

COVID-19 NEWSLETTER

NEWS, GUIDANCE & TIPS FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE PROVIDERS IN TORBAY

Guidance re visiting relatives in Care Homes – Torbay & South Devon

You will no doubt have seen the latest government announcement relating to the imminent change on social distancing rules, which allows social distancing of 1m+ in some environments where 2m is not possible.

However, the guidance for health and social care settings **remains for a minimum of 2m** social distancing. This is based on evidence that COVID-19 can spread rapidly within our care settings.

COVID-19 Level 4 Incident - the Joint Biosecurity Centre have recommended to Government that the COVID-19 alert level be downgraded from Level 4 (epidemic is in general circulation; transmission is high or rising exponentially) to Level 3 (epidemic is in general circulation). **This relates to an alert level, not an incident level - for now the NHS continues to operate under a Level 4 incident.** Therefore, this change is unlikely to have an operational impact for NHS providers and/or NHS England and NHS Improvement at the current time.

To be clear, for health and social care settings:

- The Incident status remains at Level 4
- Social distancing requirements remain at 2 metres

Admission and care of residents in a care home during COVID-19

The government guidance confirms that people that use Older Persons care homes are to be viewed as 'extremely clinically vulnerable', and therefore at 'increased risk of severe illness' and as such every effort should be made to prevent residents contracting the COVID-19 virus. The updated Infection Control guidance states that the present infection situation is one of 'sustained transmission of COVID-19' in the community, and that the community will continue to make contact with the virus a significant risk.

This guidance advises that strict adherence to the social distancing guidance should be maintained except for those within a Support Bubble. However Support bubbles as defined in the Social Distancing guidance cannot apply to those living in care homes. (It does however apply to Extra Care Housing and those living in the community.)

Therefore, residents should only meet with relatives / visitors outside the care home building, socially distanced, with a maximum of 6 people in addition to the resident they are visiting.

Care for people at end of life - Only in this situation should relatives be offered the opportunity to visit the person within the care home building. Those visiting should use PPE while in the home in line with that recommended for staff, with consideration to avoiding bringing infection into the home and /or cross infection.



Care for people at the end of life and after death

Care at the end of life for residents, regardless of the cause of their deterioration, should be provided for in line with the [5 priorities for care](#). Each resident should have a plan of care tailored to their individual needs and preferences that includes explicit consideration of food and fluids, symptom management and psychological, social and spiritual support. They should be asked, where possible, if they would like to receive a visit from a loved one or a faith leader. Their family and those important to them should be informed about what is happening and offered the opportunity to visit.

Persons at higher risk of COVID-19 in a care home setting

The following individuals may be at an increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19). Care home providers should be stringent in following [social distancing measures](#) for everyone in the care home and in supporting those in clinically extremely vulnerable groups to follow shielding guidance:

- anyone who falls under the category of clinically extremely vulnerable should consider following the [shielding guidance](#) to protect themselves
- anyone aged 70 years or older (regardless of medical conditions) is advised to follow social distancing guidance for the clinically vulnerable
- anyone aged under 70 years with an underlying health condition – for most this will align with eligibility for the flu jab on medical grounds – is advised to follow social distancing guidance for the clinically vulnerable

Keeping asymptomatic residents safe and monitoring symptom development

Care home providers should follow relevant government guidance for everyone in the care home. For example, wherever possible care homes should be implementing [social distancing measures](#), and supporting individuals to follow the [shielding guidance](#) for the clinically extremely vulnerable group.

The ‘Staying alert and safe social distancing’ guidance

You must not;

- gather outdoors in groups of more than 6 people you do not live with, or from 13 June people that are not in your support bubble.
- Visit friends or family inside their home or any other indoor place, or from 13 June if they are in your support bubble.

Support bubble – 1 person **alone** with a specific other household. (Therefore this arrangement cannot apply to people living in care homes, however can apply in Extra Care Housing or those living in the Community.)

Covid-19 swabs for symptomatic people in care homes & supported living services

As of Monday 29th June, the swab request process is as follows:

FOR SYMPTOMATIC RESIDENTS/CLIENTS

- All referrals for swabs to go to directly from the provider to: sdhis.carehomeswabrequest@nhs.net or **01626 204950 (8am – 5pm 7 days a week) with a completed referral spreadsheet. (see swab template attached with this newsletter)**
- **Please also ensure you notify Public Health England swhpt@phe.gov.uk 0300 303 8162**
- **Please ensure that you notify Torbay Quality Assurance & Improvement team (QAIT): tsdft.torbaycovid19careproviders@nhs.net 01803 697 390**

A swab referral form has been attached with this newsletter. Requests for the swabs to be undertaken will be sent to the relevant community nursing team who will contact the provider to arrange for a swab to be taken.

The swab request line will notify the initial referrer of the result, and it is for the referrer to notify the individual of the result.

Please note this process can take up to 48 hours from referral to result.

REFERRALS FOR SYMPTOMATIC STAFF

- The staff member will need to contact the staff swabbing hub directly on **01803 655783**.
- Manager of the providers to ensure that PHE and QAIT (contacts listed above) are notified that you have a staff member who is symptomatic.
- Please ensure that you notify PHE and QAIT of the results as soon as you become aware.

New guidance on care home testing

[New Guidance has been published and can be found here.](#) This proposes regular retesting of staff and residents. More information to follow on how we will implement this locally.

How (not) to wear a mask

A reminder to keep checking everyone is wearing masks correctly and not (i) dangling them round their neck or (ii) removing and replacing the same mask to speak, drink coffee, etc. It makes all the difference in spreading infection so please stay vigilant.



Supporting Day Services to Re-open

As we all progress through COVID 19 and some of the previous lockdown measures are lifted, we are aware that Day services will be thinking about how they can move forward and re-open their service, to the people they were previously supporting.

To support with preparing to re-open, we have produced a number of resources which Day services might find useful, and most of which are attached but will also be on our website: <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/care-homes/caring-for-care-homes/>

These include:

1. Preparing for Re-opening Framework

This should be used as a checklist to get providers thinking about the processes, systems and changes which will need to be put in place in order to ensure the safe opening of the service, for both clients and staff. Going through the framework should help providers to develop their own 'service re-opening action plan' and also provide ideas to consider or replicate.

2. Exemplar Service Re-opening Plan

Hollacombe has been working on their re-opening plan and it is being shared as an exemplar. Hollacombe will be opening to one 'service user bubble' from 6th July, and in a sense 'live-testing' the guidance. We will also be sharing any learning and feedback they have from opening the service, with you. (SOP – Recovery of Hollacombe document)

3. Exemplar Risk Assessment of Individuals

With social distancing, amenities and building layout restrictions, for people to be safe, it is likely that day services will need to restrict the number of people able to attend service at any one time. Staggering the service or arrivals, having shorter session times or changing location or delivery format may need to be considered. To help prioritise or ration who uses the service, providers may want to use a risk assessment tool with carers (see Client RAG rating exemplar).

4. Infection Control Visits

The infection team have offered to support and guide day services, by reading and talking through their individual re-opening plans, and doing either a physical or virtual 'walk around' the service centre/location with feedback. Please contact Infection Control: infectioncontrol.sdhct@nhs.net

5. Infection Control Training

There is FREE 2 hr training available to all staff from Day services, care homes, supported living and domiciliary care providers, and has proved to be essential in ensuring correct use of PPE and maintaining infection control measures and minimising risk. Details are attached and to register to go to the [Eventbrite page](#)

7. Infection Control Grant Fund

We are looking at resourcing a small one-off fund which could support Day services with COVID 19 infection control costs. i.e. PPE, increased cleaning costs etc., details of which will follow once agreed and in place.

Please note that re-opening of services is voluntary, as is attendance at services. This information is not a directive but is designed to support services who are considering re-opening, with their preparations and with the development of their individual reopening plan.

This information and guidance is also based on the following assumptions:

- Staff and clients will adhere to a level of social distancing
- Services may need to consider re-opening in phases
- Staff and service users will be grouped in small 'bubbles' and wherever possible, interaction with other bubbles will be limited.

We are also keen to hear from you, about any ideas or best practice you develop, or any learning, and will then (with your permission) include this in our Re-opening framework and share with others.

Important - Response Required – Care Home Digitalisation Survey

We acknowledge the amount of email and telephone communication that you are currently receiving during the Covid-19 pandemic which often appears to be asking for the same information and we are keen to support you in minimising this as far as possible. Therefore, on behalf of the health and social care system, NHS Devon Clinical Commissioning Group are undertaking a survey with all care homes in Plymouth, Devon and Torbay in order to gather a **baseline assessment** of the IT infrastructure and connectivity that is being used. We are aware a large number of care homes are currently embracing and adding to their digital technologies to assist with remote ways of working, in order to maintain infection control and business continuity in their care homes by:

- Connecting residents with their loved ones
- Holding video consultations with GPs
- Sharing information with other social care and health professionals, local authorities and multi-disciplinary teams.

The information we collate will help health and social care colleagues to understand which technologies they should be using and developing to enable remote consultation, communication and monitoring of your residents at a local level. Some of the questions contained within this survey were also included in the Care Homes Survey that many of you undertook in 2019. These questions are being asked again as some of you may now be using electronic patient records and have signed up for NHS mail accounts. We are keen to get as accurate a record as possible of your current systems and appreciate your co-operation in completing this survey.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Vx4YeeBIO0ye_XOpZ_zYAvOtOhUgg8tFraJdoOvAzEtUQTMwMVZQMzdQOTINMko4S0k0SzhPNFZBWiQIQCN0PWcu

The survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete (there are 17 questions in total with the majority being tick boxes) and we would appreciate **completion by 13th Monday July 2020**. If you are unable to submit by this date then please try as soon as possible. Please ensure that you press '**submit**' at the end of the survey. If you have more than one care home please can you submit a separate survey response for each care home?

If you have any queries regarding this email please contact d-ccg.personalhealthbudgets@nhs.net and one of the team will contact you.

NHSE/I Help us to Help you survey

During the Covid-19 pandemic, people who work in health and care services and the voluntary and community sector across the South West have offered new choices to patients and the public, for example, by making more use of online and telephone appointments.

As recovery plans are refined, health and care engagement leads have been working together to gather the views of the people who live in our region to understand their experience of services during the pandemic. That includes the people who have been

providing support on the frontline and from behind the scenes.

Together, engagement experts from our health and care systems and NHS England and NHS Improvement, community representatives and colleagues from public health, the voluntary and community sector and social care have co-designed the following survey to find out what local people think about these new ways of working in different parts of our region.

It would really help us to help you, if you were to complete the online questionnaire and encourage everyone you know in the South West to do the same. It should take between ten and fifteen minutes.

The survey can be found here: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Covid19SWExp/>

The survey will be open until 31 July, 2020. A report with the results of the survey will be published on the NHS England and NHS Improvement South West website and participating health and care organisations and shared with those who provide their email addresses.

Staff Support & Wellbeing

- **The Torbay and South Devon COVID-19 Emotional Wellbeing Helpline:** listening and signposting service for relatives affected by COVID-19 and health or care colleagues seeking support in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Call 01803 217433 or use the online form which can be found at www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk
- **Mind:** If you're finding things hard emotionally right now, you're not alone, www.mind.org.uk can provide information and support to help you.
- **Healthwatch:** Visit www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk to find out more about local mental health services for issues such as anxiety, stress, depression and bereavement.
- **CRUSE:** support for staff who work in health and care and who may be affected by the deaths of patients or clients in their care (Freephone 0808 808 1677).
- **TALKWORKS:** Anyone referring themselves will initially have a brief number of sessions based on the psychological first aid approach from the WHO. Self-referral can be made by visiting the website www.talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk and clicking on the Keyworker option, or by calling 0300 555 33 44.
- **Psychology and Psychological Therapies (PPT) Team:** PPT is offering support for social care and care home teams in response to the current COVID 19 situation. Requests for support from this service can be made by emailing dpt.od@nhs.net
- **Filipino Counselling Service:** A new, dedicated NHS bereavement and trauma telephone support line for Filipino staff impacted by the coronavirus pandemic run by qualified and trained Tagalog speakers. Available 7 days a week between 7am and 11pm, along with a 24 hour text hotline. Helpline: 0300 303 1115 Text: 'Frontline' to 85258
- **Alone Together Facebook Support Group:** A Facebook support network developed to support those who have lost loved ones to Covid-19. You can join the group here:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/550762382237414/>

