



Department of Health & Social Care

# Coronavirus

## Social care update



### A message from the Health and Social Care Secretary

To my brilliant colleagues in social care,

The last few weeks have been difficult for all of us. I am acutely conscious that you, along with colleagues across the health and social care system, are on the front line caring for and supporting people in incredibly challenging circumstances. Many of the people you care for will be in groups that are at higher risk from Covid-19 and I know that you will have naturally felt concerned for them. At the same time, you will have been grappling with the same issues we all face: how we can best keep ourselves and our loved ones healthy, juggling our own personal caring responsibilities, and looking out for our friends, our neighbours and communities.



My main message to you is simple: thank you.

Thank you for going the extra mile to make sure the people who rely on you are supported. Thank you in advance for the difficult decisions you will have to make that will keep as many people as possible safe. Thank you for taking on extra shifts to cover for those who need to isolate or have their own caring responsibilities. Thank you for doing the right thing by isolating if you or somebody you live with has symptoms. Thank you for everything you are doing this week, next week and in the months to come.

We face more difficult times ahead and I know you will have been personally impacted by the measures we have had to take to reduce the spread of Covid-19. Whilst many people are now staying at home, I know that is not an option for most of you as your work, caring for others, cannot be done from home. We will do all we can to make your lives easier during this period, including, for example, making parking on council owned on-street spaces and car parks free for those who work in social care.

The Government is releasing advice and information updates daily and we are working round the clock to make sure you and your employer have the information, equipment and resources you need. For those of you that use Twitter, please follow the Department for Health and Social Care (@DHSCgovuk) for the latest information. We will also make it available through other channels. I also want to reiterate what the Chancellor has said: we are committed to doing whatever is needed; that promise applies just as much to social care as it does for the NHS.

Thank you again for everything you do.

- Matt Hancock, Health and Social Care Secretary

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## Government to provide free car parking for NHS and social care staff

Local councils will offer free car parking to all social care staff and NHS workers during the coronavirus outbreak. The government will also cover the costs of providing free car parking to NHS staff working in hospitals during this time.

The changes will apply to all on-street parking and open, council-run car parks including pay and display and will suspend charges for health workers, social care workers and NHS volunteers.

Councils will set up local arrangements so NHS and care workers and volunteers can provide suitable evidence that they can display in their windscreen to ensure they avoid parking tickets.

This will ensure that in the face of this global pandemic, essential social care and NHS staff are able to carry out their vital work without worrying about paying for car parking.

[Find out more about free parking for social care staff](#)

**Coronavirus**  
**Message the GOV.UK**  
**Coronavirus Information Service**

Message on WhatsApp



## Government launches Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp

Launched this week, the GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service is an automated 'chatbot' service for the British public to get answers from the Government to the most common questions about Coronavirus. The service will provide information on a range of topics including Coronavirus prevention, common symptoms, the latest number of cases in the UK, advice on staying at home, when to travel and myth busting. The service will also allow the Government to send urgent messages to all users who opt in.

This will provide another route to information for the British public and take some of the burden away from care services, unpaid carers and NHS services.

To use the free GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp, simply add 07860 064422 to your phone contacts and message the word 'hi' in a WhatsApp text to get started.

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## Call for volunteer army

The NHS is calling for volunteers to help vulnerable people stay safe and well at home. Working with the Royal Voluntary Service and the GoodSAM app - a digital tool to help people offer their services to people in need – we are recruiting people who are feeling well to help with simple but crucial tasks that can help support and free up social care and NHS workers.

Social care providers, as well as GPs, doctors, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals will be able to request help for their at-risk patients via a call centre run by the RVS. Individuals needing help will then be matched with volunteers living near them.

Members of the public can sign up quickly and easily at [goodsamapp.org/NHS](https://goodsamapp.org/NHS) to become NHS Volunteer Responders. They can then be called on to do simple but vital tasks such as delivering medicines from pharmacies, driving patients to and from hospital appointments, or making regular phone calls to check on people self-isolating at home.

[Find out how to request volunteer support for your patients](#)

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## Guidance for the care sector

We have published guidance on responding to COVID-19 for the care home, home care, and supported living sectors. The aim of our guidance is to help those delivering care to do so appropriately, safely and confidently throughout the pandemic. Links to relevant published guidance can be found below.

[£2.9 billion funding to strengthen care for the vulnerable](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): hospital discharge service requirements](#)

[Procurement Policy Note 02/20: Supplier relief due to COVID-19](#)

[Ethical Framework for Adult Social Care](#)

[COVID 19: guidance on home care provision](#)

[COVID-19: guidance for supported living provision](#)

[COVID-19: guidance on residential care provision](#)

[Guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable persons from COVID-19](#)

[COVID 19 Hospital discharge service requirements](#)

[COVID 19 guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)

You can continue to get up-to-date general information and advice on the links below:

- [GOV.UK](#)
- [Health Protection Scotland](#)
- [Public Health Wales](#)



## School closures

Those essential to the social care sector's response to the pandemic, including social workers, care workers, personal assistants, those in supporting roles like catering, cleaning, and the sector's supply chain are included in the [list of the key workers published by the government](#).

This means their children will be able to access school provision if they are unable to be safely cared for at home.

[Find out about the provision for children of key workers](#)

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This communication has been sent by the Care Quality Commission on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care.