

Information for adult social care providers

CORONAVIRUS

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YOURSELF
& OTHERS



Bulletin 100 – 4 August 2021

Dear Colleagues,

When we issued the first adult social care COVID-19 provider bulletin in late March 2020 we could not have imagined that 17 months on and 100 issues later, providers and workers, Leicestershire County Council, the NHS, carers, families, people who use our services and other stakeholders would still be managing the pandemic.

We would like to thank you for your ongoing determination to keep Leicestershire people safe at what has proven to be one of the most challenging times in the history of adult social care.

LLR support to care home managers for mandatory vaccination – letter from the Directors

As you are aware, the requirement for those working in a CQC-registered care home environment to be double-vaccinated unless they have an exemption has been confirmed. The related national guidance has been released today:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vaccination-of-people-working-or-deployed-in-care-homes-operational-guidance>

We know that care home managers are working hard to prepare your staff and services to ensure you are compliant with that new law. The Directors of Adult Social Services and Directors of Public Health for LLR have prepared a letter for care home managers to set out some of the key considerations and support available to you and your workers:

<https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/resource/files/field/pdf/2021/8/3/Covid-vaccine-support-letter-July-2021.pdf>

Please take a few minutes to read the letter and use it to enhance the planning that you already have underway.

We will be summarising the guidance for you and drafting text which you can use as a letter or email to your regular contractors to advise them of the new requirement, as well as other tools.

Exemption from isolation requests - management of critical social care staff identified as a contact of a case

You will recall that in bulletin 98 we advised that new guidance from the Government on the management of front line social care staff identified as contacts of a positive COVID-19 case is in place. The lead professional for health protection and/or the local Director of Public Health relevant to the organisation can authorise an exemption in exceptional circumstances. This would include where services are at critical risk of not meeting their statutory duties, or where the safety and/or health of the individuals under their care is directly at risk due to staffing absence.

The purpose of this new guidance is to help relieve service pressure where, despite exploring alternative arrangements, the absence of a staff member risks the health of those under the organisation's care. New guidelines give employers the 'right to allow', but not to 'compel' staff to return to work. Guidance should be applied on a case by case basis.

In these very limited circumstances, staff will remain under a legal duty to self-isolate as a close contact. However, they will be considered as having a 'reasonable excuse' to leave their place of self-isolation to undertake work activities, including travel directly to and from work.

The decision to exempt an individual staff member from self-isolation will carry a degree of transmission risk, the level of which is dependent on individual and organisational circumstance. The responsibility for assuring safe practice within all existing clinical and care guidelines remains the responsibility of the provider organisation.

The following outlines the process to follow when applying for an exemption from isolation for 'critical' staff working in social care settings who have been identified as a contact of a case of COVID-19.

This is only applicable in exceptional circumstances where the following applies:

- If there is a likelihood that staff absence creates a significant risk to the health or safety of patients or service users, health and social care staff whose activities are critical to the ongoing provision of care; and
- Staff affected are fully vaccinated (more than 14 days after the second dose).

Additional safety measures must be upheld:

- Staff members should only attend work after having a negative PCR test and must perform daily lateral flow antigen tests

The decision is subject to a risk assessment and authorisation by the Director of Public Health.

In order to mitigate the increased risk associated with this exemption, the following should apply:

- the staff member should remain free of [COVID-19 symptoms](#)

- the staff member should comply with all relevant infection control precautions and PPE should be properly worn throughout the day
- outside of work activities, the staff member must follow current advice for self-isolation

The application process is as follows:

1. Social care provider must contact the Leicestershire County Council provider enquiry service on enquirylinequality&contracts@leics.gov.uk or telephone 0116 305 7263
2. Leicestershire County Council (Adults and Communities department) determines if the setting and provider meets exceptional circumstances. The provider should not move to step 3 until they have had this confirmation
3. Provider completes risk assessment form (available here <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/resource/files/field/pdf/2021/8/3/Risk-assessment-and-management-isolation-of-critical-workers-form.docx>) for each individual affected
4. Adults and Communities department emails request for consideration for exemption to the Director of Public Health and Health Protection Team
5. Public Health team to finalise risk assessment form and authorise exemption request if appropriate.

Pregnancy vaccination resources

Some new resources have been launched by Public Health England on vaccination in pregnancy. We know that pregnancy and fertility have been cited as perceived barriers to vaccine confidence, so please use these assets with your workers who are still hesitant: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-women-of-childbearing-age-currently-pregnant-planning-a-pregnancy-or-breastfeeding>

Importance of COVID-19 testing

Regular testing remains critical, not just to your services but others which the people who you support may be accessing. There have been recent outbreaks within Community Life Choices linked to other services, such as supported living provision, where the person carrying the infection had not been tested.

Finance update

Infection Control and Testing Fund (ICTF)

This week we will issue overspend payments to providers that reported expenditure in excess of the ICTF grant issued. These payments, which relate to infection control and testing, will not cover the total overspend but will mitigate it. Where providers reported an underspend, or did not report at all, we will be following up to collect refunds.

A number of providers have raised queries in relation to payments that have been made and invoices that have been raised. We are working on those and expect to respond during August.

Extension to the Infection Control and Testing Fund (ICTF2)

ICTF2 payments will also be made in the coming days. Care homes will receive £165 per bed in relation to infection control and £165 per bed in relation to testing. Community providers will receive £55 per client, per the Capacity Tracker Service User Data on 14 June 2021. However, providers that did not complete the ICTF final return, or have been invoiced for outstanding funds, will not receive payment until that reporting has been completed, or the outstanding issues have been resolved.

The first ICTF2 return detailing expenditure for the month of July is now due. All providers should use the [online form](#) to report, by Friday 20 August, all eligible expenditure for the period 1 July to 31 July 2021. For care homes there are two pages to complete, one for infection control and one for rapid testing. For community providers there is an infection control page only to complete.

For more information about the fund including the grant conditions, please see the information in the [DHSC webpages relating to ICTF2](#). By accepting payment from the Infection Control and Testing Fund, your organisation accepts the grant conditions, including the requirement to complete this return. Failure to meet those conditions may result in payments being withheld or payments made having to be refunded.

If you have any questions please email finopscovidpayments@leics.gov.uk.

Trainer training for FFP3 mask fit testing

We have been able to secure a further 3 dates to hold training sessions for people to qualify to become FFP3 mask fit testers:

- Thursday 2 September
- Thursday 9 September
- Wednesday 15 September

All three sessions will take place in person at County Hall and each session can accommodate 7 attendees.

Bookings can be made by emailing a&chub-emergency&bcplanning@leics.gov.uk or by telephoning 0116 305 1405.

Transparent face masks

The technical specifications for transparent face masks have just been updated and can be accessed here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-specifications-for-personal-protective-equipment-ppe?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=cd442c75-747f-4c30-8e82-2e1c273b2fef&utm_content=daily

The DHSC is very interested in hearing from any PPE supplier or manufacturers which feels they have a transparent mask that can pass this technical specification,

and have asked that local authorities pass any such contacts to them. Please email A&CHub-emergency&bcplanning@leics.gov.uk with any potential contacts and we will pass on for the DHSC to verify their suitability.

The DHSC is currently working with suppliers who they hope will meet the specification and hope that these transparent masks will then be made available through the PPE Portal.

Reminder of changes to adult social care provider COVID-19 conference calls

You will recall that in bulletin 98 we mentioned that the regular COVID-19 provider conference calls will continue until December and potentially beyond. A new schedule of meetings is now available at <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/working-with-you-during-coronavirus/provider-teleconferences>.

Please note any revised time and frequency for your usual COVID-19 meeting – the next calls for care home and home care will take place on Monday 9 August, with a new start time for the latter in response to provider feedback.

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 <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/working-with-you-during-coronavirus>