carers Support page:

<https://setrust.hscni.net/service/carers-support-service/>

SET Carers Development Officer

Telephone: 028 4372 1807

E-mail: [carer.support@setrust.hscni.net](mailto:carer.support@setrust.hscni.net)

### **Community COVID Helpline Freephone**

Telephone: [0808 802 0020](tel:08088020020) (Every day 9am-5pm)

Email: [covid19@adviceni.net](mailto:covid19@adviceni.net)

Text: ACTION to 81025

### **Carers NI**

Telephone: [028 9043 9843](tel:02890439843) (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)

Email: [advice@carersni.org](mailto:advice@carersni.org)

Website: [www.carersuk.org/northernireland](http://www.carersuk.org/northernireland)

## Carers Trust

For carers in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area.

Telephone: [07826 930 508](tel:07826930508)

Email: [price@carers.org](mailto:price@carers.org)

Website: <https://carers.org/our-work-in-northern-ireland/carers-support-service-northern-ireland>

## Action for Children

Telephone: [028 9046 0500](tel:02890460500)

Email: [ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk)

Website: [www.actionforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work-in-northern-ireland/](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work-in-northern-ireland/)

## Action for Children NI Regional Young Adult Carers

Supporting young **adult carers aged 18-25**, across all 5 trust areas in Northern Ireland.

Telephone: [028 9046 0500](tel:02890460500)

Email: [YoungAdultCarersNI@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:YoungAdultCarersNI@actionforchildren.org.uk)

Website: [www.actionforchildren.org.uk/](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/)

Contact via Facebook [www.facebook.com/actionforchildrennorthernireland/](http://www.facebook.com/actionforchildrennorthernireland/)

## Action for Children NI Regional Young Carers

Supporting **young carers aged 8-18** living in Belfast, South Eastern and Southern Trust areas.

Telephone: [028 9046 0500](tel:02890460500)

Email: [NIYoungCarers@ActionForChildren.org.uk](mailto:NIYoungCarers@ActionForChildren.org.uk)

Website: [www.actionforchildren.org.uk/in-your-area/services/young-carers/ni-regional-young-carers/](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/in-your-area/services/young-carers/ni-regional-young-carers/)

Contact via Facebook [www.facebook.com/YoungCarersNI/](http://www.facebook.com/YoungCarersNI/)

## Barnardo's

Telephone: [028 9067 2366](tel:02890672366)

Email: [ReceptionNI@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:ReceptionNI@barnardos.org.uk)

Website: [www.barnardos.org.uk/northern-ireland](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/northern-ireland)

## **Age NI**

Telephone: [08088 087 575](tel:08088087575)

Email: [info@ageni.org](mailto:info@ageni.org)

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland)

## **Alzheimer's Society**

Telephone: [028 9066 4100](tel:02890664100)

Helpline: [0300 222 1122](tel:03002221122)

Email: [nir@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:nir@alzheimers.org.uk)

Website: [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

## **Dementia NI**

Telephone: [028 9693 1555](tel:02896931555)

Email: [info@dementiani.org](mailto:info@dementiani.org)

Website: [www.dementia.org](http://www.dementia.org)

## **CAUSE**

Telephone: [082 9065 0650](tel:08290650650)

Website: [www.cause.org.uk](http://www.cause.org.uk)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/CAUSEcarers](https://www.facebook.com/CAUSEcarers)

## **Huntington's Disease Association**

Telephone: 07982843907

Website: [www.hdani.org.uk](http://www.hdani.org.uk)

## **Together in Dementia Everyday (Tide)**

Telephone: [07841 457596](tel:07841457596)

Email: [Fiona@tide.uk.net](mailto:Fiona@tide.uk.net)

Website: [www.tide.uk.net/](http://www.tide.uk.net/)

## Other useful links

If you need to talk to someone about coping with the pressures, you may wish to call:

Lifeline on [0808 808 8000](tel:08088088000)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.education-ni.gov.uk/](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/)

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/covid-19-service-updates](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/covid-19-service-updates)

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19)

[www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus)

The **A-Z Guide for Carers** has been revised and is available at:

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/a-to-z-guide-carers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/a-to-z-guide-carers)