

Signposts@nhs.net
01803 66 66 20
29th Jan, 2021

Dear Carer

Carers' updates about COVID vaccination, testing, guidance and additional support

If you need this in a different language or format, please email signposts@nhs.net or ring 01803 666620 and leave a message.

I apologise for the length of this letter, but the information it contains is important.

It has also been e-mailed, so if you have given us your e-mail address, please can you check that you received the e-mail (and the Signpost magazine) electronically. If not, then please e-mail signposts@nhs.net with 'E-mail issue' as the subject.

We are aware that Carers are under a lot of pressure at the moment, so the information at the end of this letter is about extra support that we are offering.

Vaccination:

COVID vaccinations are being rolled out using the following Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority order, based on the risks caused by someone getting COVID (rather than the risk of passing it on).

1. residents in a care home for older adults and their care workers
2. all those 80 years of age and over; frontline health and 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; **This also 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.**
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

People, other than Health and Care staff, are being contacted by their Doctor's Practice or the mass vaccination site (MVS) at Westpoint / Plymouth Argyle. If you refuse an MVS vaccination, you will remain on the GP listing for vaccination at the Riviera Centre or at home if you are housebound.

There is a video about vaccination at the Riviera Centre There is no need to contact your Doctor's practice, and they cannot change your priority.

We are waiting to hear more about Carers' Vaccination, but we will keep you updated.

An easy-read leaflet about vaccination has just been published, do call us on the numbers at the end if you would like us to print one for you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-easy-read-resources>

Health and Care staff, including those in care homes, and those who visit people's homes, such as Personal Assistants (PAs) employed by someone on Direct Payments or a Personal Health Budget, are being called for vaccination separately. This will also include our voluntary sector partners such as Carers Aid and Mencap. If you know of any PAs /

PTO

care workers who are not linked with an agency and have not been approached about registering on the waiting list for vaccination, please contact signposts@nhs.net with 'PA Vax' as the subject or leave a message on the numbers at the end of this letter.

Please note that, whilst it is important that as many people as possible are vaccinated, neither vaccination nor testing prevent someone from passing COVID on. Therefore, all PPE, and safe practices such as hands – face – space, and ventilation must still continue.

PPE: The Council are still offering PPE to Carers providing non-socially distant care to someone they do not live with. This has been extended to include Carers who live with the person they care for when one of you has COVID symptoms, or has tested positive to COVID and non-socially distant care is unavoidable. If you need this, or no longer need PPE originally requested, or are very concerned about PPE, please e-mail signposts@nhs.net with 'PPE' as the subject, or contact us on the numbers at the end.

Testing: Front-line health and care workers are now able to have regular COVID testing, so that will decrease the risks to people receiving support. We are ensuring that this includes PAs, as we know that many of you have been concerned about workers passing infection to you or the person you care for.

We will then investigate whether we can source regular testing for any Carers who are interested, and whether you can do this at home. If you would like to express an interest in this, please email signposts@nhs.net with 'Carer testing' as the subject or contact us on the numbers at the end.

Schools: I am awaiting further information about schools, so if you are not getting information elsewhere, and wish us to keep you informed, please contact signposts@nhs.net with 'schools' as the subject or ring the numbers at the end.

National Carers Guidance including 'respite' care

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care/guidance-for-those-who-provide-unpaid-care-to-friends-or-family>

This is the link to COVID guidance for Carers. If you cannot access the internet, we can link you to support with computers / smartphones if you want, or can provide you with a printed copy of the guidance if you contact the numbers at the end.

In brief, Carers of disabled, older or 'vulnerable people' can provide 'reasonably necessary' care, and can receive support which gives you a break. This includes other family members visiting or staying overnight to give you a break. You can use your Carers card as proof that you are a Carer. If you are concerned or would like a letter of support / explanation to show to people, please contact your Carer Support Worker, your social care worker or signposts@nhs.net or the numbers at the end. Please note that all the Carer Support Workers' details are in the latest Signpost Magazine.

National On-line Carer support

Mobilise is an organisation run by Carers for Carers which provides on-line groups and support. Here is the link to their latest offerings

Carers UK website publishes all the latest guidance for Carers and has on-line forums.

A reminder that if any of you want advice or support to become more IT confident, please contact signposts@nhs.net with 'IT support' as the subject or ring the numbers at the end.

Enhanced Support during COVID

At Carers' Services we are aware that many of the ways that you usually get support or a break are not happening. We also know that being 'cooped up' can lead to tensions for both you and the person that you care for. If you need someone to talk to, please just say something. You can talk to your Carer Support Worker or Social Care Worker or the Community Helpline on 01803 446022 (M-Fr 9am-4.30pm and Sat 9.30-12.30) or click on www.bit.ly/torbayhelpline.

You can talk at any time of day or night to the [Samaritans on 116 123](#) or [Silverline on 0800 4 70 80 90 for older people](#). (Click on the name for the link)

Emotional Support Eligible Carers of Adults can use the Emotional Support Scheme via their Carer Support Worker or Adult Social Care. This is usually a 1-off service of 6 sessions, but if you have had this before, we can authorise some additional sessions if necessary.

There is a counselling scheme for [Brixham residents](#). For more details contact signposts@nhs.net with 'Bxm Counselling' as the subject, or call the numbers at the end.

What would really make a difference to you?

What is the one thing that really annoys you, or that would really help you? If you had a helper for two hours what would you get them to do? Whilst we can't resolve some things for you, Carers Services have some staff and some volunteers, and we want to make life easier for you, so **JUST ASK!** No guarantees, but if we can do it, we will. If we know someone else who could do it, we will ask them. If it's something we can't do and enough people ask us, we'll see what we can do.

Eligible Carers of Adults may be able to have a small Direct Payment to enable them to purchase something that gives them a break from their caring role, whatever that may be. Please discuss it with your Carer Support Worker or Adult Social Care.

For Carers of Under 18s, Carers Aid Torbay (CAT) on 01803 323510 may be able to assist. They sometimes have small pots of money or links to partners who can help.

Carers' Finance and Benefits Advice is provided by CAT's Bay Benefits team on 07530 790354.

Gadgets and Equipment Most people know about Zimmer frames and those alarms people wear around their necks in case they fall, but over recent years there have been huge developments in what is available. You can make an appointment to visit the Independent Living Centre in Newton Abbot, 01392 380181 and see what is available.

NRS is our Trust's equipment provider with a huge range of things that can give you peace of mind, or increase the independence of the people you care for. This may be to summon help, or to keep you informed if you don't live together / are out at work, equipment to prompt for medication, food and drinks, and much more. We are encouraging Carers to discuss with NRS anything that would enable them to have a break – even if that's just enough time for you to walk round the block, or have a cup of tea in peace. It may be something that calms the person you care for, so that their behavior is easier to manage.

If you are interested, you can contact them direct if you are self-funding on 0345 121 8111, or can contact your Carer Support Worker or signposts@nhs.net with 'NRS' as the subject or contact the numbers at the end to see if you can have this support.

Technology / IT support Besides the offer of 1-1 advice over the phone with Healthwatch, we have a project starting with Age UK with basic tablets and smartphones. Not sure where to start? They will do a 1-1 to see what might work, then lend it to you to try, plus give advice, support, guidance and someone to practice with. When you've worked out what suits you best, they will agree the longer-term plan with you too.

Reassessments If your needs or the needs of the person you care for have changed, do ask for a reassessment. This includes if you aren't able to use your normal support and want to discuss whether there are any alternative suggestions. Contact your Carer Support Worker or Adult Social Care on 01803 219700, Children's Social Care on 01803 208100.

Community Support Remember that Torbay Community Helpline, can link you into all sorts of non-carer related support, a volunteer, shopping / prescription collection support, mental health support and much more. Call them on 01803 446022 (M-Fr 9am-4.30pm and Sat 9.30-12.30) or click www.bit.ly/torbayhelpline

Carers Strategy Survey

Thank you so much to those of you who completed this. Although the report is being written now, the survey is remaining open till the end of March to allow people the maximum time to give their views. If you would like a paper copy, just let us know. As it is managed by Healthwatch, unless you specifically requested it, we do not know who made which comments, so if you had an individual issue that needs addressing please feel free to contact us direct. Thank you

Useful Numbers

Community Helpline	01803 446022
Adult Social Care	01803 219700
Children's Social Care	01803 208100
Out of Hours Social Care	0300 456 4876

Carers Services – please leave a message

Signposts	01803 66 66 20 (Mon – Fri 9 - 5)
Additional Numbers	01803 88 13 34 (Mon – Fri 8 - 5)
	01803 20 84 56 (Mon – Fri 9 – 3).

I hope this is helpful. If there is anything further you wish to know, please feel free to contact us on signposts@nhs.net or the numbers above.

Stay Safe!

Katy Heard
Carers Lead