



Advice for people who have Direct Payments

Supporting you during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic



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Introduction

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The coronavirus pandemic presents challenges for people who receive support from the council using a Direct Payment (DP). This document sets out how people who receive care and support by using a DP should keep themselves and their employees safe during this time. It also outlines how the council can assist you, based on the government **Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for people using DP's** (published on 21 April 2020). The **Frequently Asked Questions** may also be of assistance. As this is a fast-paced pandemic, the government guidance will be updated regularly.



Advice on keeping safe

The government has issued guidance on the actions everyone should be taking to reduce transmission of COVID-19. It explains that people who are at increased risk of severe illness should be particularly stringent in following the **advice on staying at home and away from others (social distancing)**. This includes advice on how to reduce social interaction and to limit face-to-face interaction with friends and family as much as possible, particularly if you are:

- aged 70 or older regardless of underlying health conditions
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed in the **guidance** (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds)

There is separate guidance on **shielding and protecting** people at the greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19 because of specific medical conditions. NHS England has written to people who fall within this group giving advice on how to protect themselves and access the care and treatment they need. If either you or a member of your household falls within this extremely vulnerable group, your personal assistant should also follow the advice on the use of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**.

Advice for Employers of Personal Assistants (PA)

If you directly employ someone to support you with meeting your care and support needs you should:

- Ensure that your PA **washes their hands** regularly with soap and water and follows the advice on **hand washing**

- **Review** your support arrangements should your PA be unable to work due to sickness or annual leave and consider alternatives such as using a homecare agency, a back-up PA or a close family member. Note a close family member will need to have a contract and pay National Insurance and taxes and should be used as a last resort and only until your usual arrangements or another contingency becomes available.
- If you have any queries about sick pay or if self-isolating, employment queries on how to retain your staff during this period, or if they can be furloughed, you can contact Vibrance at **wandsworthsds@vibrance.org.uk** who will be able to advise.
- Think creatively about how you can meet your needs and use your budget flexibly to source alternative ways of getting the support you need.
- Ensure **details** about how you like your care and support to be delivered and key contacts are up to date with information that can easily be shared with care staff who may not be familiar to you.
- Contact Adult Social Care at **acessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk** if your PA is unable to support you due to self-isolation or contraction of COVID-19 and you have no alternative arrangements available to you. They will assist you in finding suitable alternative arrangements.
- Consider whether you need to supply your PA with PPE and plan how you will arrange this. Contact Vibrance at **wandsworthsds@vibrance.org.uk** who will be able to assist.

What to do if your Personal Assistant is concerned that they have COVID-19

Your **PA** should contact NHS 111 and, if advised to self-isolate at home, they should not visit and care for you until it is safe to do so.

Your PA is regarded as a key worker, even if they are self-employed and they **can get tested for COVID-19** through the **government portal**. See **PA testing user guide** produced by TLAP specifically **Personal Assistant Covid-19 testing user guide**. Vibrance will also be able to offer your PA advice with securing a test including providing verification for those who wish to be tested. Further information is available from **Vibrance**

You should activate your contingency plans and advise Adult Social Care of any changes you have made so they can continue to ensure your DP is paid in the usual way.

Advice for people who arrange care through a care agency

If you currently buy services through a homecare agency to support you with meeting your care and support needs you should:

- Make early contact with the agency to **discuss** your situation and agree any actions that will be taken to support you should your regular, paid carer be unavailable.
- Ensure that they have your up-to-date **details**, any relevant care and support plans and relevant dates if you need to attend important appointments with support.

- If you use your direct payment to purchase other types of support, it's important that you speak to your **provider** and agree arrangements if you foresee any issues in delivering this service during this period.
- **Contact** Adult Social Care at accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk if the agency is unable to support you due to the impacts of COVID-19 and you have no alternative arrangements available to you. They will assist you in finding suitable alternative arrangements.

What to do if you, as the employer or buyer of a service, have symptoms of COVID-19

If you or anyone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19, you must **advise** your PA or home care agency so that the risk of passing it on is minimised.

Your PA or home care agency worker should follow the advice on the use of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**. The use of aprons, fluid resistant surgical masks, eye protection and gloves are recommended for activities that bring them into **close personal contact**, such as washing and bathing, personal hygiene and contact with bodily fluids.

New PPE must usually be used for each episode of care. Used PPE should be disposed of in a rubbish bag which is placed into a second bag, tied securely and kept separate from other household waste. The same process should be used for the **disposal of personal waste**, such as used tissues, continence pads and items soiled with bodily fluids. The bags should be put aside for at least 72 hours before being put in the usual household waste bin.

If your PA or care workers undertake **cleaning** duties, then they should use the usual household products, such as detergents and bleach because these will be very effective at getting rid of the virus on surfaces.

Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly. It may be helpful to clean the property more frequently and also to ensure that it is well **ventilated**.

If doing laundry, the PA or care workers should ensure they do not shake dirty **laundry** before washing, to minimise dispersing the virus through the air. Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. All dirty laundry can be washed in the same load.

You should continue to **purchase** PPE as usual. Should you have any difficulties with lack of supply or pricing see if Vibrance are able to help. If you need additional funds to cover costs for a short period, contact Adult Social Care who will arrange a temporary increase.



Useful links

Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Guidance for people receiving direct payments

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments

**Guidance on staying at home and away from others
(social distancing)**

www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others#eel-decline

Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19

Personal Protective Equipment

www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe

Guidance on COVID-19: infection prevention and control (IPC)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control

Coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested
www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested

Apply for a coronavirus test
www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test

TLAP Personal Assistant COVID-19 testing user guide
www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/covid-19/

Q&A for people receiving a personal budget or personal health budget
www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments/coronavirus-covid-19-qa-for-people-receiving-a-personal-budget-or-personal-health-budget

Vibrance
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Our contact details

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(020) 8871 7707

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