

## COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to circulate within communities and within care homes across Cumberland. The UKHSA has confirmed that the current variant circulating is BA.2.86. While the available data is limited, there is currently no evidence to suggest that the BA.2.86 infection is more likely to make people seriously ill than previous variants. Vaccination remains the primary protection measure against COVID-19.

### Symptoms of COVID-19

COVID-19 symptoms can include:

- a high temperature or shivering (chills) – a high temperature means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not necessarily need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- shortness of breath
- feeling tired or exhausted
- an aching body
- a headache
- a sore throat
- a blocked or runny nose
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea
- feeling sick or being sick

The symptoms are very similar to symptoms of other illnesses, such as colds and flu.

Staff experiencing any of the symptoms above do not have to take an LFD test. However, they are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people. If staff have respiratory symptoms and have taken an LFD test of their own accord and have a positive result, they should stay away from the workplace for 5 days. They do not need to take an LFD test to return to work. Staff should only return to work if they do not have a temperature and they feel well enough to return to work.

Care home residents who have symptoms of a respiratory infection and who have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to do their usual activities are advised to avoid contact with other people. They should be supported to stay away from others until they no longer have a high temperature or no longer feel unwell. These residents are not required to take an LFD test if they are symptomatic.

If 2 or more linked care home residents develop symptoms of a respiratory infection within 14 days of each other, the first 5 residents with symptoms should take a COVID-19 LFD test, whether or not they are [eligible for COVID-19 treatments](#).

Individuals who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments and who have [symptoms of a respiratory infection](#) should take an LFD test immediately and follow the [guidance for people who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments](#).

## **Vaccination**

Vaccination remains a primary protection measure against both COVID-19 and flu, helping to reduce the risk of serious illness, hospitalisation, and death.

The NHS autumn to winter vaccination programme began on 11 September 2023 in care homes for older residents.

Frontline health and social care staff are eligible for Covid-19 and flu vaccinations. You can make an appointment through the national booking service, use the NHS App or phone 119.

It is essential that all health and social care workers have the best protection against flu and COVID-19 as winter approaches. The flu vaccination and the COVID-19 vaccination remain the best defences we have against both viruses.

**As part of the care settings winter preparedness strategy, managers of care settings should ensure they have a sufficient supply of PPE and LFD tests and make sure these are in date. Regular date checks on current supplies are advised.**

**Any out-of-date LFD tests and PPE should be disposed of straight away. They can be disposed of in general waste. Anything that can be recycled such as cardboard boxes should be recycled.**

## **Treatment for Covid-19**

The NHS does offer COVID-19 treatment for those who are at high risk of becoming seriously ill. Please click the link [Treatments for COVID-19 - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) to find out more information on who is eligible for treatment, and how to access it.

It is advisable to know in advance which residents are eligible for treatment.

## IPC Advice, Support, Information & Resources:

- Advice, support, and information for care home staff on the management of all infections: E.g., Covid 19; MRSA; CDI; *E. coli*; Scabies
- Advice & support to undertake a range of care home IPC audits to national standard.
- Support safe hospital discharge for residents who have been treated for an infection.
- IPC annual training programme (2023/24) & bespoke IPC courses for care home managers, clinical staff, IPC link champions, care and domestic staff.
- Advice & support on new builds & extensions to meet IPC specifications.

A wide range of excellent **IPC policies and procedures** are available to help you to manage infections in your care homes. Please follow the link below: [Care Services Cumberland - Policies and Procedures | Cumbria County Council](#)

## Training Dates for Your Diary

### November

- Infection prevention and control training for residential care settings 2023  
Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 10am-12.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2023  
Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 10am – 11.30am [Click here to join the meeting](#)

### December

- Infection prevention and control training for residential care settings 2023  
Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2pm – 4.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2023  
Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 1pm- 2.30 pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)

### Webinars

### November

- *Prevention* and management of gastrointestinal infections 14<sup>th</sup> November 2pm-3.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)