

# **COVID 19: Direct Payments Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

## **Children & Families**

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## 1. Government Guidance for those receiving a Direct Payment

### Guidance for people receiving direct payments updated September 2021

The Government updated their Guidance for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and those who have Direct Payments which are still in place. As a reminder it can be found by following the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments>

## England has moved to Step 4

**Coronavirus restrictions** – what you can and can't do (from 19 July):

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

Additional guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

While cases are high and rising, everybody needs to continue to act carefully and remain cautious. This is why we are keeping in place key protections:

- testing when you have symptoms and targeted asymptomatic testing in education, high risk workplaces and to help people manage their personal risk.
- isolating when positive or when contacted by NHS Test and Trace.
- border quarantine: for all arriving from red list countries and for those people not fully vaccinated arriving from amber list countries.
- cautious guidance for individuals, businesses and the vulnerable whilst prevalence is high including:
  - whilst Government is no longer instructing people to work from home if they can, Government would expect and recommend a gradual return over the summer
  - Government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport.
  - being outside or letting fresh air in
  - minimising the number, proximity and duration of social contacts.
  - encouraging and supporting businesses and large events to use the NHS COVID Pass in high risk settings. The Government will work with organisations where people are likely to be in close proximity to others outside their household to encourage the use of this. If sufficient measures are not taken to limit infection, the Government will consider mandating certification in certain venues at a later date.

Specific sections of the guidance which you may find helpful:

[Using direct payments during the coronavirus outbreak: full guidance for people receiving direct payments and personal assistants](#)

[Using direct payments during the coronavirus outbreak: the most important things to know](#)

## **Coronavirus (COVID-19): providing unpaid care**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care>

### **Additional resources from Skills for Care:**

Skills for Care have updated their resources for people who employ Personal Assistants. This includes useful templates including risk assessments to support PAs to come back to work if they have been off during the Covid period, contingency plans and other useful resources and guidance

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Information-for-individual-employers/COVID-19-Individual-employers.aspx>

## **Managing Coronavirus and information about these FAQs**

COVID-19 (also known as the Corona virus) is a Public Health issue and as such certain precautions need to be taken with both your own health and also your employees. This guide contains the most common questions we have been asked and some important information when employing Personal Assistants (PAs).

Please note that Government guidance and legal provisions are still changing regularly. This FAQ is for general guidance only and may not reflect each person's individual circumstances.

It is not legal advice. Legal advice should be taken where you are unsure about your rights or the rights of those you employ.

If you or your PAs require initial guidance with regards to employment issues, then this can be accessed for free from PURPLE. If you need more detailed guidance or legal advice on your rights and responsibilities, then please contact your care insurance company. You may also want to contact ACAS (<https://www.acas.org.uk/>) or a solicitor.

The information contained in this version of the FAQs are correct as at the date on them. Future updated versions will be available on the ECC website via the link below, please check this link regularly for updates:

[children, young people and families](#)

If you require this document in alternative formats please contact us via the email address below, please also use this email address to let us know of any new questions and answers you feel it would be helpful to include in future versions:

[DP.Covid19@essex.gov.uk](mailto:DP.Covid19@essex.gov.uk)

*NB: The information contained in the FAQs which relates to the employment of staff has been sourced from nationally available FAQs and guidance from Insurance Companies who specialise in these areas.*

## Where can I get medical advice if I am concerned about Coronavirus?

### Staying home when unwell

If you develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#), self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test](#), even if your symptoms are mild. You should self-isolate at home while you book the test and wait

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

If someone you live with has symptoms of COVID-19, or has tested positive for COVID-19, you will not need to self-isolate if any of the following apply:

- you're fully vaccinated – this means 14 days have passed since your final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine given by the NHS
- you're under 18 years, 6 months old
- you're taking part or have taken part in a COVID-19 vaccine trial
- you're not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Even if you do not have symptoms, you should still:

- get a [PCR test on GOV.UK](#) to check if you have COVID-19
- follow advice on [how to avoid catching and spreading COVID-19](#)
- consider limiting contact with [people who are at higher risk from COVID-19](#)

Rapid lateral flow testing is available for free to anybody but is particularly focused on those who have not been fully vaccinated, those in education, and those in higher-risk settings such as the NHS, social care and prisons. People may also wish to use regular rapid testing to help manage periods of risk such as returning to the workplace, close contact in a higher risk environment or when spending prolonged time with a more vulnerable individual. You can get tests from pharmacies or online. [Find out more about how to get rapid lateral flow tests](#) for the results. You must self isolate if you test positive.

If you feel unwell but don't have COVID-19 symptoms, or your COVID-19 test is negative, you may still have an illness which could be passed on to other people.

Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:

- You're worried about your symptoms
- You're not sure what to do

Call 111 if you cannot get help online. Do not go to places like a GP surgery, hospital or pharmacy.

### Covid Vaccine suitability

If you have any questions about the effectiveness and suitability of the COVID vaccine for you, please refer to the following NHS guidance and or contact your GP:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine>

<https://eput.nhs.uk/frequently-asked-questions-on-the-suitability-of-the-covid-19-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-you/>

### **Who needs to self-isolate?**

Up to date guidance on who needs to isolate and for how long can be found on the following

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

For further support:

<https://www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk/>

## **2. Advice for those employing Personal Assistant/s**

### **My employee (PA) is self-isolating as they have shown symptoms and or been identified as a contact of a Covid 9 case, what are my options ?**

Self- isolating employees are legally defined as being unfit to attend work. They should therefore notify you of their intention to self-isolate in accordance with your sickness and absence procedures.

Advice on what to do if someone has symptoms can be found here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance)

You will need to put in place your contingency plans, as discussed when your Direct Payment was set-up, please ensure you review and update these regularly in light of the current circumstances and recent updated guidance from Government

If these plans are no longer possible, is there someone else who can support you, maybe a relative, friend or neighbour, another PA or provider?

If you have followed this guidance and are unable to ensure your needs are met in alternative ways, please contact your allocated social worker or the relevant duty team.

**Mid Children with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330139886**

**Mid Young People with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330138964**

**North Children with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330139981**

**North Young People with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330 138956**

**West Children with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330139969**

**West Young People with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330138965**

**South Children with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330139802/03**

**South Young People with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330138966**

For out of hours queries contact the Emergency Duty Service: 0345 606 1212

### **What are the employee's rights if they have to self-isolate and are not excepted ( as above)?**

They have the right to remain away from work for a period of 10 days from the symptoms becoming known. You can find detailed Government guidance on staying at home due to a possible Coronavirus infection from:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-home-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-home-guidance)

As the employee is considered to be unfit for work, they are entitled to statutory sick pay (if eligible) from day one of absence.

All PAs including those on zero hours contracts, who have worked regularly for an employer over the past 3 months will be entitled to SSP if they meet the criteria and earn on average £118 per week over the last 8 weeks. SSP is £96.35 per week which is available if your PA is too ill to work. It is paid by you for up to 28 weeks.

If the employee is not eligible you must provide them with the SSP1 form to explain why, which will allow them to present a claim for possible benefits.

This is the link to SSP1 form which can be completed online or printed and returned.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-sick-pay-employee-not-entitled-form-for-employers>

NB: SSP is paid at a rate of £96.35 per week

The Government states they will reimburse employers any payments of SSP, up to 10 days, for each employee.

If your employee does have Corona virus, they will probably need more than 10 days off. The NHS should expect to hear from them if symptoms have not improved after 10 days and so it is likely that they will need further medical treatment and testing.

If the sickness absence continues beyond 10 days, your normal sickness reporting procedures are still applicable, as will ongoing payment of SSP. At this stage you may feel it appropriate to obtain medical evidence to support the claim for ongoing SSP.

## **What kind of medical evidence?**

With normal cases of sickness absence, you can ask your employee for a medical certificate after the first seven days of absence.

Under self-isolation however, we are being advised that you should not need to press for such medical evidence as the current guideline for those self-isolating is not to go to a GP. Hopefully you trust your PA enough to be able to take their word for it. Employers are being advised to be flexible if they require evidence from the employee or worker.

## **Can my PA access a test for Covid 19 if they have symptoms so that they can return to work if it is not positive?**

**Updated: Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing for personal assistants**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-personal-assistants>

The guidance has been updated to reflect the policy change for personal assistants to conduct 2 LFTs a week and not to test with PCR unless to use for a confirmatory PCR following a positive LFT.

- **Providing Home Care**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-home-care>

- **Supported living services during coronavirus**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-living-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

## **NHS Test and Trace Guidance**

Information on accessing tests for both those receiving care and those providing it can be found below. PAs and other care workers are considered critical (key) workers and are eligible for priority tests.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

## **Coronavirus: getting tested**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

Existing guidance is being updated to reflect that the isolation period has been reduced from 14 to 10 days. Latest updates:

### **Staying home when unwell**

If you develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#), self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test](#), even if your symptoms are mild. You should self-isolate at home while you book the test and wait for the results. You must self isolate if you test positive.

If you feel unwell but don't have COVID-19 symptoms, or your COVID-19 test is negative, you may still have an illness which could be passed on to other people.

### **Testing twice a week even if you don't have symptoms**

Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms. This means they could be spreading the virus without knowing it. Testing twice a week increases the chances of detecting COVID-19 when a person is infectious, helping to make sure you don't spread COVID-19.

Rapid lateral flow testing is available for free to anybody but is particularly focused on those who are not fully vaccinated, those in education, and those in higher-risk settings such as the NHS, social care and prisons. People may also wish to use regular rapid testing to help manage periods of risk such as returning to the workplace, close contact in a higher risk environment or when spending prolonged time with a more vulnerable individual. You can get tests from pharmacies or online. [Find out more about how to get rapid lateral flow tests](#).

If you develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#), self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test](#).

- A useful video can be found at the link below which explains the Test and Trace guidance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMxZ4jX-OZo>

- You may also wish to download the NHS COVID-19 app <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-covid-19/>

### **Support for people on low incomes who need to self-isolate:**

The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is available to people in England who have been asked to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. An eligible applicant must be on a low income, unable to work from home and losing income as a result.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support>

## **Management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings>

The government has updated the above guidance with new information on the implications of positive antibody result (introduction and section 4.3.) and the addition of guidance for staff who are notified that they are a contact of a co-worker who is a confirmed case (new section 4.4).

## **Daily contact testing rolled out to further critical sectors**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/daily-contact-testing-rolled-out-to-further-critical-sectors>

Further targeted daily contact testing is being rolled out in England to frontline emergency services and some transport workers, following the government's close engagement with these sectors in order to avoid any potential disruption to crucial services.

## **What do I do to get the support my child needs if their regular PA is unable to complete duties?**

If you have other employees, you may ask them to cover some of the absences. Casual workers may be called to fill in these hours too.

If you have no other employees, as an alternative, you can use a temporary agency and local businesses and providers that you can purchase support using your Direct Payment.

If you think other members of the local community could support you by volunteering to undertake simple tasks, you can find this type of support by visiting the following Facebook Page or getting in touch with a new service called Essex Welfare Service. They can then match you to local people who are offering to help.

We know some people are impacted by people returning to work if they cannot work from home, this may impact on your contingency arrangements. It would be useful for you to consider the impact of this if someone has been supporting you on a temporary basis and this is not possible due to them returning to their usual work.

## **Essex Wellbeing Service (EWS) support still available**

The EWS is there to provide support around daily living tasks for those who are shielding, such as shopping and collection of prescriptions. The service has also expanded to meet a wider range of needs. Residents feeling isolated or vulnerable, regardless of their age, health, or circumstances, can now access support for:

- Dementia care
- Mental health
- Parenting and family matters
- Learning disability/autism
- Caring responsibilities
- Physical wellness.

You can register for support at The Essex Wellbeing Service which was created at the beginning of the UK's Coronavirus outbreak in March 2020.

Please now visit [www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk](http://www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk) or call 0300 303 9988 or email [provide.essexwelfareservice@nhs.net](mailto:provide.essexwelfareservice@nhs.net)

Please share this information with your friends and family or via your own social media channels.

### **Essex Corona Virus Action Support Facebook page**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/essexcoronavirusectionsupport/>

If you are considering employing temporary / casual workers and would like to seek Employer Advice and Guidance please contact PURPLE (you do not have to be using their payroll service to access this advice). This is free advice.

Please use the website

<https://wearepurple.org.uk/direct-payment-support/managing-your-personal-budget/>

or contact: Email: [essex@wearepurple.org.uk](mailto:essex@wearepurple.org.uk) Telephone: **01245 392 300**

### **If our family is self-isolating does that mean my child goes without Care?**

No – the Government are updating guidance regularly based on the recent rise in infections and in line with the new easing of lock down measures. However, it is recognised that you may not be able to manage without your Personal Assistant (s) or other care you usually have if you are impacted by continued circulation of the virus and so you are not under any obligation to remove your employees from the household.

If you are self-isolating because you are reducing your contact with others, please continue to discuss this with you PA. You must be sure that your child's assessed care needs are met, this may be by yourself, another family member or by considering some of the other advice we are providing around meeting your child's needs in different ways.

If this means that you will be changing how you spend your direct payment, then you can do so as long as the proposed spend is aligned to the purpose of your child's support plan and meets the outcomes in that Plan. Please also take the following advice in to account:

- If you wish to purchase specialist equipment, such as for toileting, bathing, seating or manual handling, this request will need to be discussed with the Occupational Therapy team to ensure that the equipment is suitable and safe for the child/young person. Please contact the Occupational Therapy Duty Team for advice: **OT Duty number is 0333 013 9951**
- If your child/young person usually attends a club/activity and you are able to purchase equipment/activities similar to these, this would be considered to be in line with the care plan (for example if a child attended a trampoline club and you wish to purchase a trampoline to use at home.)
- If you would like to purchase an item that is not in line with your child/young person's current care plan, this will need to be discussed with the allocated Social Worker.

Please can you notify your social worker of any change in need and how you are planning to address this.

If these changes mean you would like to employ another person at this time you can seek Employer Advice and Guidance please contact PURPLE (you do not have to be using their payroll service to access this advice). This is free advice.

Please use the website

<https://wearepurple.org.uk/direct-payment-support/managing-your-personal-budget/>  
or contact:

Email: [essex@wearepurple.org.uk](mailto:essex@wearepurple.org.uk) Telephone: **01245 392 300**

If this means that you will be changing how you spend your direct payment, then you can do so as long as the proposed spend is in the spirit of your support plan and meets the outcomes in that plan. All such short term, temporary changes at this time to how your care needs are met will be reviewed when circumstances allow, and any carers assessments will similarly be carried out as and when possible.

Please ensure you keep evidence in relation to any changes to how you spend your DP at *this time*. ***If you temporarily employed a family member to provide care and you are considering whether this needs to continue on a longer-term basis, this must be agreed by your social worker as set out in Government guidance.***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments>

### **What should I tell my employees to do?**

Whilst your employee/s are fit and able to work, they should carry on fulfilling their duties. It is absolutely vital that they take this situation seriously and adhere to any new health and safety and hygiene rules you implement. This is not just to protect your family and them but also to prevent spreading the infection to the wider public.

Employees should use PPE in line with advice given and not remove PPE without your permission.

### **I would rather not have my employees come into my home whilst my household is self-isolating, what are my employee's rights?**

The employee is entitled to their full pay as you are asking them to stay away from the workplace.

For permanent employees who work regular hours you may find that there is a right in the contract to put them on a period of lay off.

This means a temporary suspension of their work and pay. Please note that this will only apply if your contract is very clear that you have a right to lay off the employee under these circumstances.

An employee on lay off has a right to statutory guarantee pay which is up to £30 per day from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and is only payable for the first five days of absence.

If you do not have a lay off clause you can ask the employee not to attend work and pay them in full during the absence. If there is a lay off clause, but you want to pay your employee anyway to ensure you can retain them, Essex County Council are supportive of this approach.

We would however encourage you to speak to your PA about whether there are any tasks they can do to support your child without needing to be in direct contact.

If you employ casual or zero hours workers, you have no obligation to offer them work so therefore if you do not require them to work you do not have to offer them any hours. However, if the PA has formed a pattern of regular work with you please contact PURPLE and speak to the Employer Advice and Guidance team who can advise further.

<https://wearepurple.org.uk/direct-payment-support/managing-your-personal-budget/>

or contact: Email: [essex@wearepurple.org.uk](mailto:essex@wearepurple.org.uk) Telephone: **01245 392 300**

### **Can I ask my PA to take paid leave whilst my family is self-isolating?**

As an employer, you may have the right to tell your employees when to take holiday if you need to and you may wish to ask them to do so whilst self-isolating.

Please check the employment contract you have with your employee and if unsure of your rights contact PURPLE for advice and guidance.

Please use the website:

<https://wearepurple.org.uk/direct-payment-support/managing-your-personal-budget/>

or contact: Email: [essex@wearepurple.org.uk](mailto:essex@wearepurple.org.uk) Telephone: **01245 392 300**

### **My PA has chosen to self-isolate to err on the side of caution, however I need them in work – where do I stand?**

If your PA has no symptoms of Covid-19 and does not fall into the categories of those who are being advised to self-isolate and is not attending work without a valid reason, you may be entitled to follow a disciplinary route. If you would like more advice in how to follow this process, please contact the Employer Advice and Guidance team at PURPLE.

Please use the website:

<https://wearepurple.org.uk/direct-payment-support/managing-your-personal-budget/>

or contact: Email: [essex@wearepurple.org.uk](mailto:essex@wearepurple.org.uk) Telephone: **01245 392 300**

### **If only one of my PAs is self-isolating – where do the other PAs stand?**

Treat self-isolation on a case-by-case basis – self-isolation is at the employee's discretion and the employer is therefore not responsible for this.

Because one PA is self-isolating this does not automatically mean the others should. If, however your PA has had symptoms and been in close contact with another PA or others in the household then please ensure they follow the Test and Trace advice outlined above

Treat self-isolation on a case-by-case basis – self-isolation is at the employee's discretion and the employer is therefore not responsible for this.

### **Someone that my Personal Assistant lives with has symptoms of Coronavirus. What shall I do?**

As per government advice an employee or someone in their household has a new continuous cough or a high temperature, everyone in their household must self-isolate for 10 days. The employee should receive SSP for those 14 days if they earn over £118 per week – See SSP advice above.

Please also see the question in relation to testing which is now included in these FAQs.

## **Is my employee entitled to sick pay if they are self-isolating for 12 weeks?**

They are entitled to SSP (if they are eligible) for the first 10 days of self-isolation – anything after that 10-day period needs a sick note to cover it and enable them to claim SSP.

## **The Personal Assistant is pregnant. What should I do?**

Please follow the government advice for those who are pregnant

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance)

For latest update : <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>

If you need specific guidance regarding your rights or that of your PA, please contact PURPLE or your care insurance company:

<https://wearepurple.org.uk/direct-payment-support/managing-your-personal-budget/>

Email: [essex@wearepurple.org.uk](mailto:essex@wearepurple.org.uk) Telephone: 01245 392 300

## **Do the Furlough leaves rules apply to me if I employ PAs?**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been extended until 30 September 2021.

In general, the government expects that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will not be used by many direct payment holders.

This is because most public sector employees, like PAs, are continuing to provide essential public services or contribute to the response to the coronavirus outbreak. The government consider PAs to be an essential worker who provide vital care and support, and as such, use of this scheme should be minimal.

Nonetheless, government recognise there will be certain circumstances where it would be appropriate for a direct payment holder to furlough somebody they employ. The specific guidance mentioned above provides detail and practical examples on this.

From 1 July 2021, the government will pay 70% of wages up to a maximum cap of £2,187.50 for the hours the employee is on furlough.

From 1 August 2021, the government will pay 60% of wages up to a maximum cap of £1,875 for the hours the employee is on furlough.

For claims from 1 July 2021, employers must top up their employees' wages to make sure they receive 80% of their wages (up to £2,500) for the hours they are on furlough. The caps are proportional to the hours not worked. Find out more about :

[Changes to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

## 3. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

### What is the guidance regarding Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Where you continue to receive support from an employee at home you remain under an obligation to ensure that there is a safe system of work in place and that the employees are provided with Personal Protection Equipment and clothing (PPE) **where necessary in line with Public Health guidance**.

Make sure you explain fully the new health and safety procedures to your employees. You should record the new measures you have implemented and keep a record of the PPE you have received.

Guidance is available regarding the use of PPE in a home care environment including instructions and videos on how to use it safely:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-to-work-safely-in-domiciliary-care#history>

Free Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for people employing Personal Assistants (PAs) or using self-employed carers.

Essex County Council are now able to support Direct Payment Recipients who are employing Personal Assistants (PAs) or using self-employed carers, with access to Government PPE for their Covid-19 specific needs. This is no longer just for emergency supplies but can be used to source any PPE over and above your business as usual needs.

The [guidance for this new process is HERE](#).

<https://www.livingwellessex.org/media/726143/provider-ordering-note-29620-v10.docx>

If you require it, you should follow the link below which will take you to a form to complete to place an order. If you use self-employed carers, please share this form with them so they can order Covid-19 related PPE supplies.

[Direct Payment or Personal Assistant / https://www.livingwellessex.org/media/726146/formdp-.doc](#)

## 4. Additional Support

### Get vaccinated

All adults in England have now been offered at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccines are safe and effective. They give you the best protection against COVID-19.

If you have not yet received the COVID-19 vaccine, you should [get vaccinated](#). It usually takes around two to three weeks for an antibody response to develop. You need two doses of vaccine for maximum protection against COVID-19.

At the current time, the third COVID-19 vaccine dose will be offered to individuals aged 12 years and over with severely weakened immune system ( immunosuppression ). The NHS will contact you directly to arrange an appointment.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) booster vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

However, even if you have been fully vaccinated, you could still get COVID-19 and get sick - a recent PHE report shows that around 1 in 5 people who are double-vaccinated are still vulnerable to getting infected with the Delta variant and showing symptoms. You can also still spread COVID-19 to others. We all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to protect others and to reduce the risk of new variants developing and spreading.

This advice will help us protect our friends, families, and communities, including those who have been vaccinated.

### Using the NHS COVID-19 app

Using [the NHS COVID-19 app](#) helps stop the spread of the virus by informing you that you have been in close contact with someone who has since tested positive for COVID-19, even if you don't know each other. The app is free and easy to use and doing so can help you protect your loved ones and others.

The app also allows people to report symptoms, order a coronavirus test, and check in to venues using a QR code. To help protect yourself and others, [download and use the latest version of the NHS COVID-19 app](#).

### Mental Health resources

**Psychological first aid in emergencies training for frontline staff and volunteers.**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/psychological-first-aid-in-emergencies-training-for-frontline-staff-and-volunteers>

Free online psychological first aid training from Public Health England has been launched for frontline staff and volunteers.

The training will equip staff to provide support and recognise people at risk of distress. It has been tailored to the specific challenges of the coronavirus outbreak, including job worries, bereavement and isolation. The course takes 90 minutes to complete and can be accessed through the Future Learn website:

[https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/psychological-first-aid-covid-19/1?utm\\_campaign=fl\\_phecovidpsych\\_2020&utm\\_medium=futurelearn\\_organic\\_pressrel\\_ease&utm\\_source=fl\\_pr\\_outreach](https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/psychological-first-aid-covid-19/1?utm_campaign=fl_phecovidpsych_2020&utm_medium=futurelearn_organic_pressrel_ease&utm_source=fl_pr_outreach)

## **New Support Service**

A new support service has been set up by our NHS colleagues called [here for you](#).

The new service has been launched by the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT) and Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is specifically for staff, both frontline and non-frontline, who work in healthcare, social care, the voluntary sector, or not-for-profit sector. They provide confidential advice and support on a range of things so if you'd like to find out more please visit the [EPUT website](#).

## **Skills for Care wellbeing offer**

The **attached document from Skills for Care** sets out their recent wellbeing activity, providing an update on their support offer.

The offer includes the recently launched **workforce wellbeing resource finder** is a new easy tool to help the social care workforce ( including PAs ) to find trusted resources to support their own or others well-being.

We know there's a vast amount of resources, support and help available that can be overwhelming to navigate. Our Workforce Wellbeing Resource Finder holds a selection of different resources suited to social care from our national trusted partners. Whether you're looking for self-help, support for others, needing someone to talk in confidence or mental health support, there's an easy filtering system that gives the user several choices to help find something relevant. We hope this will help reduce time and energy searching for resources and there's an option to save and print your results.

## **How can I get additional support if I need it during this time?**

If you require additional support, please use your contingency funds or any surplus in your Direct Payment account in the first instance. A contingency fund is in place for exactly this type of scenario.

The steps you take to find alternative support may also mean some costs are reduced at this time. There may be some costs that have increased, for example you may need to buy services that are more expensive because they are booked last minute.

If you require an increase in your support to meet your needs in order to keep you safe at this time, as long as the proposed spend is in the spirit of the support plan and meets eligible needs then you are able to request it. You will need to contact us to request this additional funding should it be required so your account does not fall into deficit.

Please contact us using the information below to request an increase in funds to your Direct Payment account. Please retain all records of any change of care provision and ensure it is in line with what is within your support plan.

You will need to contact us via the information below to request an increase in funds to your Direct Payment account. Please retain all records of any change of care provision.

Please contact your allocated social worker or the relevant duty team to discuss this further.

## **5. What do I do if my child is without support?**

If you have used all the guidance, we have provided about alternative ways to ensure your child's needs are met but are still without the support your child needs please contact your child's allocated social worker for advice and support.

For out of hours queries contact the Emergency Duty Service

Telephone: 0345 606 1212

[socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk](mailto:socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk)

## Can I spend my Direct Payments in a different way if my regular care cannot be provided i.e. other tasks, activity, or transport needs?

As per guidance in our initial letter we are encouraging people to meet needs in different and flexible ways, and this can include equipment or technology etc. We are encouraging flexibility regarding how Direct Payments are spent during this emergency period, in line with government advice.

This means that if you can source alternative care and support or alternative activities to support your child's needs as long as the proposed spend is aligned to the purpose of your child's support plan and meets the outcomes in that Plan then this is OK.

You must be sure that your assessed care needs are met, this may be by a family member, or someone you live with as a carer or by considering some of the other advice we are providing around meeting your needs in different ways.

All short term, temporary changes made at this time to how your care needs are met will be reviewed when circumstances allow, and any carers assessments as will similarly be carried out when possible. Please ensure you keep evidence in relation to any changes to how you spend your DP at this time.

Please also take the following advice in to account:

- If you wish to purchase specialist equipment, such as for toileting, bathing, seating or manual handling, this request will need to be discussed with the Occupational Therapy team to ensure that the equipment is suitable and safe for the child/young person.
- Please contact the Occupational Therapy Duty Team for advice: **OT Duty number is 0333 013 9951**
- If your child/young person usually attends a club/activity and you are able to purchase equipment/activities similar to these, this would be considered to be in line with the care plan (for example if a child attended a trampoline club and you wish to purchase a trampoline to use at home.)
- If you would like to purchase an item that is not in line with your child/young person's current care plan, this will need to be discussed with the allocated Social Worker.
- If you have temporarily employed a family member to provide care and you are considering whether this needs to continue on a longer-term basis, this must be agreed by your social worker as set out in Government guidance

Please can you notify your social worker of any change and how you are planning to address this.

If the changes you are making mean you need to employ people who you have not previously then please access Employer Advice and Guidance from PURPLE.

<https://wearepurple.org.uk/direct-payment-support/managing-your-personal-budget/>

Email: [essex@wearepurple.org.uk](mailto:essex@wearepurple.org.uk) Telephone: 01245 392 300

We have produced some useful guidance on some of the technology that is available to support care needs and have published this, it can accessed by following the link below (although this link takes to you an Adult Social Care page the guidance is also useful for those with children and young people):

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/changes-services/adult-social-care-health>

## **If I canno longer purchase care at this time and my needs are being met in another way, can I request my DP account is put on hold?**

We recognise in the current emergency period it may not be possible to use your direct payment to meet your needs in the way set out in your care and support plan.

We can temporarily pause payment of your direct payment in this situation, but we will need to discuss with you whether there is another way in which some or all of the needs it is meeting can continue to be met, as these will remain whether or not you have a direct payment.

Where it is not possible to meet your needs in full due to the emergency situation, we will discuss the position with you as this may affect the size of your personal budget.

Please contact your allocated social worker or the relevant duty team to discuss this further.

**Mid Children with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330139886**

**Mid Young People with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330138964**

**North Children with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330139981**

**North Young People with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330 138956**

**West Children with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330139969**

**West Young People with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330138965**

**South Children with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330139802/03**

**South Young People with Disabilities Duty Number: 03330138966**

## 6. Children & Young People

Covid Guidance on vulnerable children and young adults

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>

Advice for Direct Payments used to support adults is the same in respect of employing staff or self-employed PAs.

A version of these FAQs has been published on the ECC website for those who have a DP to support an adult. It can be accessed on the following page:

[direct payments page](#)

## 7. Advice for Self Employed Personal Assistant

**My client has decided that they do not want support during this time, what notice can I expect from them to terminate our arrangement?**

This will depend upon the terms of any agreement you have in place with them. If you signed an agreement with your client at the beginning of your arrangement, that contract may set out a notice period. A client would usually have to pay for your services in full during a notice period, even if they don't want you to attend their home, but your contract will determine if that is the case.

If you don't have a written contract you may find evidence of your arrangement in letters, emails, or other documents.

Where you are genuinely self-employed and an agreement has not been made as to a notice period, your client will be able to terminate your services immediately and pay you only for the work that you have completed so far.

**I have a client who is self-isolating due to concerns that they, or someone in their household have symptoms of Coronavirus. I feel unsafe, am I obliged to attend work for them?**

The Government have updated their guidance on self-isolation and it now includes new laws which enforce it as well as packages of support for those on low incomes:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

You are free to continue your business and in doing so it is your responsibility to ensure that you or any workers of yours have safe systems of work. This includes the responsibilities you have to ensure you have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

You will be familiar with everyday risks of work; however, the Government recognise the difficulty for home care workers under these circumstances and so have produced some helpful guidance for home care providers, this can be found at: -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-to-work-safely-in-domiciliary-care>

If you decide that you do not want to take the risk of continuing your work personally, it is advisable to check the terms of any written agreement with your client. You are also encouraged to see how you can meet the needs of your client in different ways at this time, this may be through undertaking different tasks which involve reduced close contact. It may be that you have a right to send someone else into the client's home to carry out the work on your behalf. This could be another worker or contracted work through an agency for example.

Be sure that any workers engaged by you carry out the work they are providing with the right health and safety procedures and protective equipment and clothing, as suggested in the Government guidance.

If you are not sending in a replacement for the work and simply want to terminate the arrangement with your client, you must check your service contract. Many service contracts will provide a notice before termination, in which case you should work that notice period if you want to avoid being in breach of contract.

If you were to breach a notice period, the client would have the right to legal redress against you for any losses they suffer as a result of your breach, this may include the additional cost of alternative agency fees for example.

**I am not sick, but I am following the Government guidance to self-isolate, I am unable to attend to my clients in their home, what are my rights?**

Guidance on self -isolation can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

For latest update : <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>

It is hoped, given the seriousness of the circumstances, that clients will understand your self-isolation amount to being incapable of work.

So that you can continue in the same way, had sickness occurred in everyday circumstances, such as bringing in a replacement worker or using an agency. As a self-employed person, you are not entitled to statutory sick pay.

If you are willing to attend to work despite the current measures, it would be wise to speak to your client about it first. Your contract may provide specific conditions for circumstances where you are sick, but if not, this is an ideal time to communicate and attempt to find common ground.

Some clients may be happy to simply defer your work for the 10-day period and recommence once your isolation period ceases, without the need for formal termination of the arrangement.

**My earnings are significantly impacted because of the Coronavirus, what help can I get from the Government?**

In all circumstances, the arrangements are different for self-employed PAs compared to employed PAs. Self-employed PAs are not able to claim Statutory Sick Pay and are not entitled to be paid by the employer if they have not worked.

Self-employed PAs should have employment insurance as the first port of call for financial protection.

The Government is extending its financial packages of support, please visit the following:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support>

You can also now more easily make a claim for Universal Credit (UC) or new style Employment and Support Allowance.

For more information on how to claim, please visit

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>

and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-employment-and-support-allowance>.

It has also been announced that the Government are making provisions for loans to small businesses who have suffered interruption to their businesses. More information can be found by following the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

### **I am responsible for sourcing PPE, but I am struggling to find supplies**

It is important usage of PPE equipment across health and social care is in line with national guidance which is available via the links provided.

Guidance is available regarding the use of PPE in a home care environment including instructions and videos on how to use it safely:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-to-work-safely-in-domiciliary-care#history>

Please refer to the Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) section.

## **8. Other Useful Resources**

### **Daily contact testing rolled out to further critical sectors**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/daily-contact-testing-rolled-out-to-further-critical-sectors>

Further targeted daily contact testing is being rolled out in England to frontline emergency services and some transport workers, following the government's close engagement with these sectors in order to avoid any potential disruption to crucial services.

The following guidance has been updated to reflect changes in restrictions from 17 May:

### **Being a deputy or attorney during the coronavirus outbreak**

[Being a deputy or attorney during the coronavirus outbreak - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/being-a-deputy-or-attorney-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak)

## **Making and registering an LPA during the coronavirus outbreak**

[Making and registering an LPA during the coronavirus outbreak - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-and-registering-an-lpa-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak)

## **Supported living services during coronavirus**

[Supported living services during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/supported-living-services-during-coronavirus)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-living-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-supported-living>

**Coronavirus and Faith guidance** – this is also available to download in an easy read version

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/coronavirus-and-faith>

## **Health, care and volunteer workers parking pass and concessions**

Coronavirus (COVID-19): health, care and volunteer workers parking pass and concessions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

In line with the government's roadmap for lifting COVID-19 restrictions, the emergency parking pass guidance will be withdrawn by 21 June 2021. Pass holders will need to contact their local council to find out about any local plans for the future of the parking pass or any other local parking permits.

## **Bereavement scheme for family members of NHS and health and social care workers**

Coronavirus (COVID-19): bereavement scheme for family members of NHS and health and social care workers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

This Home Office scheme is concerned with eligibility for ILR (indefinite leave to remain) for family members of NHS and social care workers who have died as a result of contracting coronavirus.

The guidance has been updated to clarify that in exceptional and compelling circumstances, wider family members (eg parents or grandparents) may also be granted ILR and consideration may also be given to those whose permission has expired.

## **Skills for Care**

The aim of this webpage is to have the most up to date information for the sector in one place.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/COVID-19](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/COVID-19)

They have also added some pages to the information hub [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub)

There is a tab called 'COVID-19 IE and PA updates. Then this page has two sections – one for Independent Employers (IE's) – these are people who employ PAs and one for PAs themselves. There are lots of useful resources in the links on these pages. Government advice for those with Direct Payments is also now available on these pages in the form of questions and answers.

IE page: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Information-for-individual-employers/COVID-19-Individual-employers.aspx>

PA page: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/Working-as-a-personal-assistant/COVID-19-personal-assistants.aspx>

**This information is issued by:**

Essex County Council

**Contact us:**

[dp.covid19@essex.gov.uk](mailto:dp.covid19@essex.gov.uk)

[www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk)

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

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