

# **COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Incident Management Advice for Unpaid Carers**

**Provided by Cumbria County Council's Public Health Team**

## **1. Introduction**

This guidance is for anyone providing unpaid care to a relative or friend in Cumbria. Unpaid carers provide incredible support to others and we want to make sure they are provided with information and advice to help them to continue to do this safely and confidently.

This guidance aims to provide you with advice on how to minimise the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19.

## **2. What is unpaid care?**

Unpaid care is care that is delivered by a family member or friend for those who due to a lifelong condition, illness, disability, serious injury, a mental health condition or an addiction, cannot cope without their support.

Unpaid care includes a range of activities including delivering personal care such as washing, dressing and feeding as well as help with chores such as washing, cooking, shopping and cleaning.

## **3. I provide care to someone I live with, do I need to do anything differently because of COVID-19?**

As long as no one in your household has symptoms of COVID-19, continue to provide care as you have been.

Cleaning your hands frequently throughout the day by washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser will help protect you and the people you live with. This step is one of the most effective ways of reducing the risk of infection for you and other people.

If you do not have one already, you should develop an emergency 'back-up' plan for what would happen if you became ill (with COVID-19 or another illness) and could not provide the care you normally do. See appendix 1 for more information on developing an emergency plan.

If the person you care for develops symptoms of COVID-19, see sections 5-10 for more information.

If you do develop symptoms of COVID-19 (a high temperature, new continuous cough or loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste), see section 4 for more information.

#### **4. I am an unpaid carer – what should I do if I develop symptoms of COVID-19?**

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are a fever (temperature of 37.8°C or above), new continuous cough or a change to/loss of your sense of taste or smell.

If you are an unpaid carer providing essential care, it is vital you stop if you have symptoms of COVID-19 and seek to make alternative arrangements for the care of the person you care for. Alternative arrangements may include asking family or friends to offer extra support whilst you are unwell.

You should arrange to get tested as soon as possible after developing symptoms. Unpaid carers experiencing COVID-19 symptoms are a priority for testing as they are recognised as essential workers. You can arrange a test by calling 119 or via the [NHS website](#).

Follow the advice in the Government's '[Stay at Home](#)' [guidance](#).

If you live with the person you care for and you have symptoms (or have had symptoms within the past 10 days) keep a distance of 2 metres (3 steps) away from them. Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water, or use hand sanitiser. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it in a bin straight away. Always wash your hands afterwards. Clean (or ask someone else to clean) any hard surfaces in shared areas of your home regularly with a household cleaner.

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.

You should stay at home for 10 days from the time you develop symptoms. Anyone else in your household should stay at home for 14 days from the time you develop symptoms. If during this time you get tested and receive a negative test result, you can start providing essential care again. You and your household can also stop isolating.

If you need medical advice about your symptoms you can use the [NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#)

#### **5. What if I provide unpaid care to a person in a different household?**

People who provide unpaid care to an individual in another household are able to continue to do so regardless of any COVID-19 lockdown arrangements that may be in place nationally or locally. It is crucial that this care is essential care only. This would include things like preparing meals and personal care such as washing and dressing.

## **Key principles of infection prevention control for carers delivering care in another household during COVID-19**

- All unpaid carers should maintain two metre social distancing when visiting the home of the person receiving care. They should also maintain 2 metre social distancing from anyone else who lives in the household with the person receiving care.
- A face covering should be worn at all times by the unpaid carer
- It is important that while maintaining the two metre social distancing that you also do the following to prevent the spread of the virus:
  - wash your hands when you arrive and often, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser
  - cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
  - put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
  - do not visit or provide care if you are unwell and make alternative arrangements for their care. See section 4 for more information on what to do if you develop symptoms

### **6. I provide hands-on care for someone in a different household and cannot maintain a 2 metre distance. What should I do?**

If you are unable to maintain a 2 metre (3 step) distance while undertaking your caring role for someone outside your own household, including those in your support bubble (for example, during the delivery of personal care such as showering or bathing) there are additional steps you need to take to protect you and them.

You should wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when you are close to the person you are providing care to. The following items should be worn:

- **Disposable gloves**
- **Disposable plastic apron**
- **Fluid-repellent (Type IIR) surgical mask**

You may also need to wear eye protection if there is a risk of droplets or secretions from the client's mouth, nose, lungs or from body fluids reaching your eyes (e.g. caring for someone who is repeatedly coughing).

See section 11 for more information about PPE.

If in doubt about PPE or you need help obtaining PPE, contact the Cumbria County Council's adult social care team for your area (see appendix 2 for contact details).

## **7. What should I do if the person I care for develops symptoms of COVID-19?**

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are a fever (temperature of 37.8°C or above), new continuous cough or a change to/loss of your sense of taste or smell.

You should wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when you are close to the person providing care. The following items should be worn:

- **Disposable gloves**
- **Disposable plastic apron**
- **Fluid-repellent (Type IIR) surgical mask**

You may also need to wear eye protection if there is a risk of droplets or secretions from the client's mouth, nose, lungs or from body fluids reaching your eyes (e.g. caring for someone who is repeatedly coughing).

See section 11 for more information about PPE.

You should arrange to get the person you care for tested as soon as possible after they develop symptoms. You can do this by calling 119 or online via the [NHS website](#)

## **8. The person you care for has symptoms, and you are not in a clinically 'vulnerable group' or clinically 'extremely vulnerable group' with increased risk of severe illness**

You can continue to provide care for someone you live with, or in another household if they have symptoms. If the person lives in another household, you should only continue to provide care if it is essential and there is no-one else in their household who can do this.

You should wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when you are close to the person you are providing care to. The following items should be worn:

- **Disposable gloves**
- **Disposable plastic apron**
- **Fluid-repellent (Type IIR) surgical mask**

You may also need to wear eye protection if there is a risk of droplets or secretions from the client's mouth, nose, lungs or from body fluids reaching your eyes (e.g. caring for someone who is repeatedly coughing).

See section 11 for more information about PPE.

The person you care for should follow the [Stay at home guidance](#) and stay at home for 7 days from when their symptoms started. Anyone else in their household should stay at home for 14 days from the day the person developed symptoms. If during this

time the person you care for gets tested and receives a negative test result, they and their household no longer need to stay at home.

Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water, or use hand sanitiser. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it in a bin straight away. Always wash your hands afterwards. Clean (or ask someone else to clean) any hard surfaces in shared areas of your home regularly with a household cleaner.

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.

You should arrange to get the person you care for tested as soon as possible after they develop symptoms. You can do this by calling 119 or online via the [NHS website](#)

If you need medical advice about the symptoms of a person you care for you can use the [NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#)

## **9. The person you care for has symptoms and you are in a clinically 'vulnerable group'**

You should review the [Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable adults](#) for information about those people who are considered at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19). If you are within this group, you should be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures set out in the guidance.

However, we appreciate this may not be easy to achieve where you provide close contact care for a person such as washing and bathing.

Where possible ask friends and family who can support you in providing care. You should distance yourself from the person you care for as much as possible and follow the guidance below. If you require further assistance contact Carers Support Cumbria on 08443 843230 or your local Adult Social Care Office (see appendix 2 for contact details).

The person you care for should follow the [Stay at home guidance](#) and stay at home for 10 days from when their symptoms started or longer if they continue to have a temperature, in this case they should seek GP advice. Anyone else in their household should stay at home for 14 days from the day the person developed symptoms, if they become symptomatic during this time they should request a test and start 10 day isolation from the onset of their symptoms. If during this time the person you care for gets tested and receives a negative test result, they and their household no longer need to stay at home.

Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water, or use hand sanitiser. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it in a bin straight away. Always wash your hands afterwards. Clean (or ask someone else to clean) any hard surfaces in shared areas of your home regularly with a household cleaner.

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 need medical advice about the symptoms of a person you care for you can use the [NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#)

If the person you care for is in another household, you should wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when you are close to the person you are providing care to. The following items should be worn:

- **Disposable gloves**
- **Disposable plastic apron**
- **Fluid-repellent (Type IIR) surgical mask**

You may also need to wear eye protection if there is a risk of droplets or secretions from the client's mouth, nose, lungs or from body fluids reaching your eyes (e.g. caring for someone who is repeatedly coughing).

See section 11 for more information about PPE.

## **10. The person you care for has symptoms and you are in a clinically 'extremely vulnerable group'**

As per the [guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable groups](#), you should strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Where possible, ask friends and family who can support you in providing care for their help. You should distance yourself from the person you care for as much as possible and follow the guidance below. If you require further assistance contact Carers Support Cumbria on 08443 843230 or your local Adult Social Care Office (see appendix 2 for contact details).

Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water, or use hand sanitiser. Cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it in a bin straight away. Always wash your hands afterwards. Clean (or ask someone else to clean) any hard surfaces in shared areas of your home regularly with a household cleaner.

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 need medical advice about the symptoms of a person you care for you can use the [NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#)

## **11. More information about Personal Protective Equipment**

If you require the use of PPE, you should practice donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off) any equipment. There are [posters to help with this](#).

Always wash your hands before and after removing PPE.

If you need to transport PPE in your own car, ensure you have enough supplies and that equipment is kept in a clean, dry area. Keep PPE in its packaging until required for use.

You should put on your PPE before entering the home of the person you are caring for and remove it before leaving. It is recommended that used PPE should be double-bagged and that you should request that it be left at the home of the person you are caring for segregated from normal waste for 72 hours before being safely disposed of with other household waste.

### **Disposable gloves**

If gloves are required, ensure you put on a fresh pair before you enter the house of the person you are caring for. It is recommended you wash your hands immediately before and after wearing gloves.

### **Disposable apron**

Wear a fresh apron each time you visit the home of the person you are caring for. Put it on before entering the house. It is not necessary to wear an apron that protects your sleeves, but you should clean your forearms when you clean your hands.

### **Type IIR Fluid repellent surgical face mask**

Fluid-repellent surgical masks can be used continuously for between 4-6 hours, unless you need to remove the mask from your face (e.g. to drink, eat, take a break from duties).

Do not take the mask off, or lower it from your face. You should not touch your face mask.

The mask is worn to protect you. You should remove and dispose of the mask if it becomes damaged, soiled, damp, or uncomfortable to use.

### **Eye/Face protection**

Eye/Face protection such as goggles or a visor may be needed where there is a risk of droplets or secretions from the person's mouth, nose, lungs or from body fluids reaching the eyes (e.g. if there is a risk of being coughed on).

Eye/Face protection can be used continuously, unless you need to remove the eye/face protection from your face (e.g. to take a break from duties). Remember to wash your hands immediately after removing PPE, including goggles or visors.

If you require further assistance with PPE contact Carers Support Cumbria on 08443 843230 or your local Adult Social Care Office (see appendix 2 for contact details).

## **Appendix 1: Developing an emergency plan**

The Government are advising all carers to create an emergency plan with the person they care for, to use in circumstances where help from other people to deliver care may be needed. Depending on the circumstances, this could be help from family or friends, or a care provider.

In order to create an emergency plan that fits the needs of the person you care for, you will need to set out:

- the name and address and any other contact details of the person you look after
- who you and the person you look after would like to be contacted in an emergency
- details of any medication the person you look after is taking
- details of any ongoing treatment they need
- details of any medical appointments they need to keep

You should also ensure that it is in a format that can readily be shared with other people who will need to discuss the plan with the person you care for.

Further information can be found at [Carers UK](#).

You may be able to arrange help and support from family and friends, but it can be reassuring to have the involvement of your local authority or [healthcare provider](#) in case informal arrangements fall through. It may also be helpful to contact your local carers support organisation who can help with contingency planning. You can find out about local carer organisations at [Carers UK](#).

You can also find information out about local services on the [Carers Trust website](#).

## **Appendix 2: Useful Contacts**

Carers Support Cumbria

Telephone: 08443 843230

Website: <https://www.carerssupportcumbria.co.uk/>

### **Adult Social Care**

Please contact your local Adult Social Care office at the following times:

Monday to Thursday: 9am to 5pm, Friday: 9am to 4.30pm

At all other times (including bank holidays) please contact the Emergency Duty Team on 01228 526690.

### **Allerdale**

West Cumbria House, Jubilee Road, Lillyhall, Workington, CA14 4HB

Telephone: 0300 303 3589

Email: [workingtonssd@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:workingtonssd@cumbria.gov.uk)

### **Barrow in Furness**

4th Floor, Craven House, Michaelson Road, Barrow in Furness, LA14 1FD

Telephone: 0300 303 2704

Fax: 01229 404054

Email: [barrowssd@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:barrowssd@cumbria.gov.uk)

### **Carlisle**

3rd Floor, Cumbria House, 117 Botchergate, Carlisle, CA1 1RD

Telephone: 0300 303 3249

Fax: 01228 226655

Email: [carlisslessd@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:carlisslessd@cumbria.gov.uk)

### **Copeland**

Blencathra House, Tangier Street, Whitehaven, CA28 7UW

Telephone: 0300 303 3589

Fax: 01946 506433

Email: [whitehavenssd@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:whitehavenssd@cumbria.gov.uk)

### **Eden**

Adult Social Care, PO Box 224, Penrith, CA11 1BP

Telephone: 0300 303 3249

Fax: 01768 812262

Email: [penrithssd@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:penrithssd@cumbria.gov.uk)

### **South Lakes**

County Offices, Kendal, LA9 4RQ

Telephone: 0300 303 2704

Fax: 01539 713354

Email: [kendalssd@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:kendalssd@cumbria.gov.uk)