

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for Carers: Frequently Asked Questions



Version 2
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(for the most up to date
information in line with
Government and NHS
guidance, please use links
provided in this document)

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Information for Carers

The following information has been created in response to questions received from local carers in Gloucestershire. This will be a changing resource available online at <https://www.yourcircle.org.uk/Information/Covid19-Community> where it will be updated regularly. If you have any questions you would like to raise, please email carers@peopleplus.co.uk or telephone 0300 111 9000.

There are several national and local websites that can help you with information which are listed at the end of this information sheet.

Please ensure you:

- Let your GP know that you are a carer (if they do not know already)
- If the person you care for needs medication, contact your GP to ensure prescriptions and medication can still be collected
- Put a contingency plan in place (more information below)
- Keep up to date with information provided by the NHS and Government (links provided at the end of this leaflet).

As a carer, how do I plan for COVID-19?

- » Contact Gloucestershire Carers Hub (details at the end of this information sheet) if you are a carer of an adult or a parent carer. You can speak to them about planning to ensure you and your cared for are supported. If you are a young carer, or young adult carer, you should contact Gloucestershire Young Carers (details at the end of this information sheet).
- » Ensure you have informed your GP or other medical professional that you are a carer.
- » If you are not already registered with the Carers Emergency Scheme, please do so with the Gloucestershire Carers Hub.
- » If the person you care for has serious underlying health conditions, which put them at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19), follow shielding measures in order to keep them safe. Shielding is a measure to protect extremely vulnerable people by minimising interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others. This means that those who are extremely vulnerable should not leave their homes, and within their homes should minimise all non-essential contact with other members of their household.

What do I do if I and/or the person I care for have COVID-19 symptoms?

NHS 111 can offer direct guidance through their online coronavirus helpline www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19 .

Call 111 if your (or their) symptoms become severe, and let them know you are a carer.

Government advice is to get tested if you display any symptoms and information and links can be <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

1. What do I do if I have severe symptoms of COVID-19 and care agencies are unable to enter the property to provide essential care?

- Such a situation would be individually risk assessed by you and the provider of the care together.
- If you live with the cared for person and you become unwell you should already have an alternative list of people who can help support the person you care for. Alternatively, contact Adult Help Desk either via the online form <https://forms.gloucestershire.gov.uk/AdultSocialCareEnquiry> or if urgent via telephone on 01452 426868.
- If you do not live in same household as the person you care for and you become unwell, again you should already have an alternative list of people to step in to provide support. You can also contact the local council for advice on how to access care.

Government advice is to get tested if you display any symptoms and information and links can be <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested>

2. Should I be using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

If neither the carer nor the individual receiving care and support are showing any symptoms of coronavirus, then no personal protective equipment (PPE) is required above and beyond normal good hygiene practices.

Symptoms are included in the 'Advice for everyone-Coronavirus (COVID-19)' link at the end of this information sheet.

If there are Covid-19 symptoms, then please phone the Gloucestershire Carers Hub to have a discussion regarding this.

3. What precautions should I take to lower the risk?

- It is advisable to keep up to date with the latest advice set out at the end of this information around social distancing and protecting vulnerable people.

- Cleaning your hands frequently throughout the day by washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser will help protect you and the people you live with. This step is one of the most effective ways of reducing the risk of infection for you and other people. This includes when you arrive at the home of the person you care for, if you do not live with them, or have been out.
- Government advice is that visits from people who provide essential support such as healthcare, personal support with daily needs or social care should continue, but carers and care workers must stay away if they have any of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

4. We are running out of medication, how do we get repeat prescriptions?

Prescriptions will continue to cover the same length of time as usual. If you do not currently have your prescriptions collected for you or delivered, you can arrange this by:

- asking someone you know to pick up your prescription from the local pharmacy (this is the best option, if possible) or contact your local pharmacy to ask if they make deliveries.
- registering with the Community Help Hub.
- If you have hospital specialist medication, please contact your hospital care team.

5. The person I care for, or I, have a medical appointment what do I do?

There will be far fewer face to face consultations to ensure the safety of patients and staff, but there will be significantly more telephone, on-line and video consultations. Some routine GP surgery and hospital appointments will be cancelled as the situation develops, but individual patients will be contacted if this affects them.

- GP surgeries will be working much more closely together to ensure that they can continue to provide essential services to patients.
- Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust is writing to some patients who receive regular care at home to let them know that the Trust may need to cover their visits/treatment using alternative qualified staff or in different ways. Patients, carers and families are being asked for their thoughts.
- Essential community services are being prioritised, meaning some non-urgent work will be postponed.
- Group sessions, such as those for the Managing Memory service, Let's Talk and baby hubs are being stood down temporarily in a planned way. However, due to cancellations some of these sessions are being stopped earlier than others.
- Visiting restrictions have been put in place in hospitals and five mental health and learning disability inpatient units (check Trust websites for details).

- Patients should attend appointments at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, Cheltenham General Hospital and Stroud Maternity Hospital unless they are contacted directly to advise them otherwise or if they have symptoms which require them to self-isolate. If patients are unable to attend an appointment due to self- isolation they should contact the hospital through usual routes for advice on what to do.
- The Hospitals Trust is rapidly accelerating alternative ways of providing hospital outpatient appointments, however based on the care required, some patients will still need to attend in person. If patients have not been contacted directly by the team that manages their care to make other arrangements at this point, they should plan to attend as normal.
- Isolation wards have been set up at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and Cheltenham General Hospital for people who are unwell and have suspected or confirmed coronavirus. The wards have teams of highly experienced doctors, nurses and other staff appropriately trained and equipped to provide care effectively.

6. My cared for is in hospital can I visit them?

Gloucestershire Royal Patient Support Service Hub (details at the end of this information sheet) will support, help and listen to you as a relative, family member, carer or patient by providing the information you need in one place. They will also support if you are unable to visit them.

Updated advice from NHS England (5 June) advises visitors to:

- Before visiting contact the ward to discuss appropriate arrangements.
- The number of visitors at the bedside is limited to one close family contact or somebody important to the patient.
- Visitors should be informed in advance about what to expect and, be given practical advice about social distancing wearing personal protective equipment, handwashing and risks associated with the removal of gloves to hold hands.
- Visitors must wear masks or face coverings at all times.
- Anyone showing symptoms of coronavirus should not visit, 14 days.
- Other people who are in attendance to support the needs of the patient, for example a familiar carer/supporter/personal assistant, should not be counted as additional visitor.
- Where a face-to-face visit is not practical then virtual visits may be possible.

7. Where do I find support if my cared for is at End of Life?

Please contact the Gloucestershire Carers Hub who can arrange support for you from the Sue Ryder organisation. The Hub also offers bereavement support and advice.

Health and Wellbeing

8. I am at risk of domestic violence what do I do?

Domestic abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial. If you're experiencing domestic abuse or you think someone else is, please tell someone. For advice and support contact Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) via www.gdass.org.uk/referral-form/, Tel: 01452 726570 or email support@gdass.org.uk. Alternatively visit <https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/>, call 101, or in an emergency always call 999.

Other helpful links include:

- **Refuge**
24-hour freephone Helpline 0808 2000 247
www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/
- **Gloucestershire County Council**
- if you have a concern about a child at risk please contact Children and Families Helpdesk on 01452 426565 (during office hours), but if you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child please contact the Police on 101 at any time
www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-young-people-and-families/report-a-child-at-risk/
- **NHS Gloucestershire Health and Care, Hope House, Sexual Assault Referral Centre** - free and confidential advice call 0300 421 8400 or visit www.hopehousesarc.nhs.uk/
- **Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Assault Centre** - helpline 01452 526770 open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 12pm – 2pm and Wednesday 6.30pm – 8.30pm; email support@glosrasac.org.uk website: www.glosrasac.org/

9. We need support for our mental health, what can I do?

- It is important that you look after your own health and wellbeing as well as supporting others you care for.
- The Gloucestershire Carers Hub offers support and advice for your mental health, please contact them.
- Gloucestershire County Council has a webpage about looking after your wellbeing during this time, including links to local organisations <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/advice-on-covid-19/looking-after-your-wellbeing/>
- Further support is available via the government website listed at the end of this information.

Essential Supplies

10. How do I get my essential food and grocery shopping or I am having financial difficulties?

- The Gloucestershire Carers Hub offers support and advice and will be able to link with your local community support. This includes sending you a letter and Carer Aware badge to show that you are a carer and need support.
- Gloucestershire Community Help Hub connects local people who need help, with others who can provide the support they need (details at the end of this information)
- Age UK Gloucestershire provide support.
- Citizens Advice Bureau provide advice on benefits and money matters at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>
- Clean Slate Ltd offer finance advice and reassurance for those on low income. Refer to website for local contacts: <https://www.cleanslateltd.co.uk/gloucestershire.html>

11. How do I evidence I am a carer? Specifically around accessing shops, purchasing items and transport?

- The Gloucestershire Carers Hub can provide you with a letter and Carer Aware badge outlining that you are in a caring role and supporting someone who is vulnerable. This can be provided via email for you to print off, have on your smart phone to take with you to enable access to shops or be posted with your badge.
- You can also use your Carers Emergency Scheme card to access shops.
- You may also have a card from a condition specific support provider which can support with showing you are a vulnerable person or shopping for a vulnerable person.

Support

12. We feel socially isolated, what can we do?

- The Gloucestershire Carers Hub now have longer opening hours from 8am – 8pm Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- There is a WhatsApp group available for all carers to talk to one another and support.

- The Gloucestershire Carers Hub are having regular coffee mornings specifically for Parent Carers, and have also set up a Parent Carer WhatsApp group.
- The Gloucestershire Carers Hub have set up short coffee mornings/ afternoons which can support you with meeting other carers, gaining support and also having time out. There are also online training courses available for you to access via the internet. There is also group support available via the telephone for those who do not have access to the internet.

13. Do I continue to receive respite breaks? What do I do if this stops?

The providers of the breaks will assess every contact for risk. If you have been assessed and are currently receiving a short break/sit in service this will continue to be offered. Day centre services and out and about are currently suspended. Please contact the Gloucestershire Carers Hub if you have any queries regarding your break.

Transport

14. If I or my cared for need transport for a critical reason, how do I travel there and ensure we are kept safe?

The Gloucestershire Carers Hub will be able to support and give advice.

Working and Employment

15. I am travelling to work and am worried about putting my cared for at risk, what do I do?

- The government has strongly advised that people should work from home where they possibly can. As a carer, you have the statutory right to request flexible working. Check with your employer how they can support you with this or speak to the Gloucestershire Carers Hub for advice and support.
- Gloucestershire County Council has umbrella membership for Employers for Carers. You can register online at www.efcdigital.org – code is #EFC4433, where you can get support and advice around employment matters.
- The Forwards Team are available if your employment has been affected due to Coronavirus (COVID-19). They can support you with benefits, sourcing employment, guidance and advice and job coaching when you return to work
Email: forwards@gloucestershire.gov.uk Tel: 07825 024692 Facebook: www.facebook.com/ForwardsGloucestershire/

Technology

16. I don't have access to the internet what do I do?

- Contact the Gloucestershire Carers Hub and discuss your difficulties with them and they will do their best to support you with this.
- Don't forget if you have other forms of technology in your home such as a Smart Speaker you can connect to friends and family using this.
- Some companies are taking telephone orders should you need to access ordering. There maybe value in contacting your local store to enquire if they are able to provide this service.

Key Local Contacts/Information

Gloucestershire Carers Hub

Phone: 0300 111 9000

Web: www.gloucestershirecarershub.co.uk

Email: carers@peopleplus.co.uk Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Gloucestershirecarershub/>

Twitter: @GCarersHub

Instagram: Gloucestershire_Carers_Hub

Gloucestershire Young Carers

Phone: 01452 733060

Web: <http://www.glosyoungcarers.org.uk>

Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum

Phone: 07494 704564

Web: www.glosparentcarerforum.org.uk Email: info@glosparentcarerforum.org.uk Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/Gloucestershireparentcarers> Twitter: @CarerForum

Gloucestershire Community Help Hub

You can register on the new <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/>. This new hub is a collaboration between all local councils, police and health services.

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital Patient Support Service Hub

To contact our friendly advisers, email:

Ghn-tr.HelplineSupport@nhs.net or call our freephone number: 0800 019 3282

Open from 7.30am – 10pm, Monday to Friday and 7.30am – 7pm on weekends and Bank Holidays.

You can leave a message outside of these hours on voicemail or email and someone will get back to

you the next day. If your query is outside of operating hours and you think it is urgent and can't wait until the next working day, contact our Switchboard on: 0300 422 222

Gloucestershire County Council

has a wide range of information on their website, including more information about Adult Social Care <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/covid-19-information-and-advice/>. They also have a website called Your Circle. If you need help there might already be a group you can get in touch with there <https://www.yourcircle.org.uk/>

Guideposts

will support people self-isolating by providing a Stay Connected free helpline service, call 0800 048 7035 (Monday to Friday 9am-5pm). Support includes Information, Advice and Guidance around with specific advice for carers/family members.

Email: hereinfo@guideposts.org.uk or website for resources: www.guideposts.org.uk/stay-connected

Age UK Gloucestershire

You can contact their help team Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm on 01452 422660

Useful national links

UK Government: offer guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from COVID-19

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

Guidance for those who provide unpaid care to friends or family

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care>

NHS: offer advice for everyone regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Carers UK: offer support to Carers. Their helpline is open Mondays and Tuesdays, 10am – 4pm on **0808 808 7777** or email advice@carersuk.org Website: <https://www.carersuk.org/>