



## **Coronavirus: Information for unpaid family and friend carers. Your questions answered.**

We appreciate this time of self-isolation and lockdown due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is worrying for you and the person you support. We have worked with Hertfordshire County Council to put together questions and answers for some of the key queries and issues you have been raising with us and the Council.

For further information or advice you may be interested in the following:

To contact us, **Carers in Hertfordshire**, call 01992 58 69 69 or email us at [contact@carersinherts.org.uk](mailto:contact@carersinherts.org.uk)

There is information about our services as well as advice for carers in relation to the coronavirus

### **Hertfordshire County Council**

If you or the person you provide care for currently use a social care service it should continue, but discuss with your care provider first. If you or the person you care for is in Hertfordshire you can contact Hertfordshire County Council's Adult Care Services on 0300 123 4042.

You can get the latest information about Hertfordshire County Council services in relation to coronavirus at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/serviceupdates](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/serviceupdates)

### **HertsHelp**

If you need support HertsHelp is a free, independent service that can listen and direct you to community organisations in Hertfordshire that can help. Call 0300 123 4044, email [info@hertshelp.net](mailto:info@hertshelp.net) or visit [www.hertshelp.net](http://www.hertshelp.net)

### **Government guidance for unpaid carers can be found at**

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-social-care-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-social-care-guidance)

## Questions and Answers

### **1. 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 advice and only allowing essential visits to take place, including health and social care professionals. Please talk to the home about how they can best facilitate communication between you and your loved one, such as setting up a video call via WhatsApp, Skype or Facebook.

If you consider it essential that you visit for the resident's mental wellbeing, then please discuss this with the care home in the first instance, who may be able to carry out a risk assessment with a health or social care professional to facilitate a visit in exceptional circumstances.

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.

### **2. We pay for a carer / care worker from a Direct Payment. What will happen if care workers are unable to make home visits because of their own health needs or because they are self-isolating?**

If you have a Direct Payment you can call Leonard Cheshire for advice on 01462 439000. You can use your money flexibly to support your needs. You should continue to pay your care worker if they are unwell and the Council will make sure you have enough money in your Direct Payment account to pay for any sick pay and for a new care worker.

Your care worker or personal assistant must tell you straight away if they or a person they live with has the symptoms to prevent transmission to you. Please call Hertfordshire County Council immediately on 0300 123 4042 saying that you are a person who receives Direct Payments and your carer is unwell. The Council will make the arrangements from there.

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

Hertfordshire County Council is supporting care providers to ensure they can continue to provide care. The Council is 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 at [www.hcpa.info/covid-19](http://www.hcpa.info/covid-19)

The Council is coordinating support through HertsHelp to the people that are shielding and are providing support with food and medication.

The Safeguarding Adults Board has also published specific advice to professionals on their website: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hsab](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hsab)

#### **4. I'm starting to have some challenges, all under control at the moment, but could do with some advice.**

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 your family, friends and neighbours can do to help. If you or the person you care for is in Hertfordshire please call the Council on 0300 123 4042 if emergency care needs to be arranged.

It is a good idea to complete a contingency plan as it highlights what you do to support your loved one, and it enables the Council to understand what support you provide daily. It also helps the Council to source alternative care and support arrangements if needed. You can find a link to an online version at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/carers](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/carers) or call the Council on 0300 123 4042 to complete this over the phone.

#### **5. Will paid care workers 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 the Council on 0300 123 4042.

#### **6. Where can families who use Direct Payments source supplies of masks, gloves and disposable aprons?**

Please continue to try and source personal protective equipment (PPE) through your usual suppliers. We know supplies are short and this is a problem for everyone. If you have to pay more, the Council will ensure your Direct Payment covers reasonable cost increases.

#### **7. What PPE should care workers be wearing?**

Care workers have been given strict guidelines to follow based on government guidance on COVID-19 on home care provision. They will wash their hands when they arrive and leave. Care workers that give personal care will have extra guidance on when they need to wear PPE. 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 have been given a lot of advice and support on how to keep residents safe. If they have residents that have symptoms, they are following infection control guidance issued by Public Health England. Residents with symptoms are isolated and staff are wearing the correct PPE to prevent the virus spreading. If you are not confident this is happening, please raise your concerns with the manager of the care home in the first instance. If you are still concerned please email [CareConcerns@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:CareConcerns@hertfordshire.gov.uk)

**9. I care for elderly relatives who are now self-isolating – I cannot get food to them.**

Please call HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044 who can arrange to get food and medication delivered to people that do not have anyone 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 phone or by video call rather than visit. If you have symptoms of coronavirus (high temperature and new, continuous cough) please let them know. If staff do visit, they will ensure they maintain high standards of hygiene and keep a good distance from you.

**11. My adult son with learning disabilities needs to exercise outdoors more than once a day, is this allowed?**

Yes, government guidance states individuals with learning disabilities or autism who require specific exercise in an open space two or three times each day can do this. Your social worker can arrange for you to have a temporary Hertfordshire COVID-19 passport, developed for people with learning disabilities and/or autism with complex needs. Where possible to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19, government guidance should be followed, and people should remain within their homes.

**12. I currently receive a Carer's Direct Payment. Will I continue to receive this? How can I use it now the activities I attend are closed?**

Yes, you will continue to receive your Carer's 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, the Council may ask for it 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](mailto:directpayment@leonardcheshire.org)

Carer break providers are continuing to support by phone and assessing the appropriateness of home visits on an individual basis.

**13. What emotional support can I receive as a carer e.g. following bereavement or for my mental wellbeing?**

We, Carers in Hertfordshire, can put you in touch with someone that can support you. The government has issued guidance on mental wellbeing too.

If you want to know about the financial support you can receive as a carer e.g. due to being furloughed or out of work see the government coronavirus guidance on what benefits and payments you may be entitled to if you cannot work because of coronavirus - [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

**14. 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 coronavirus, whether this applies to the carer or the person being cared for. Please look here for more information: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/money](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/money)