

COVID-19: Guidance for Carers

**Guidance published by the
Public Health Division,
Lincolnshire County Council**

Published 31.03.20

(Updated 15.04.20)

GUIDANCE FOR CARERS

As someone with caring responsibilities we understand that this is a difficult and uncertain time and there will no doubt be questions and concerns that you have with regards to the impact of the Coronavirus on you and your loved ones.

The Government has published guidance for carers [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): providing unpaid care](#). The guidance is "for anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who, due to a lifelong condition, illness, disability, serious injury, a mental health condition or an addiction, cannot cope without their support". It builds on other guidance published by the government including the [Stay at home guidance](#) and the [Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable adults](#) and the measures we should all be taking in order to reduce the transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

General advice from the Government can be found [here](#), it is updated regularly.

Please remember that whilst these are challenging times, you are not alone and support is available should you need it.

PROTECTING THOSE YOU CARE FOR

How do I protect myself and my loved ones from Coronavirus?

Protect yourself and others by following the hygiene and infection control guidelines on the [NHS website](#). It details what action you should take and when, including tips on staying at home if necessary.

If you are worried that you or someone you look after has Coronavirus, NHS 111 provides direct guidance through the online [coronavirus helpline](#). Let them know you are a carer.

Is the person I care for, or am I, at particular risk from coronavirus?

The government has issued guidance about who is at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) which can be found [here](#)

You need to be particularly careful about staying away from others ('social distancing') if they (or you) are 70 or older (with or without medical conditions) or if they (or you) are younger than 70 and have underlying health conditions, including long-term respiratory diseases and a number of listed chronic conditions, including a weakened immune system. See the guidance for further details, but in short if you, or those you care for, are instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds then you need to practice social distancing.

[Government Guidance for shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable people](#) has been published. NHS England will be writing to such individuals directly to advise them to stay at home for the next 12 weeks. If you or someone you care for falls into this category you will be identified and contacted, with regular contact maintained to offer reassurance and information regarding how to manage health needs whilst self-isolating. In short the guidance introduces 'shielding' - a measure to protect extremely vulnerable people by minimising interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others. It protects those who are at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) from coming into contact with the virus. Further information on what this means in practical terms, including what support is available please see [here](#).

There is specific government guidance if you live in a house with a vulnerable person, see the [household guidance](#)

Both of these guidance documents are intended for use in situations where people are living in their own homes, with or without additional support from friends, family and carers.

If the person you care for lives in a Residential Care setting, in Supported Care or with Home Care Support, separate [government guidance is available](#) (more information on this is below)

What is someone I provide care for in the 'extremely vulnerable' category but hasn't received a letter from the NHS?

From 23rd March, NHS England has been directly contacting people identified as clinically 'extremely vulnerable' due to their medical conditions. All those identified should have received a letter. If you think someone you care for falls into one of the [categories of extremely vulnerable people](#) listed in the guidance and they have not received a letter or been contacted by their GP, discuss your concerns directly with their GP or hospital clinician.

How do I 'shield' someone?

Government guidance on [How to protect extremely vulnerable people \(shielding\)](#) outlines the measures needed to protect people who are clinically extremely vulnerable by minimising all interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others. People with serious underlying health conditions which put them at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) are to rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe. The detailed guidance explains [what shielding is](#) and provides practical advice for informal carers. Advice for formal carers is included in the [home care provision](#).

Can I visit a loved one in a residential care home if I am advised to practice socially distancing? What advice do I need to follow/take?

Many residential care homes will have already taken steps to restrict or prevent visits to minimise the risk of transmission. Whilst you may find it upsetting not to be able to visit your loved one, it is vital to prevent infection spread. In exceptional circumstances, such as those receiving palliative care, limited contact may be allowed and you will be advised accordingly by the care provider regarding how to protect yourself and your loved one.

It is understandable that you feel concerned about how you can continue to support another whilst protecting both yourself and them from infection. If you are unable to visit someone you usually care for, consider how technology might help you keep in touch and connect with them. Perhaps explore Facetime or Skype as a way to talk face to face, though at a distance.

There are apps and devices that are specifically designed with carers' needs in mind. [Jointly](#) is an innovative mobile and online app (web, iOS, Android) developed by Carers UK that is designed by carers for carers. It is designed to make caring easier, less stressful and more organised by making communication and coordination between those who share the care as easy as a text message. There is also technology that can help with particular tasks, in case you can't be around, such as managing taking medication. [Read more about different types of remote technology that are available to help](#) on the Carers UK website.

I am a carer living with a vulnerable adult/child and I (or they) have been advised to self-isolate at home – what should I do?

Please follow the [PHE guidance](#). In short, if you have been advised to self-isolate at home, you should not care for individuals until it is safe to do so. If you have a contingency plan in place hopefully this will assist you in making alternative arrangements which may include

making cover arrangements with trusted neighbours, friends or family members. If you haven't yet made a plan see Carer's UK Advice on [creating a contingency plan](#)

The Government's [Stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#) states that if you live with others and you are the first in the household to have symptoms of coronavirus, then you must stay at home for 7 days, but all other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.

Those living with vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) are advised where possible to move them out of the home to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period. If you cannot do this, advice is to:

- Minimise as much as possible the time any vulnerable family members spend in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep shared spaces well ventilated.
- Aim to keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from vulnerable people you live with and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible. If they can, they should use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. Make sure they use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.
- If you do share a toilet and bathroom with a vulnerable person, it is important that you clean them every time you use them (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). Another tip is to consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with the vulnerable person using the facilities first.
- If you share a kitchen with a vulnerable person, avoid using it while they are present. If they can, they should take their meals back to their room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry the family's used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly. If the vulnerable person is using their own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.

(Taken from [Stay at home guidance households with possible coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#))

How will I get food, medication and essentials if I am self-isolating?

If someone that you care for requires support – maybe because you are self-isolating and are unable to provide your usual support - please visit gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable from Tuesday 24 March 2020 to register and identify the support required. This includes help with getting food, shopping deliveries, collecting medications and any additional care needed.

Lincolnshire County Council has set up a Community Help webpage where you can identify what support you require whilst you are self-isolating. Support may include shopping, dog walking or simply a friendly chat. Use the online form [Coronavirus support - request community help](#) or alternatively, call 01522 782189. Your request for support will be matched with local volunteers and community groups who are ready and willing to help.

Whilst Lincolnshire County Council's Community Help webpage is an excellent first point of call for those requiring support, there are a number of additional community based organisations offering practical help these include:

- **Age UK –Salted Orange Meals**

Available to people over 65 and living in Lincolnshire, this partnership between Salted Orange Food Co. and Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire delivers a full week of meals to the person's doorstep for £20. It includes 21 meals – 7 breakfasts, 7 lunches and 7 dinners. To order and for more information call Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire on 03455 564144

- **Networks of community-based support groups**

There are a number of local community-based support groups who may be able to help those who are self-isolating. [Connect 2 Support](#) has an increasing amount of information about local groups that can support you. It provides an online, telephone, email and live chat service. Contact them on 0300 303 8789.

In addition, search for local support at [Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK](#).

- **Morrison's Food Boxes (all areas)**

Morrison's are offering a Food Box delivery of essential food and household items delivered to your door. A meat-eater and vegetarian option are available. See the webpage [Morrison Food Box webpage](#) for more information and to place an order.

The main **supermarkets** are looking to support vulnerable and older people by offering protected shopping time, see below for the current arrangements:

Tesco: Elderly/vulnerable customers can shop between 9am-10am every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning.

Morrison's: Providing individual support to elderly/vulnerable customers in stores (using volunteers)

Sainsbury: Elderly, disabled customers and carers can shop between 8am-9am on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Iceland: Elderly/vulnerable people can shop between 8am-9am from Monday to Saturday.

Marks and Spencer: Elderly/vulnerable people can shop for the first hour of the day once doors are open on Mondays and Thursdays. Opening times of stores vary so check at www.marksandspencer.com/stores

Waitrose: Elderly/vulnerable people/carers can shop everyday for the first hour of the day once doors are open. See [opening times here](#).

Many home delivery and 'click and collect' deliveries are now booked weeks ahead, however many of the major supermarkets are taking action to prioritise online deliveries for elderly and vulnerable customers. This includes contacting those customers who have previously identified themselves as elderly or vulnerable, as well as supporting those on the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' list that the government has shared with retailers (those who require 'shielding').

For additional, up-to-date information on additional sources of support, please visit Lincolnshire County Council's [Community Help and Volunteering webpage](#).

How do I practice social distancing when I am responsible for delivering shopping/medications to someone who relies on me?

Government advice is clear - Stay at home and only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home) or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person. [Full guidance on staying at home and away from others can be found on gov.uk](#)

If you need to provide/care to support a vulnerable person, you need to do so safely. You should be minimising time spent outside of the home and ensuring you are 2 metres (6 feet) apart from anyone outside of your household. See the [How to Help Safely](#) guidance.

Consider alternative ways of getting shopping to the person/people you care for. You could sign up to a repeat prescription delivery service if the person you care for is reliant on regular prescription medication. For further information and to check if your GP surgery uses this service see [Free online prescription service \(NHS\)](#)

In addition, you could shop online for grocery items and have them delivered directly to them. Whilst there is currently a high demand for home delivery slots resulting in lengthy waits, it appears that supermarkets are taking action to free up more slots for elderly/vulnerable customers by encouraging those who can shop in-store to do so. All home deliverers have measures in place to prevent infection spread including 'no contact' deliveries. If you do have to shop in-store, follow the social distancing measures in place including keeping 2 metres (6 feet) away from others and practice good hand hygiene; many of the larger supermarkets will have floor markings to ensure distance between customers, restrictions on the number of shopper's in-store at any one time and in-store hand sanitisers.

Take precautions to protect those 'at risk' when you drop off deliveries by leaving deliveries at the door if you can, or if that's not possible, follow measures to protect you both (good hand hygiene, no non-essential physical contact, etc.)

Some carers are concerned that they will get stopped (or fined) for picking up shopping or essential supplies for someone they provide informal care for. The [government's guidance](#) regarding social distancing measures does not specify that a form of proof is required if travelling to provide essential care for somebody vulnerable. However, the recently published [Coronavirus Action Plan for Adult Social Care](#) recognises that unpaid carers leaving the home for short periods may be challenged about their movements and that some kind of 'proof' would be useful. As such, Lincolnshire County Council will shortly be contacting all known carers, either by email or by post, to offer a letter to show that they are a carer. If you are not known to the Council and wish to request such a letter, please contact the Council's Covid line on 01522 782189 and we can register you as a carer.

I employ personal assistant support by direct payment – where can I find advice if they are unable to continue providing care due to ill-health or needing to self-isolate?

Personal assistants, like everyone else, must follow the guidance to stay home and self-isolate if they, or members of their family, have symptoms of Coronavirus or if they are in the shielded group. This means that there may be a significant increase in staff absences rates, creating workforce shortages, meaning that the continuity of care usually provided is adversely affected. If this happens and you receive direct payments and have a personal assistant, you should contact them in the first instance for advice.

Alternatively, LCC have set up a Customer Service Centre (CSC) Coronavirus helpline which you should call if your formal home care fails, or you are struggling and need advice. The CSC is a **non-medical** advice helpline to support those who are affected by the COVID 19 disruption. There is a single number - 01522 782189 - with 3 options. Option 1 is for information and advice including how to access support.

If you employ someone to provide care/support and they are unable to continue to carry out this work due to ill-health/needing to self-isolate, you can also contact the Penderels Trust for advice on 01526 833803, including accessing support via their Personal Assistant finder. You should refer to your contingency plan and if you are receiving Direct Payment Support remember you can be flexible with your Direct Payment to buy alternative agency/personal assistant support. This may include, in some circumstances, paying for a relative or trusted neighbour/friend to provide support.

Alternatively, it may be that you can ask friends and family for informal help.

Our paid carer is issued with personal protective equipment such as gloves and aprons – as an informal carer providing essential personal care will these be provided to me?

Care home providers routinely use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and aprons as part of infection control protocols. Adult social care providers are being provided with PPE to support compliance with government advice.

As an informal carer *if neither of you is symptomatic of Coronavirus*, then no personal protective equipment is required above and beyond the good hygiene practices detailed on the [NHS website](#). The [Stay at home guidance](#) provides information on washing your hands, cleaning and disposing of waste, and cleaning laundry, as well as other information for those living with a vulnerable person.

If you or the person you care for display symptoms of Coronavirus, see the government advice for carers [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): providing unpaid care](#) for detailed advice of what actions and protective measures you should be taking.

It includes advice on:

- Caring for someone who is clinically ‘extremely vulnerable’;
- What to do if you, or the person you care for, has symptoms and you are not in a clinically ‘vulnerable group’ or clinically ‘extremely vulnerable group’;
- What to do if the person you care for has symptoms and you are in a clinically ‘vulnerable group’;
- What to do if the person you care for has symptoms and you are in a clinically ‘extremely vulnerable group’;
- If you are a carer and you have symptoms.

Please see the guidance [here](#).

If you are providing informal care at home and either you or they are symptomatic of Coronavirus, please contact Lincolnshire's health protection team at HealthProtectionTeam@lincolnshire.gov.uk who will advise you.

What if the person/s I care for lives in residential care, supported living or receives home care?

[Guidance for providers of residential care, supported living and home care](#) has been published by the government. The guidance sets out the measures being taken to maintain delivery of care for those receiving paid-for care, detailing a range of measures in place that support care providers to reduce the transmission of Coronavirus.

How do I support someone I care for at this difficult and challenging time?

Ensure that you are familiar with the government advice which is regularly updated and added to. General advice is [here](#). Recent advice and support measures have been announced for those most vulnerable, see [measures to protect and support the extremely vulnerable](#)

Any paid care workers, cleaners or other helpers coming into the home of the person you care for will need to ensure that they are following stringent hygiene and infection control measures as set out by the NHS. If they are employed through an agency and you have any doubts, contact the agency to ask them about what protective measures they are taking.

If you are the only carer then support and guidance is available should you have specific questions or queries. Contact details of organisations that can help are provided in the section below.

The person I care for has Dementia; how can I support them through the additional challenges that the Coronavirus outbreak brings?

If you support someone living with Dementia (either in the same household or from a distance) you may be finding the Coronavirus outbreak particularly challenging. Government advice on [Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of Coronavirus](#) provides useful information and contact numbers.

Advice and practical tips from the [Alzheimer's Society](#) can be found in the links below:

- [Coronavirus: Supporting a person with dementia at home](#)
- [Coronavirus: Activity ideas for people living with dementia](#)
- [Coronavirus: Support for a person with dementia living alone](#)
- [Coronavirus: Supporting a person with dementia from a distance](#)
- [Coronavirus: Frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [Coronavirus: Other useful organisations and information](#)

If you'd like to connect and talk with other people affected by dementia, you can visit the Alzheimer's Society online community [Talking Point](#). If you are still feeling worried and want 1:1 support you can call the [Alzheimer's Society Helpline](#) on 0300 222 11 22.

You can also speak to a dementia specialist Admiral Nurse on [Dementia UK's Helpline](#) on 0800 888 6687.

The person I care for already has poor mental health; how can I support them through the additional challenges that the Coronavirus outbreak brings?

[COVID-19: guidance for the public on mental health and wellbeing](#) provides advice and information on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak. An [Easy Read Guide](#) is available.

If you support someone who has an existing mental health problem, then they may be finding the Coronavirus outbreak particularly challenging. MIND has published [comprehensive guidance](#) to support you. The government has also recently published

[Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of Coronavirus](#) which has additional advice for groups with specific mental health needs, including anxiety and dementia.

The person I care for has a learning disability; how can I support them through the additional challenges that the Coronavirus outbreak brings?

The person you support may be finding the Coronavirus outbreak stressful. They may be worried about changes that might happen because of it, including having to stay at home, or may be worried about themselves, you or wider family members getting ill.

Public Health England has published [easy read guidance](#) on Coronavirus which it might be a good idea to talk through. There is also other information available about Coronavirus from [Mencap](#) as well as helpful advice on how to [manage difficult feelings](#).

See recent government advice on [Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of Coronavirus](#) which has additional information to support those with a learning disability, including Autism.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF TOO – YOU MATTER!

The Coronavirus outbreak is going to have an impact on everyone's daily lives, as the government and the NHS take necessary steps to manage the outbreak, reduce transmission and treat those who need medical attention.

If you are providing informal (unpaid) care for the first time due to Coronavirus, support is available to you. It is recognised that that the COVID-19 outbreak means that family members and/or those close to them are, perhaps for the first time, taking on unpaid caring roles. In addition, social distancing requirements mean that many unpaid carers are providing higher levels of support than they normally would and, at the same time, access to respite care is limited. The government has published [guidance to support unpaid carers](#).

To make a **new carer referral** contact the Lincolnshire Customer Service Centre on 01522 782224. Their Carers Team will either be able to help you or put you in touch with [Carers FIRST](#) who offer support, advice and information to carers across Lincolnshire.

Having responsibility for the welfare of others during this time of uncertainty brings added pressure and worry and it's easy to forget your own health and wellbeing. Keeping yourself physically well and supporting your mental and emotional wellbeing is not only important for you, but it also helps the person you look after too.

[COVID-19: guidance for the public on mental health and wellbeing](#) provides advice and information on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak. An [Easy Read Guide](#) has recently been added.

There are simple things you can do that will help you to stay mentally and physically active during this time (even if you are having to self-isolate) such as:

- Try to stay connected and keep in touch with your friends and family, by telephone, email or social media. There are people you can speak to via [NHS recommended helplines](#) if you feel you need emotional support, or you could find support groups online to connect with.
- If you are able to go outside, consider walking or gardening (keeping the recommended 2 metres from others as outlined in the [social distancing guidance](#)). If you are staying at home, you can find free easy [10 minute work outs](#) from Public

Health England or other exercise videos to try at home on the [NHS Fitness Studio](#). Sport England also has good tips for keeping active at home.

- Spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to the radio or watching TV programmes
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise regularly, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs
- Keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can, or get outside into the garden. Spending time in green spaces can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing.
- Look after your sleep: feeling anxious or worried can make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how you feel mentally and physically, so try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment. The [Every Mind Matters sleep page](#) provides practical advice on how to improve your sleep.

If you are experiencing stress, feelings of anxiety or low mood, you can use the [NHS mental health and wellbeing advice website](#) for self-assessment, audio guides and practical tools. [Every Mind Matters](#) also provides simple tips and advice to start taking better care of your mental health. In addition, the Mental Health Foundation has published a useful guide on how to [look after your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak](#).

You can contact the [Lincolnshire Carers Service \(Carers FIRST\)](#) who will be able to provide a friendly, understanding and compassionate listening ear to help support you. You can contact them on 01522 782224, email them at hello@carersfirst.org.uk or click on the link above to find out further information. Please do not be afraid to ask for help or support, they are there to support you and you will not be judged.

Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) has set up a new helpline providing free and confidential emotional support across Lincolnshire. The helpline is available 24/7 to provide emotional support, advice and guidance if you are feeling low, anxious or stressed and think you might benefit from speaking to someone - Call 0800 001 4331

If you are still struggling after several weeks and it is affecting your daily life, please contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111.

BE PREPARED

Make sure that you have an up-to-date contingency plan in place in case you are unable to carry out your caring responsibilities and, if you can, make cover arrangements with trusted neighbours, friends or family members. See Carer's UK Advice on [creating a contingency plan](#)

Make sure your GP/medical professionals know that you are a carer or that the person you look after has a carer. Ask for this to be added to your GP's 'Carers Register'. For information on how to do this, please see Carer First's guidance on their [Let your GP know](#) webpage.

[Lincolnshire Carers Emergency Response Service](#) (CERS) can help if you are suddenly unable to provide care for someone. It is a free service. If an emergency occurs, it will provide emergency (time-limited) social care services for you loved one. The service can

help you to prepare an emergency care plan, which includes details of what you and the person you care for want to happen, if you are unable to care for them. See [here](#) for website information or email carersservice@lincolnshire.gov.uk or alternatively call them on 01522 782224.

For those living in residential care homes, the “Red Bag” initiative supports quick and effective transfer and treatment when being taken to and from hospital. The red bag contains general health information, including any existing medical conditions; medication information and personal belongings (such as clothes for day of discharge, glasses, hearing aid and dentures). The scheme supports patient centred care and improves efficiency in the admission and discharge process. Ask if the care provider has signed up to the scheme.

For those living at home, it is useful to prepare a single hospital bag for the person you look after. This should include their emergency contact, a list of the types of medication they take (including dose and frequency), any details of planned care appointments and things you would need for an overnight stay (snacks, pyjamas, toothbrush, medication etc). If they have an advanced care plan, please include that. You could also prepare one for yourself if you feel that you are at higher risk from coronavirus. [See the Gov.uk list of those who are at higher risk.](#)

Ensure to let your energy supplier know, if you haven't already, if the person you care for is vulnerable, of pensionable age, has a disability or long-term medical condition. Each energy supplier keeps a [Priority Services Register](#) of people who may need additional assistance and it's free to be added to the list. Gas and electricity suppliers have agreed an emergency package of measures to ensure vulnerable people do not get cut off amid a Coronavirus virus outbreak.

For those self-isolating from Coronavirus due to an age or an underlying health condition, or if you are identified as being in one of the high risk groups, Anglian Water encourage you to join their [Priority Services Register](#) part of their WaterCare services. See <http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/coronavirus> for further information.

If you are a working carer, consider speaking with your line manager (if you haven't already) so s/he has a better understanding of the present demands on you and can support and advise you if you need to take off from work. See the section below for support as a working carer.

GETTING SUPPORT IN WORK

What support is available if I am an employee with caring responsibilities?

Your employer will be keen to support those with caring responsibilities, both to protect your health and those you care for. Following government advice on Social Distancing, home working is advised for all those that can work from home. It is recognised that for many employees this is not possible or feasible due to their work role, but please speak with your employer regarding your caring responsibilities and any additional support or flexibility you may need at the present time.

Guidance for working carers is available from both local and national Carer organisations, see below for contact details.

What are the arrangements for employee carers needing to time off from work due to Coronavirus and will I be paid?

For employment and benefit advice, please see the Employment and Financial Support section of the [government advice on Coronavirus found here](#). They have published [Guidance for employees](#) which sets out what your rights are at work, what benefits you are entitled to and what further support is available.

There is also useful guidance on your rights as a working carer in the [Employers for Carers](#) digital resource, run by Carers UK. Carers UK have recently updated the website and now when you log on, you will see a 'COVID-19 Guidance' tab on the right-hand side toolbar. When you click on this link, it will take you through to various information, as well as [the government's latest guidance for employees](#). You will also find a useful frequently asked questions page, as well as a 'Wellbeing Action Plan' that Carers UK have created, with some tailored tips on keeping a positive frame of mind both for yourself as a carer and those you care for. To access the resources for free, simply log on to [carersdigital.org](#) and create an account, using Access Code DGTL1946.

If you have COVID-19 or are staying at home you are now able to [claim Universal Credit](#), and if required can access advance payments upfront without needing to attend a jobcentre.

What if I have lost my job, had my hours reduced or have been asked to take unpaid leave - can I claim benefits?

Your employer can ask you to stay at home or take unpaid leave if there's not enough work for you. The government has published [guidance to employers about furloughing through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#), which makes clear that employees who are unable to work because they have caring responsibilities resulting from COVID-19 can be furloughed (temporarily laid off work).

You might be able to get [Universal Credit](#) or '[new style](#)' [Jobseeker's Allowance](#) (or both) while you're laid off or on short-time. [Covid-19-guidance-for-employees](#) provides up-to-date government guidance for employees.

What if I have to take time off work?

If you have been advised to 'self-isolate' by NHS 111 or a medical professional, you must tell your employer as soon as possible. This does not need to be in writing. Your workplace's usual sick leave and pay entitlements will apply. The government has promised that Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be given from day one of self-isolation. You should check your contract of employment to see if your employer offers contractual sick pay on top. You may also be asked to certify your absence.

By law, for the first seven days of sickness, you are not required to provide medical evidence to your employer. However after seven days, it is at the discretion of your employer to decide what evidence, if any, they need from you. Due to the unusual nature of the situation, the government has strongly advised that employers use their discretion. For workers that are ineligible for SSP, support will be available through Universal Credit and contributory Employment and Support Allowance. See [Covid-19-guidance-for-employees](#) for further information.

Can I take time off to look after someone I care for if they have been affected by Coronavirus?

As an employee, you also have a statutory right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off from work to see to an emergency or unforeseen matter involving your partner, child, parent, grandchild, or someone who relies on you for care. There is no fixed amount of time you can

take off. The time off is unpaid unless your employer is willing to give paid time off as a contractual right. Also check your work policy on care leave.

See also government [Guidance for employees](#) which sets out what your rights are at work, what benefits you are entitled to and what further support is available.

My child has SEN/Has an Education, Health and Care plan ... how will the school/college closures affect me?

Following the recent [Guidance by the government on school closures](#) discuss with your employer the impact of any school/college closures on your working arrangements.

Schools, and all childcare providers, are required to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. Residential special schools and other educational settings are being supported to remain open, enabling children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) to continue their education. [Advice set out by Public Health England](#) as well as [Government guidance on Social Distancing in Education and Childcare settings](#) and [Guidance on isolation for residential educational settings](#) ensures that robust risk assessment and infection control measures are in place to keep your child safe if they do continue to go to school.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors. Speak with your employer and the school/college for further clarity and advice.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Both local and national organisations are responding proactively to the challenges that Coronavirus has brought, including issuing health-specific information, providing general wellbeing resources as well as 1:1 online and telephone/webchat support.

Local Sources of Support

Lincolnshire County Council has teamed up with [Carers UK](#) to support Lincolnshire carers by bringing together Carers UK's online resources and digital products with local information and support for carers onto a single webpage. To create an account and get free access to all the products and support resources visit [Carers Digital](#) and create a new account by using your free access code DGTL1946.

[Connect to Support Lincolnshire](#) is an online information and advice library, community directory and marketplace for adults in Lincolnshire. This website is intended for adults who want to find out about local groups, activities and services within the community; it also hosts the [Digital Resource for Carers](#) detailed above.

At a local level, **Carers FIRST** delivers the Lincolnshire Carers Service in partnership with the Lincolnshire County Council's Customer Service Centre and together they offer a wide range of services to carers across the county – they can be contacted [here](#).

LCC have set up a new Customer Service Centre (CSC) Coronavirus helpline which you should call if your formal care fails, or you are struggling and need advice. The CSC is a **non-medical** advice helpline to support those who are affected by the COVID 19 disruption. There is a single number - 01522 782189 - with 3 options. Option 1 is for information and advice including how to access support.

In addition, Lincolnshire County Council has set up a **Community Help webpage** where you can identify what support you require whilst you are self-isolating. Support may include shopping, dog walking or simply a friendly chat. Use the online form [Coronavirus support - request community help](#) or alternatively, call 01522 782189. Your request for support will be matched with local volunteers and community groups who are ready and willing to help.

Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) has set up a new helpline providing free and confidential emotional support across Lincolnshire. The helpline is available 24/7 to provide emotional support, advice and guidance if you are feeling low, anxious or stressed and think you might benefit from speaking to someone - Call 0800 001 4331

National support for carers

Nationally, [Carers UK](#) provides carers expert advice, information and support. They have put together some really useful frequently asked questions about Coronavirus [see here](#) as well as general information on Coronavirus found [here](#).

[NHS](#) has a list of all national telephone support and helplines for carers.

[Carers' Trust](#) charity work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone with carer responsibilities.

[Carers Direct \(NHS\)](#) can give information and advice on your caring role. You can talk to them about what options are available to you [using webchat](#) or [by email](#).

[Every Mind Matters](#) has released expert advice and top tips on how to look after your mental wellbeing if you need to stay at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. It also includes guidance if you're feeling worried or anxious about the outbreak.

If your feelings continue for a couple of weeks and are having a detrimental impact on your daily life, consider speaking to your GP or access free NHS psychological services (IAPT). [Find an IAPT service](#)

If you already have a mental health problem, you may find that the added stress of the current situation worsens your mental health - [comprehensive guidance provided by Mind](#) is available but your first point of contact should be your named mental health support worker/CPN.

If you support an older person [Age UK runs an advice line](#) that can put you in touch with local services that will be able to support you. Telephone 0800 678 1602 – lines are open every day from 8am-7pm.

If the person you support is living with dementia, the Alzheimer's Society have published [information on coronavirus for people affected by dementia](#). A range of information on information on dementia is also available from [Alzheimer's Research UK](#)
If you are still feeling worried and want more help you can call the [Alzheimer's Society Helpline](#) on 0300 222 11 22

If you require financial advice, including benefit advice, there are a number of organisations that can support and advise you including:

- [Citizens Advice \(Coronavirus benefit advice\)](#)
- [Entitled to](#)
- [Turn2Us](#)

Please remember, these are difficult and challenging times, you are not alone and support is available if you need it.