GUIDANCE

Guidance for unpaid carers: coronavirus (COVID-19)

Guidance for those who provide unpaid care for family and friends.

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Introduction

This guidance is for anyone providing regular care and support to a vulnerable friend or relative. It applies to carers of all ages. There is also a specific section on the help available for young carers.
Impact of the Coronavirus Act on carers’ rights under the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014

The Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 gives carers the same rights to care and support as those in their care. The Coronavirus Act will help local authorities to manage the pressures on our care system.

It is important to know that the Coronavirus Act is not intended to weaken the rights of carers in Wales. Local authorities must continue to maintain the rights of carers under the 2014 Act as much as possible. The Coronavirus Act does not allow local authorities to block, restrict or withdraw whole services.

Modifications are temporary and must be as a result of unavoidable local circumstances. These need to reviewed and terminated as soon as possible.

Statutory guidance about the changes made to the 2014 Act by the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Social distancing

Guidance is available on the latest advice around social and physical distancing measures in Wales. Limiting social interaction between people will help us to reduce the transmission of the coronavirus.

The guidance includes information about forming an extended household. Those you care for do not need to list you as a member of their extended household. You can continue to provide any support they need, and go anywhere with them if they need your support.

The guidance also includes advice for visitors, including those providing essential care. You can visit those you care for even if you do not live with them or form part of their extended household.
Protecting yourself and those you care for

Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is one of the most effective ways of reducing the risk of infection.

This is particularly important when you:

• arrive at the home of the person you care for
• have been out and are returning home to a vulnerable person

Other measures both you and the person you care for can take to reduce the risk of infection include:

• use a hand sanitiser when you get home or into work, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food
• avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
• avoid close contact with people who have symptoms
• cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands
• clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home

It is important that you follow the current social distancing rules. This will reduce the risk of spreading the virus to the person you are visiting to provide care, or to the person you care for at home.

Experiencing coronavirus symptoms and testing

The most common symptoms of coronavirus are recent onset of one or more of the following:

• new continuous cough
• high temperature
• loss of or change to sense of smell or taste

You are now able to order a home testing kit if you think you need to test yourself for coronavirus. This is in line with the Welsh Government’s Test Trace
Protect strategy. Anyone experiencing at least one of the coronavirus symptoms listed can apply for a home testing kit using the new UK online portal.

Guidance is available on what to do if you or the person you care for is experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus illness.

It is very important to stay away from a vulnerable person or someone who is shielding if you have any of the symptoms of the coronavirus. Further information is available about planning alternative arrangements if you are unable to continue providing care.

We understand that it could be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others at home. Try to follow the guidance and everyone in your household should:

- regularly wash their hands
- avoid touching their face
- clean frequently touched surfaces

**Face coverings**

Guidance on wearing a face covering.

How to make a 3 layer face covering.

While wearing a face covering, you should still take all possible measures to protect yourself and others around you. This includes:

- maintaining social distancing
- washing your hands often
- not touching your face

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for carers**

We have published guidance about the availability of PPE for anyone providing regular personal care to vulnerable friends or relatives. Personal
Care involves direct contact with the person you care for. It includes washing, dressing, or helping them to eat and take medication. The guidance explains:

- how unpaid carers might need to use PPE
- where to access PPE
- how to use PPE safely

**Unpaid carers and shielding**

Guidance is available for people who are vulnerable to the coronavirus illness, and their carers. The advice centres on following good hygiene, as well as maintaining distance where possible and practical.

**Planning for alternative care arrangements**

It may be necessary to have an emergency plan in place should you become ill and need to self-isolate or are unable to provide care. This will enable the person you care for to get help from other people to deliver any care needed. Carers UK has some excellent advice about creating an emergency plan on its website.

It's a good idea talk to family, friends or other networks about whether they could safely take over caring responsibilities. You need to make sure that all relevant information about the person you care for is available. This will enable anyone taking over their care has all the information they need.

If you are unable to rely on practical support from family or friends, there are other alternatives. These include:

- the public sector
- businesses
- charities
- general public

It is important to speak to organisations offering their services especially when
arranging:

- delivery of food
- medicines
- essential services and supplies to the person you care for.

Even if you have arranged suitable help and support always involve your local authority or healthcare provider. This is in case any informal arrangements fall through.

If the person you care for already has care provided for them through the local authority or health care system, this will continue as normal. Your health or social care provider will take precautions. This would involve them wearing personal protective equipment (PPE).

**Carers support grant**

The [Carers Support Grant](https://gov.wales/guidance-unpaid-carers-coronavirus-covid-19-html) is open to all carers across Wales, including young carers, who are experiencing financial difficulty. Grants of up to £300 are available for a range of essential items including:

- food
- household items such as furniture or white goods
- electronics, such as a laptop for access to support and services

Carers Trust Wales have more information about how to apply.

The Carers Support Grant will be open for applications up to 31 March 2021.

**Access to food and medicine**

**Medicines**

Carers Trust Wales and its partners have developed resources to support carers. This is so that they can access essential medicines during the
COVID-19 pandemic.

The resources include a guide to help you make the most out of your pharmacy team. This includes details on how your pharmacist can support and understand your needs. Local authorities and carers services will also be able to help where other forms of carer identification are not already in place.

Shielding

If you are caring for someone who is shielding, you can collect and deliver their shopping and prescriptions.

Young carers

A young carer can access a range of online information and advice, or other forms of support. These should be available on the local authorities’ website.

You can also access support via local or national carers’ organisations. Guidance for carers has been published by Carers Wales.

Mental health and well-being

If you have concerns about the impact of the coronavirus outbreak you can contact our CALL confidential helpline.

Tel: 0800 132 737 or text ‘help’ to 81066.

The CALL website has ideas to help you maintain good mental health. It includes links to other organisations who can offer emotional support to young people.

Organisations offering support

Meic
Local carer centres and young carer services

Local carer centres and young carer services have made adjustments to the way that they conduct their business. Where they cannot safely offer face-to-face support, most offer alternative forms of support online, or over the phone. You may be able to find the information or advice you are looking for on their websites.

If you need to identify yourself as a young carer you can contact your local authority or MEIC advice line. They will be able to inform you of your rights as a young carer. Details are also available from Children’s Commissioner for Wales.

Hwb

The Welsh Government’s Hwb website provides a wide range of information, advice and resources. Please check the site for updates either on the main public page or by logging into your account (if you have one).

Looking after your own health and well-being

We have provided advice for those who are shielding. Here you will be able to find information on looking after your own mental health and well-being.

Public Health Wales has advice on how to look after your well-being while staying at home, and tips for reducing loneliness and isolation.

Guidance for carers has been published by Carers Wales. If you want to talk to someone directly you can:
Carers Trust Wales and its partners have developed resources to support carers.

Age Cymru offers an advice service for older people in Wales, including older carers. If you want to talk to someone directly you can:

- call them on 08000 223 444 (open between 9:30am and 4:30pm, Monday to Friday)
- email them at advice@agecymru.org.uk.
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