

Date:

Dear

We in the Western Health & Social Care Trust are fully aware of the increased demands on you as administrators of Direct Payments during Covid-19. With this in mind we thought it may be helpful for you as Employers in managing your Personal Assistant at this time to be aware of the guidance in relation to Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and how to access if required.

## **SELF DIRECTED SUPPORT- DIRECT PAYMENTS**

### **CORONAVIRUS [COVID-19]**

#### **ADVICE & ACTION CARD UPDATE**

**26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020**

### **Signs and symptoms of COVID-19**

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection:

- cough
- difficulty in breathing
- fever

The evidence to date suggests that for people who are normally in good health the symptoms are generally mild. However these infections can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

### **How is it spread**

Spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

There are 2 main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:

- infection can be spread to people who are nearby (within 2 metres) or possibly could be inhaled into the lungs
- it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory

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secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching door knob or shaking hands then touching own face).

Our current understanding is that the virus doesn't survive on surfaces for longer than 72 hours.

It is believed that the virus can be spread by an individual who has not yet developed the symptoms but is carrying the virus.

### **What to do if you develop symptoms consistent with Coronavirus?**

You should contact your Employer **by telephone** as soon as possible to discuss your situation.

If you develop any or all of the symptoms listed above you are required to self-isolate for 7 days. There is no need to contact your doctor or other health professional at this stage, you should only make contact with your doctor or the 111 service if you are no better after 7 days, your condition worsens or you have an underlying condition that increases the risk of coronavirus, such as lung disease, compromised immune system, diabetes, etc. Self-isolation can end on day 8 after the on-set of the symptoms if clinical improvement has occurred and you have had no fever for 2 days.

If any member of **your** household develops a fever, new cough or experiences breathlessness you must also self-isolate, along with the rest of your household for 14 days.

In the event of a medical emergency dial 999.

When in self-isolation you will refrain from work and remain at home. You should restrict contact with family members and visitors throughout your self-isolation. Further advice on self-isolation is available from the PHA website <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/pha-advice-new-coronavirus-guidance>

### **Preventing the Spread of infection**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus.

There are general principles anyone can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- washing your hands often - with soap and water, or use alcohol sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol, only if adequate handwashing facilities are not available. Refer to hand-washing guidance provided.
- covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in a bin. Catch It, Bin It, Kill It
- people who feel unwell should stay at home and should not attend work avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

## What do you do if the individual in receipt of services becomes unwell and displays symptoms consistent with Covid-19.

If you become aware that the individual that you are providing care/support has developed any of the Covid-19 symptoms, fever, new persistent cough, breathlessness you must make contact with your Employer as soon as possible and advise them that the individual and/ or their legally authorised person who is responsible for managing the Direct Payment to make contact with their GP practice by phone for advice. You will be advised by your Employer if there any implications for you providing ongoing care and support to the individual in question. It may be that the individual in receipt of services will be required to self-isolate, your Employer will consider what particular arrangements need to be put in place to facilitate ongoing care and support including the provision of PPE [see section below]

### Personal Protective Equipment [PPE]

If you are required to provide care and support to a suspected or confirmed Covid-19 case you will be provided with the necessary PPE to enable you to provide care/support safely. The following PPE will be provided in the circumstances described;

Individuals in receipt of services type	PPE Equipment
For symptomatic, unconfirmed service users meeting the COVID-19 case definition	fluid resistant surgical mask, gloves, apron and <u>eye protection if risk* of droplet secretions / splashing into the eyes is presenting.</u>
For confirmed cases of COVID-19	fluid resistant surgical mask, gloves, apron and <u>eye protection if risk* of droplet secretions / splashing into the eyes is presenting.</u>
For possible and confirmed cases of COVID-19 requiring an *aerosol generating procedure	FFP3 respirator or equivalent, disposable eye protection, preferably visor, long sleeved disposable gown and gloves.

\* For example, Individuals who require suction / Individuals with Tracheotomy / During Chest Physio / CPR Intervention / Bronchoscopy

\*this risk will be identified by professional staff through the assessment and care/support planning process

***You as a Direct Payment User you can access PPE via the Trusts keyworker IF required. The employer will then be responsible for distribute the PPE in a timely and efficient manner.***

*The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly increased the demand on PPE. The Trust has put arrangements in place to ensure that personal assistant employed via Direct Payments have a timely supply of all necessary items. It is important not to be wasteful with PPE at this time*

***NB.*** *If you commission your care from an independent provider it is their responsibility to provide PPE if and when required in the first instance. If however you experience difficulties then speak to your keyworker who will support you to access the required PPE via the Trust.*

## **Hand Hygiene**

It is important that all personal assistant employed via Direct Payments adhere to appropriate hand-washing practice when providing care & support in the individual's home. It is imperative that all personal assistant employed via Direct Payments strictly adhere to good hand hygiene and follow the steps detailed in the attachments provided. It may be helpful to reassure the individual in receipt of care/support that you have washed your hands.

## **School Closures**

Personal Assistants have been identified as key workers whose children must be accommodated in whatever special arrangements are put in place following the recent announcement to close schools. Personal Assistant with children who attend school can contact the school to be advised what arrangements are being put in place

## **Further Information and advice**

This is an evolving situation. The Trust will be provided with updated information in the days and weeks ahead. All relevant information will be shared with you by post.

If you have any questions about this matter speak to your keyworker.

You can obtain the latest advice from the following websites;

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>