



Bulletin 120 – 13 December 2021

Dear Colleague

New funding for adult social care

On Friday, central government announced new funding for adult social care and measures in care homes as part of a package of new measures to protect people from the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The press release is available here: [Support package to protect care sector this winter - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/press-releases/2021/12/10/support-package-to-protect-care-sector-this-winter).

Vaccines remain the best line of defence against the virus, and the NHS will redouble efforts to reach people in care homes and those receiving adult social care support at home who haven't yet had their boosters. Care homes will be able to request follow up booster visits from vaccination teams for staff and residents.

The new fund is £300 million nationally, and the amount to be allocated to Leicestershire is to be advised – further information will follow as soon as possible.

New protective measures including visiting restrictions in care homes

New care home visiting guidance is expected to be published tomorrow (Tuesday 14 December), with new measures being implemented from Wednesday.

You may have received a related letter dated 10 December 2021 from Gillian Keegan MP, the Minister for Care and Mental Health, but if not it is copied in italics, unamended, here.

Dear Care Providers and Directors of Adult Social Services,

In light of emerging evidence and clinical advice relating to the Omicron variant of COVID-19, I am writing to inform you that we need to take further steps from 15 December 2021 to keep residents in care homes safe.

Residents in care homes are more likely to suffer serious health consequences if they become infected with COVID-19. The latest data indicates that the Omicron variant may be more transmissible, with infections doubling every 2-3 days. It is possible that the number of Omicron cases may be significantly higher than those already confirmed, with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) estimating there could be in the region of 10,000 cases of the Omicron variant in the UK.

Despite the challenge of Omicron, we are keen to ensure that visiting is still able to take place in order to enable residents to continue to see their families and friends. To ensure these visits can take place as safely as possible, along with current infection prevention and control (IPC) measures, regular testing, and PPE, we are introducing the following measures:

- *In order to boost individual protection via the COVID-19 boosters vaccination rollout, we will guarantee that any homes that have not yet received a visit are offered one as a matter of priority (care homes can contact their primary care network clinical care home lead if they haven't had their first visit). We will ensure all homes get the visits they need to ensure everyone has a chance to access the vaccine. The NHS will closely monitor data on vaccination team visits to care homes and housebound people.*
- *Social care workers can continue to book a vaccination slot via the National Booking Service, and frontline care workers have priority status within the booking system. Care workers should book now if it is 2 months since their second dose so that they can receive their vaccination once 3 months has passed. With proof of employment, staff can also walk in to vaccination services to get protected.*
- *We will be increasing the number of LFD tests that each staff member should take each week from two to three, which is on top of their weekly PCR test.*
- *Each care home resident should be limited to three nominated visitors who can visit regularly. This will be in addition to all residents being able to nominate an essential care giver who can visit for companionship or for care needs. In line with the system that was in place earlier in the pandemic, the nominated visitors should remain the same, barring an exceptional change in circumstances. Visits at the end of life should always be supported.*
- *When going out of the care home residents should:*
 - *avoid visiting people they do not usually spend time with regularly*
 - *avoid visits out that involve mixing with a large number of people indoors*
 - *have had a COVID-19 booster before taking part in a visit out of the care home if eligible, unless exempt*
 - *ask those they are visiting to undertake regular LFD testing, and receive a negative LFD on the day of the visit*
 - *ask those they are visiting to have had their COVID-19 vaccinations including booster if eligible*
- *Residents will still be asked to self-isolate following an emergency stay in hospital or following a visit out of the care home that is determined to be high-risk following an individual risk assessment.*

- *For other visits out of the care home, to ensure that care home residents can continue to go out of the care home to visit loved ones or spend time in the local community, we will ask residents who have had two doses of the vaccine, or who are exempt, to take LFD tests every other day for 14 days when they return from spending time out of the care home.*
- *For those residents who have not had two doses of the vaccine and who are not exempt, we will ask them to isolate for 14 days following a visit out in order to mitigate the risk that they endanger their fellow residents by bringing the new variant into the care home.*

Care providers and Local Authorities should do as much as possible to facilitate visiting in line with this new guidance.

I hope that you will agree that the new arrangements provide appropriate additional protection to care home residents while ensuring they can continue to have meaningful contact with loved ones and take part in activities they enjoy in the context of a highly transmissible variant. The clinical advice is that these measures are needed. Further details on how care providers can implement these measures will be set out in guidance, which will be published this week for implementation from 15 December 2021.

Thank you for all your support in ensuring residents can safely spend time with their loved ones this Christmas. I very much appreciate all that you and your staff have done and continue to do to protect the most vulnerable people in our society.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Keegan MP

Booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine

A booster dose of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine helps improve the protection you have from your first 2 doses of the vaccine. To check eligibility, book a booster vaccination appointment, or to find a walk-in vaccination site for your booster, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-booster-vaccine/>

Opportunity to provide services to support hospital discharge

The government has provided a national discharge fund to cover the cost of post-discharge recovery and support of people following discharge from hospital. Across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland we are aiming to use some of this funding to procure services to help facilitate speedier hospital discharge. In light of historical and current COVID-19 pandemic pressures, the LLR authorities and the NHS are seeking to work with a number of providers to provide residential care beds for people who are to be discharged from hospital pending alternative arrangements. It is envisaged that the beds will be occupied by people for a short period of time to facilitate the provision of:

- a period of therapy / reablement
- an interim bed whilst awaiting a care package in the community

The two service elements aim to support maximising capacity within UHL and give time to arrange the right services / support either to enable people to return home or be moved into the right setting for them. The contracts are expected to start on the 10 January 2022 and end on the 31 March 2022.

Tenders need to be completed by 12.00 noon on the 20 December 2021. If you are interested or have any queries, please email Dave Pruden dave.pruden@leics.gov.uk or Carol Stanyard carol.stanyard@leics.gov.uk to receive the information pack.

New PPE portal platform – user research

The Department of Health and Social Care would like to invite you to take part in user research for a new platform that will replace the current PPE Portal. They are testing the new platform from January 2022 and hope to build a representative group across all sectors, experience levels and user needs.

They are particularly interested in hearing from users with accessibility requirements, such as individuals with disabilities or those who are less familiar with online platforms.

During this time, you will be onboarded onto the new platform, and will order your PPE through the new system. There will be no change in the type or quantity of PPE that you can order.

Please note that this user research does not mean that DHSC has taken a decision on whether to continue to supply free PPE to health and care sectors beyond March 2022. That decision will be announced in due course.

Why get involved:

- Gain early access to new and enhanced PPE Portal features
- The opportunity to familiarise yourself with the new platform. Ahead of its full launch, this is a great opportunity to learn about the new platform and become comfortable using it
- Help improve the new system. Your feedback is invaluable in ensuring our platform is meeting our users' needs and is accessible to all

The ask of participants:

- They anticipate your involvement to take no more than one hour a week. This includes using the new platform and feeding back your experiences. There will be a team on hand throughout the entire process to support you in using the new system

- They will ask you to complete some short surveys sharing your experiences of the current Portal as well as the new Portal
- They will also invite you to focus groups, where you can share more detailed feedback about your experiences on the Portal

To register your interest, please fill out this short form:

https://dhexchange.kahootz.com/PPE_Portal/viewQuestionnaire?qid=7654339

Invitations to join the new Portal, and our user research, will commence in early January 2022.

If you have any further questions, please get in touch with the PPE portal team at ppe-portal@dhsc.gov.uk who will be happy to assist.

OTHER NEWS

Share your views on health and wellbeing support across Leicestershire

Have your say on how Leicestershire County Council, the NHS and partner organisations can help to improve health and wellbeing.

An 8-week public consultation, which runs until 23 January 2022, is seeking feedback on the outcomes and priorities of the next health and wellbeing strategy. The Health and Wellbeing Board brings together organisations responsible for making decisions about health, wellbeing and care services in Leicestershire. This includes Leicestershire County Council, the NHS, Healthwatch, the Officer of Police and Crime Commissioner, Police, District councils and other agencies with a responsibility for health and wellbeing.

The Board plans how best to meet the needs of the local population and tackle health inequalities through a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

This is an opportunity for Leicestershire residents, professionals and organisations to share their views on the draft strategy and the priorities outlined for the next ten years. You can do this by visiting www.leicestershire.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing-strategy.

You can also read the draft strategy in full [online](#).

Yours sincerely

Jon Wilson
Director of Adults and Communities

Mike Sandys
Director of Public Health

The archive of all previous COVID-19 provider bulletins released since March 2020 can be found at resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/provider-bulletin