



Information for adult social care providers

Covid-19 and Flu

Bulletin 121 – 17 December 2021

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the end of what has been another turbulent year, we wanted to write to you and thank you for your outstanding resilience, determination, and strength. You and your teams have worked tirelessly to keep things moving while supporting some of our most vulnerable residents in Leicestershire and for that, we cannot thank you enough.

There is no one person who hasn't continued to be affected by the personal and professional challenges brought by COVID-19, but thanks to all of you, our residents have continued to be supported and cared for throughout the pandemic.

Last year, we wrote about optimism that the vaccination would bring. With your help, we've implemented legal changes and service developments within the care sector whilst working with health colleagues to protect people using services and health and social care workers through vaccination.

We know that you have gone above and beyond to ensure services continued to run smoothly through all the staffing and provider changes brought about in 2021. As we learn to live with COVID-19 and turn our attention to what 2022 holds, we know that we will be approaching it together.

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect yourself, your family and vulnerable service users alongside robust infection prevention controls. With the booster programme ramping up and the importance of testing remaining high, it is clear that COVID-19 remains a cause for concern for vulnerable people in Leicestershire and we thank you for all your support through these continuous developments.

Although services will continue to run over the festive period and many staff will be working, we sincerely hope that you and your teams will have some time to rest and recover, even if it is short. It is no doubt deserved.

Thank you for your flexibility and commitment to care throughout 2021 – the support you and your teams have given has been vital for so many Leicestershire citizens.

Kind regards and warmest wishes for the festive season and New Year,

Jon Wilson
Director of Adults and Communities

Mike Sandys
Director of Public Health

The next provider bulletin will be issued during the week commencing 3 January 2022.

Delivering safe services over the festive period

We know that you are doing everything you can to ensure good quality services over the festive season, including safe staffing levels. At a time of high community COVID-19 infection and transmission, please review your business continuity plans to ensure that they cover:

Staffing

- The ability to update staff availability on an ongoing basis
- Loss of significant levels of staff, including due to COVID-19 positivity or isolation
- Mutual aid relationships with other providers and other branches within your own business
- Awareness of staff members' health and childcare considerations
- Rotas which take into account inclement weather and walking routes based on staff home locations
- Alternative rotas to accommodate different scenarios such as loss of staff and inclement weather
- Access to agency and bank staff
- Staff details available remotely to key staff
- 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 their support needs - consider rating specific calls if people are supported multiple times per day
- Informal support available to each person – such as family, friends and neighbours
- Alternative support such as privately commissioned community meals
- All information for people using services available remotely to key staff

Registered managers have the responsibility to ensure continuity of services for people supported. Leicestershire County Council does not have staff available to deploy in the event of providers not being able to complete rotas.

Booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine

A booster dose of the COVID-19 vaccine helps improve the protection you have from your first two doses of the vaccine. It helps give you longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from COVID-19.

You can get a booster dose if you had a second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least 3 months ago and:

- you are aged 18 or over
- you are aged 16 or over with a health condition that puts you at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19
- you are a frontline health or social care worker
- you live or work in a care home
- you are aged 16 or over and are a main carer for someone at high risk from COVID-19
- you are aged 16 or over and live with someone who has a weakened immune system (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)

People who work for an NHS trust or a care home will usually get their booster dose through their employer.

You can pre-book your booster dose online if it's been 2 months (61 days) since you had your 2nd dose. Click [here](#) to book your booster dose or to find a walk in centre.

Care home visiting

Providers are expected and encouraged to facilitate care home visiting in a risk-assessed way. New measures have now come into place to ensure safety for both residents and staff. When developing their visiting policies, providers should undertake individual risk assessments to assess the rights and needs of individual residents, as well as any specific vulnerabilities that are outlined in the resident's care plan, and to consider the role that visiting can play in this.

Care home residents can nominate up to three visitors who can enter the care home for regular visits. This number does not include an essential caregiver, or pre school-aged children. Visitors should continue to make arrangements with care homes in advance of the visit, so that care providers can manage the number of people attending at any one time to ensure safe visiting practices can be maintained, taking into account the size and layout of the care home.

The duration of visits remains without limits, provided safe visiting practices can be maintained. Visits should take place in a room most practical and comfortable for the resident (for example, residents with dementia may be more comfortable in their own room with familiar belongings).

The three named visitors should receive and report a negative lateral flow test on the day of their visit, preferably onsite, however these can be done at home. Essential care givers still need to follow the regular testing arrangements: weekly PCRs and 3 lateral flow tests. The essential care giver can offer companionship or help with care needs, even if the care home is under outbreak measures. If visitors have any symptoms that suggest other transmissible viruses and infections, such as cough, high temperature, diarrhoea or vomiting, they should avoid the care home until at least 5 days after they feel better.

In the event of an outbreak in the care home, the home should stop indoor visiting (except for end of life visiting and visits from essential care givers). Subject to a risk assessment by the health protection team (HPT), outbreak controls may be in place for up to 28 days following the last positive case especially as we learn more about real-world vaccine effectiveness and disease severity of the Omicron variant.

Visiting out of the care home

Care home residents who have had two doses of the vaccine, or are exempt from vaccination, should not have to isolate for 14 days after most visits out of the care home, but should take a lateral flow test every day for 10 days following the visit out. Where possible, anyone else who the resident meets as part of an indoor visit should undertake a lateral flow test and receive a negative result on the day of the visit. All tests should be reported to the Unique Organisation Number (UON) of the care home.

Care home residents who have not received at least two doses of the vaccine, and are not exempt from vaccination, should not go on visits out of the care home unless they isolate for 14 days after the visit out. This is a necessary precaution following clinical advice in light of the more transmissible variant of COVID-19.

All residents should isolate following an emergency stay in hospital, if they test positive for COVID-19 or following a visit that has been deemed high-risk following an individual risk assessment by the care home.

Advice for contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19

Anyone aged 5 years and over, who has been identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 and who is not legally required to self-isolate, is now strongly advised to take a rapid lateral flow device (LFD) test every day for 7 days or until 10 days since their last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier.

The guidance for health and social care staff was updated on the 15 December 2021 and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings#contents>

Mandatory vaccination for the wider health and social care workforce

Individuals undertaking CQC regulated activities in England must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 no later than 1 April 2022 to protect patients, regardless of their employer, including social care, secondary and primary care. The regulations will apply equally across the public (NHS) and independent health sector. These regulations will sit alongside the existing regulations which require workers of all CQC registered care homes, and workers entering care homes to be vaccinated (subject to certain exemptions) which came into force on 11 November 2021.

Unvaccinated individuals will need to have had their first dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine by 3 February 2022 (date to be confirmed), in order to receive their second dose by the 31 March 2022 deadline.

Some individuals may have grounds not to have the vaccine for clinical reasons. Anyone who is unable to be vaccinated for clinical reasons will have to use the NHS COVID Pass to show their exemption status.

It is recommended that formal redeployment of workers should not commence until the regulation has been approved by Parliament which is expected on 6 January 2022 (this date is subject to change). The detailed guidance is anticipated for publication in mid-January.

Vaccination as a condition of deployment (VCOD) – extension to self-certification

The cut-off date for self-certification for everyone who has registered a self-certification before 24 December 2021 has been extended to 31 March 2022. This is due to delays that some individuals have faced whilst applying for formal medical exemptions. Extending the cut-off for self-certification will allow sufficient time for individuals whose formal medical exemption request is unsuccessful to be fully vaccinated before 31 March 2022.

Individuals whose formal medical exemption application has been reviewed should now have received their notification letters. If notification letters are not received within 2 to 3 weeks for these individuals, they are encouraged to call 119.

From 1 April 2022, they will either need to show proof of a formal medical exemption or be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to comply with the regulation and continue working in a CQC-regulated care home.

Please see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-medical-exemptions-for-covid-19-vaccination-of-people-working-or-deployed-in-care-homes/vaccination-as-a-condition-of-deployment-extension-to-self-certification-cut-off>

Funding Update

Infection Control and Testing Fund Round 3 (ICTF3)

ICTF3 payments have been issued to support community providers and will be issued this week to support care homes as follows:

ICTF3 Initial 'Direct' Payments	
Care Homes	
Infection Control	£161.00 per bed
Vaccination	£12.00 per bed
Testing	£115.00 per bed
Home Care Providers	
Infection Control	£53.00 per client
Vaccination	£11.00 per client
<i>As specified by the grant conditions, the care home bed count is per the CQC listing - 1 Sep 2021; and the care home client count is per the home care tracker 22 Sep 2021.</i>	

For information about the fund please see [Bulletin 113](#).

Please use this link to complete the online return by Tuesday 4 January 2022 detailing your eligible expenditure for October and November 2021:

<https://surveys.leics.gov.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=162029249296>

Care homes will be required to report all eligible infection control, vaccination and testing expenditure by month.

Community providers will be required to report all eligible infection control and vaccination expenditure by month.

By accepting payments from this fund your organisation accepts the grant conditions, which are detailed in the [Infection Control and Testing Fund - Round 3](#) section of the Gov.uk website.

Completion of this return is a condition of receipt of the funding for providers with services registered by the CQC in Leicestershire. Note, some providers may not yet be in receipt of ICTF3 funding but completion of the return is still required.

If you fail to report, or to comply with any of the grant conditions, including the regular completion of the capacity tracker, you risk having to return payments made to your organisation.

Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund (WRRF)

All social care providers in Leicestershire must submit their first WRRF return, which entails reporting cost incurred to 30 November, estimating cost for December to March, and requesting funding for any initiatives.

The adult social care winter plan includes a commitment to providing workforce recruitment and retention funding, originally announced on 21 October 2021, to

support local authorities and providers to recruit and retain sufficient staff over winter, and support growth and sustain existing workforce capacity.

The form is in two parts - the first section relates to actual expenditure and outcomes and the second section relates to expected expenditure and outcomes:

<https://surveys.leics.gov.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=163905617694>

- Section 1: This section requests actual expenditure incurred on workforce measures for the period 21 October to 31 November 2021. You are also requested to submit information about the number of jobs and additional hours generated in that period and, for comparison, the number of jobs and additional hours generated in September 2021.
- Section 2: This section requests expected expenditure that will be incurred on workforce measures for the period 1 December 2021 to 31 March 2022. You are also requested to submit information about the number of jobs expected to be generated in that period and / or the number additional hours generated in that period. There is also a section to request funding to support any workforce initiatives that you may want to undertake, that are not listed in the main sections of the form.

For information about the fund please see [Bulletin 117](#).

This return must be submitted by Tuesday 4 January 2022 - failure to submit the form by that deadline may mean that your organisation will not be able to obtain WRRF funding.

The first WRRF payments will be made in January 2022 to those providers that have submitted this return on time.

The DHSC has recently published Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund [examples of allowable activity](#) - please see the link for further information.

By accepting payments from this fund your organisation accepts the grant conditions, which are detailed in the [Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund](#) section of the Gov.uk website.

Reminder of 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.

OTHER NEWS

Workforce Development Fund

The Workforce Development Fund (WDF) is funding from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) disseminated by Skills for Care. It supports the provision of high-quality care and the continuing professional development (CPD) of staff across the adult social care sector by providing a contribution towards the costs of vocational learning. The fund allows you to claim back money towards the costs of workers completing a broad range of adult social care qualifications and learning programmes.

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Learning-development/Funding/Workforce-Development-Fund/Workforce-Development-Fund.aspx>

You can claim funding towards the cost of qualifications and learning programmes completed between 1 January 2021 and 31 March 2022. This includes money towards the cost of course fees (or employer contributions) and associated costs.

For further information please email lscdg@leics.gov.uk

Online course in effective complaint handling for care providers

The Local Government Ombudsman is offering online courses in effective complaint handling for care providers. Please see the link for further information and how to book: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/training/effective-complaint-handling-open-online-course-for-councils>. Please note that there is a charge per delegate.

Cyber security alert

A world-wide security vulnerability known as log4j or log4shell has been identified and has the potential to affect IT systems (both on-premises and cloud based). The National Cyber Security Centre (the UK Government department for Cyber Security) provides details of the issue at this link: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/log4j-vulnerability-what-everyone-needs-to-know>

The recent vulnerability has been classed as severe, being in the top three most severe vulnerabilities in the last 10 years. If exploited, it provides criminals with the potential to hold data to ransom or steal that data for other purposes.

[Digital Social Care has published advice from NHSX](#) and shared this widely. The main message is that care providers should notify their IT teams or person responsible for IT, and ensure actions are taken. The primary action is for IT leads to work with their digital / IT suppliers and follow their advice about mitigating cyber vulnerabilities. This is most likely to be to install the latest software updates. The advice will be updated on the above link as more information becomes available.

The archive of all previous COVID-19 provider bulletins released since March 2020 can be found at <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/working-with-you-during-coronavirus>