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Guidance and good practice

Changes to Autumn/Winter 2023/24 vaccination programme

A new COVID-19 variant, BA 2.86, has been identified in a number of countries including the UK. There is currently limited information on the severity of this variant, and as global testing has reduced, it may take several weeks to months to determine how it compares to other circulating variants.

As a precaution, UKHSA have advised that the vaccination programme be brought forward to enable as many people as possible to be vaccinated by the end of October. This intervention will have the greatest public health impact. In line with

public health advice, wherever possible, flu and COVID-19 vaccines should be administered at the same time.

Care home vaccination will start from 11 September 2023, aiming to be completed by 22 October 2023. Both residents and staff will be eligible for the vaccines and should be encouraged to take up this offer to protect themselves and their residents. GP practices will contact care homes to confirm details and dates.

The national booking system for other eligible cohorts, including social care workers, will open from 18 September.

Please start to prepare consent forms now:

- If a resident has capacity, they need to complete the following form: [COVID-19 vaccination consent form – Care Home Resident \(able to consent for themselves\)](#)
- If a resident does not have capacity, they need to complete one of the following forms: [COVID-19 vaccination relative's view form – For a Relative of a Care Home Resident unable to consent for themselves](#) or [COVID-19 vaccination consent form – For the Attorney of a Care Home Resident unable to consent for themselves](#)
- Consent remains in place unless the individual who gave it withdraws it. If any new, relevant information arises between the time consent was given and when the immunisation is offered, it may be necessary to inform the patient and for them to re-confirm their consent.

[Existing IPC measures remain important.](#)

For any enquiries, please contact healthprotection@leics.gov.uk

COVID-19 treatments for people at higher risk of severe outcomes

There are individuals who are at a higher risk of becoming severely unwell, or may die, if they are infected with COVID-19 ([highest-risk patients eligible for new COVID-19 treatments.](#)) These people may be eligible for antiviral medication (see [Who can have COVID-19 treatment](#) for eligibility criteria.)

Previously, people who were 'potentially' eligible for COVID-19 treatment would have been identified by their NHS medical records and may have received a letter explaining how to access specific treatments for COVID-19. However, from late August, people will not be identified this way.

If a person is thought to be in the higher risk group, and are symptomatic of COVID-19, follow these steps:

- Take a lateral flow device (LFD) test as soon as possible.
 - a. If the test result is negative, test daily for a further 2 days (3 days in total).

- b. If the test result is positive, contact GP service during normal opening hours or NHS 111 out-of-hours and at weekends.
- Stay away from others for a minimum of 5 days after taking the LFD.
 - Can have 1 visitor at a time with appropriate IPC measures in place.
 - Can go into an outdoor space within care home grounds (avoiding contact with other residents).
 - Avoid contact with other people who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments for 10 days after a positive test.
 - After 5 days (on day 6), if they feel well and do not have a high temperature, can return to normal activities.

Starting antiviral treatment early lowers the risk of harmful outcomes. They are most effective if provided within 5 days of symptoms starting.

Antiviral medications help the body's natural defence (immune) system by helping to stop the virus multiplying. This reduces the amount of virus in the body, thus easing symptoms, and can aid recovery.

Heat health

At the time of writing, an amber heat health alert was in place. Please see [Provider News 30](#) for more details of the alert system, how to stay up to date, and measures that you should take.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

You will be aware that some schools throughout the country have been temporarily closed because of evidence about unsafe concrete known as Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) used in construction from the mid-1930s to the 1990s.

Whilst the focus is currently on its use in public buildings, it is important that adult social care providers undertake their own risk assessments and any follow up action required relating to the possible presence of RAAC within their buildings, or buildings that they use.

Risk assessment will need to be carried out by a structural engineer with reference to [RAAC investigation and assessment guidance](#) produced by the Institution of Structural Engineers. If you have any concerns following such an assessment, please contact the adult social care provider enquiry line on enquirylinequality&contracts@leics.gov.uk

Community Safety team home fire safety checks

The Community Safety team, in collaboration with partners, provides a crucial service known as the Face-to-Face Home Fire Safety Check. This service is designed to ensure that your home is well-prepared to handle any potential fire hazards. Here's what you need to know about it:

Home fire safety check

The Home Fire Safety Check is a comprehensive examination of your home's safety preparedness. It is carried out by the Community Safety team and their partners, taking approximately 30 minutes of your time. During this visit, the team evaluates various aspects of your home's fire safety measures.

Smoke alarms installation

As part of the Home Fire Safety Check, the team may install smoke alarms if necessary. These alarms are critical for early fire detection, providing you and your family with valuable seconds to evacuate safely. However, please note that smoke alarms are not automatically provided but are fitted based on the team's assessment of your home's fire risk.

Targeted visits for higher fire risk areas

The Community Safety team focuses their efforts on areas where the risk of fire is higher. To ensure that their resources are used efficiently, they rely on the information provided in the application process. It is essential to complete the application form as thoroughly and accurately as possible. Your input helps them determine the level of risk and prioritize their visits accordingly.

How to request a home fire safety check

If you're interested in benefiting from the Community Safety team's services, it's easy to request a Home Fire Safety Check. Simply follow these steps:

- Visit www.leics-fire.gov.uk and request a Home Fire Safety Check via the Contact Us tab.
- Fill out the application form, providing accurate information about your home and specific safety concerns.
- Wait for the team to review your application and schedule a visit at your convenience.
- During the visit, the team will conduct a thorough assessment of your home's fire safety and provide recommendations or install smoke alarms as needed.
- Be prepared to take proactive steps to maintain and enhance your home's safety based on their suggestions.

By taking advantage of the services offered by the Community Safety team, you can play an active role in creating a safer living environment for you and your loved ones. Don't hesitate to reach out and make use of their expertise to protect what matters most—your home and your family.

Please promote this service to relevant people supported by you.

IPC audits – one year on

The Community Infection Prevention and Control Service (CIPCS) have been offering to undertake a comprehensive IPC audit in care homes for the last year

since piloting the new IPC audit tool last summer. Only a couple of care homes across County & Rutland have declined this offer. Firstly, the service would like to thank all care providers for their co-operation, participation, and patience during this transition period. In the past year, the service has not only reviewed the audit tool itself after feedback from providers, service users and colleagues, but also adapted how the audit is undertaken to acknowledge that each care setting is unique.

This new audit process and the accompanying visit report letters have been positively welcomed by our care providers, with many reporting back that it is now much easier to understand and implement recommendations made from the audits. The service is encouraged to see that most care home providers across County & Rutland have scored over 90% in their IPC audit. Where it is identified that improvements are required in either environmental cleanliness, IPC practice and/or governance, the service proactively supports providers to make any necessary changes, including signposting to or providing resources, and face to face training. As the service starts the second round of yearly audits, providers are now able to evidence how they have embedded and sustained improvements since their first audit.

A recent example is a care home in the County that only scored 72% in their first audit last year. With the support of CIPCS, including training and review visits to monitor progress, the care home has worked incredibly hard to improve staff knowledge and IPC practice, environmental cleanliness, and internal governance processes. Last month the CIPCS reaudited the home who scored an amazing 99% in their audit. This is a fantastic transformation and CIPCS would like to congratulate them for their hard work and looks forward to seeing other similar success stories in the future.

Language is important

The Mind Your Language campaign, led by self-advocates, supported by Learning Disability England, reminds people of the importance of always using words and phrases which show respect for individuals and their lives. This [film](#) explains what their campaign wants to see change in support providers, and how we should challenge people when they use language that labels or separates people.

Threats to email and network security

Local Authorities are a target for fraudsters and [St Helens Council was recently hit by a suspected cyber-attack](#).

It's extremely important that you consider each email you receive and decide if it's genuine or a potential malware threat. These can either be seeking to get your username and password to gain access to the main network or emails with attachments that contain malware. Protections are in place, but staff being careful is the most vital component in us being able to prevent any attacks.

The Welsh Government has produced a short '[cyber resilience: a social care impact video](#)' that shows exactly why you and other colleagues are critical to maintaining the security of our network and what can happen if an organisation is compromised.

Better Security, Better Care

The [Better Security, Better Care programme](#) is a national and local support programme to help adult social care providers to store and share information safely. It covers paper and digital records and focuses on helping care providers to complete the Data Security and Protection Toolkit – the annual, online self-assessment.

All adult social care providers, including services like day services which are not registered with CQC, can access national support from the programme in order to complete the [Data Security and Protection Toolkit](#).

You may find the following useful:

- Digital Social Care has a guide on [how to register on the DSPT](#) and '[start here](#)' [webinars](#) to help you prepare for registering on, and completing, the Toolkit. No technical knowledge is needed.
- [DSPT helpline](#)
- [Toolkit help section](#) including a quick start guide and 'big picture' guides, and frequently asked questions
- [Comprehensive guidance for social care](#) on how to complete the toolkit
- Off the shelf 'template' [policies](#), [guidance](#) for providers' staff and [advice](#) on how to document data processing

Learning and development opportunities

Oliver McGowan mandatory training on learning disability and autism

The [Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism](#) is named after Oliver McGowan, whose death shone a light on the need for health and social care staff to have better training.

As explained in [Provider News 13](#), The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced a requirement that regulated service providers must ensure their staff receive learning disability and autism training appropriate to their role.

The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism is the standardised training that was developed for this purpose and is the government's preferred and recommended training for health and social care staff.

Together we can prevent the many avoidable deaths like Oliver's from happening again. See a [comprehensive guide to the training](#).

LLR Festival of Practice

Following the success of the previous LLR Festival of Practice events in 2019 & 2021, the LLR Festival of Practice Team are extending an invitation to join this year's event.

This year is a 'hybrid' model, with live face to face and virtual sessions across the week commencing 2 October 2023 with this year's theme being equality, diversity and inclusion.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion are central to effective and meaningful practice, and the team are looking forward to exploring these themes and learning together across child, family and adult services in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

The invitation to join the event is also being extended to local people drawing on support and carers, as well as multi-agency partners.

Full details of how to book on Eventbrite are on the last page of [the programme](#).

This year bookings are on a first come first served basis, so early registration is essential.

Managing deterioration – training and useful resources

Training in managing deterioration in care homes is available on [Tuesday 26 September 2023 at 14.00-15.45](#).

Access 'React to' guides here:

- [React to Deterioration](#)
- [React to Frailty](#)
- [React to Quality Improvement](#)

Other useful resources are:

- [Using SBARD in Care Homes - YouTube](#)
- [Dying Matters leaflets](#) focusing on having discussions and planning ahead
- Learn about [personalised care training](#)
- [Universal Principles for Advance Care Planning \(ACP\)](#)
- Northern Cancer Alliance - ['Your life, your choice' leaflet](#)
- [Skills for care advance care planning](#)

STOMP – online workshop

LPT is holding an online workshop on Tuesday 19 September, 10.00-12.00, to talk to people with a learning disability and/or are autistic, or those who support someone who does, about stopping over-medication for this group of individuals.

The workshop will cover how to

- Find out what to expect when medication is reviewed
- Talk to health professionals about medication
- Ask any questions about stopping or changing medication
- Talk about any worries you have about medicines

Email lpt.pcln@nhs.net to find out more or book to attend.

Data tracking

Capacity tracker reporting window

A reminder that Section 277A of the Health and Care Act 2022 enables the Secretary of State to require regulated providers of adult social care to provide information relating to:

- themselves
- their activities in connection with provision of adult social care in England
- persons to whom they have provided such care

The Adult Social Care Information (Enforcement) Regulations 2022 came into force on 1 December 2022. It requires all adult social care providers, regulated by the CQC, to update the mandated collection in [the Capacity Tracker](#).

The reporting windows are between the 8th & 14th day of each month - or next working day if the 14th is a weekend or public holiday.

See:

- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Provider training and awareness sessions](#)

As explained in [Provider News 32](#), DHSC has offered support and advice to providers who have not supplied the information required, and have advised that have now moved to [enforcement action](#).

DHSC and Leicestershire County Council are extremely keen that providers do not face enforcement action, and you are therefore strongly encouraged to complete the tracker as per the requirement by the deadline each month.

Health and wellbeing

‘Your menopause’ survey

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland NHS Talking Therapies is currently planning a service to support people experiencing physical and emotional difficulties in the context of the menopause. They want to make sure that they design this service to support the true needs of individuals experiencing the menopause.

Your responses to a survey will ensure that we design the service to deliver meaningful and practical support. You don't have to answer all the questions, but any that you can will be very appreciated.

All responses are anonymous and they will not see or collect any contact details.

[Your personal experience of the Menopause: survey](#)

Consultations and research

Call for evidence - immigration functions and support to the social care sector

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration has launched [a call for evidence to assess the extent to which the Home Office's immigration functions support the social care sector](#).

For this latest inspection, the Chief Inspector would be particularly interested to hear from those with knowledge and experience regarding:

- the effectiveness and efficiency of the [health and care worker visa route](#)
- the extent and quality of communication and engagement between the Home Office and the social care sector
- the current suitability of the Home Office's licencing system for health and care worker visa sponsorship
- the effectiveness of the Home Office's compliance requirements on sponsors, including how these safeguard employees from exploitation
- the Home Office's progress towards delivery of their transformation plan, '[The UK's Points-Based Immigration System Sponsorship Roadmap](#)' and the effectiveness of any implemented changes

The Chief Inspector is inviting anyone with knowledge and experience of this area to provide evidence for the inspection. The call for evidence will close on 11 September 2023.

Awards

Care Professional of the Year Awards – nominations deadline 1 October!

Every year, the [Care Professional of the Year Awards](#) look to recognise the work of your staff and colleagues. And what shows them more, how deeply valued and appreciated they are than a nomination for an award! Nominating is free – so what better way to boost your teams morale, support retention and promote your setting in the wider community than having a list of nominations to your setting's name?

This year there are 22 awards up for grabs - [discover more about each category and its criteria](#).

Now you are ready to nominate, and it has never been easier! Applications are online and straight forward. All you will need to provide are contact details for yourself and the nominee, tick the box for the award you are nominating for and provide a supporting statement. Your statement should include the reasons why you think the individual should win the award. It is important to make sure your statement stands out from the crowd – it is going to be up against a lot of other great nominations. Think of examples that demonstrate the impact that the individual has

had in your setting, and with those they support and work with. Our panel of judges will be looking for those personal accounts and stories.

Remember all nominations are confidential – while we will notify all nominees, we will never disclose to them who their nominator was. There is no pressure for you to tell them either, we think the mystery adds to the charm of the awards!

So, all that is left is for you to [nominate today](#) and recognise the hard work of your team and colleagues!

Industrial action

Forthcoming industrial action of junior doctors and consultants

The British Medical Association (BMA) has announced new strike dates in September and October from junior doctors, including joint action with consultants from our local hospitals. For the first time, there will be four days in which junior doctors and consultants coordinate their industrial action. This is in addition to other days on which just junior doctors or just consultants will be on strike.

Strike details

- Consultants will strike on 19 and 20 September
- Junior doctors will also strike on 20 September, as well as 21 and 22 September.
- Both consultants and junior doctors will strike again on 2, 3 and 4 October.

Impact on emergency and care services

The industrial action will affect emergency and care services, due to reduced staffing and services will be busier than normal, with Christmas day levels of cover.

We know that you are already doing everything you can during this busy time to ensure good quality services and may have concerns about the impact of the upcoming industrial action.

In addition to the arrangements that have been put in place to make sure that care homes remain supported during this time, there are things that you too can check to ensure that only clinically essential referrals are made to 999 or 111 for the duration of the industrial action and proceeding 24 hours.

Please see below updated information, resources and services which will help support care homes and social care workers during the industrial action.

How you can help

At this time of potentially high demand on services, please review your business continuity plans to ensure that they cover:

Staffing

- The ability to update staff availability on an ongoing basis
- Mutual aid relationships with other providers and other branches within your own business
- Key local authority contacts contained within your plan

People who use your service

- Risk rating ('RAG' or red-amber-green rating) according to people's support needs – if you know someone is unwell or is more susceptible to illness which may require support from an ambulance
- Informal support available to each person – such as family, friends, and neighbours – remind them their assistance is vital so other people can continue to receive support
- Using alternatives to an ambulance. This could include the falls service where someone can come and assess a person and decide if an ambulance is needed
- Up to date GP details so this is your first port of call in the event of someone being unwell.

Alongside business continuity plans, please refer to the NHS Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's [guidance on keeping the emergency department clear](#) by using alternative support services to help facilitate health concerns during this period.

Local system plans in place to support adult social care providers

Own GP for generally unwell patients		
Urgent/Acute home visiting service	Via own GP first port of call or DHU Health Care Professional Line	DHU HCP line 0300 323 0672
Night nursing service	22.00 – 08.00	DHU HCP line 0300 323 0672
Health Care Professional Line	24/7 alternative to 111 support into most appropriate local service	DHU HCP line 0300 323 06872
Crises Response	08.00 – 20.00	DHU HCP line 0300 323 0672
Urgent Falls Service (Accepting referrals from all nursing and care home in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, plus referrals from other health and care staff in Leicestershire and Rutland locations only)	08.00 – 20.00 Monday to Sunday	DHU HCP line 0300 323 0672
Two-hour Crisis Response Service- Social care, Leicester City, Leicestershire County Council & Rutland Social Care (home care)	Agreement to refer directly into 24/7	City- 01162211515 County- 01163050495 Rutland- Duty line is 01572 758341 and out of hours is: 0116 2551606
Two-hour Crises Response Service	Nursing & Therapy 08.00 – 22.00	0300 300 1000
Mental Health Central Access Point (CAP)	24/7 Mental Health Triage	0808 800 3302

Discharge of patients with COVID-19 from hospital

IPC guidance relating to the discharge of patients from hospital to a care home can be found in the [COVID-19 supplement](#).

The hospital should still perform a PCR test 48 hours before discharge or a lateral flow test if the individual has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days.

However, care homes can accept patients who are either awaiting the PCR swab result or are confirmed positive (via PCR or LFT) and are still within their isolation period, if the home is able to isolate and safely care for the individual.

Please note if patients have tested COVID positive they are advised to isolate for a minimum of 5 days. After 5 days, the individual can return to normal activities if they no longer have a high temperature and feel well enough to do so.

COVID positive patients should avoid contact with those eligible for COVID 19 treatments for 10 days after a positive test (e.g. immunocompromised etc).

The isolation, PPE requirements and testing regimes when caring for COVID -19 positive individuals should be followed as per the COVID-19 supplement.

For additional IPC support, please contact infection@leics.gov.uk or 0116 305 5121

Next edition

The next edition of Provider News will be published during week commencing 18 September 2023. If you are interested in contributing by writing about a topic of your choice, perhaps something that is particularly important to you, please contact us at enquirylinequality&contracts@leics.gov.uk.