

Coronavirus guidance – Carers UK Website

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There's been a lot of news in the media recently about the coronavirus. If you are worried that you or someone you look after may be at risk, NHS 111 can offer direct guidance as they have set up an online [coronavirus helpline](#). You can also call 111, letting them know that you are a carer.

Getting help in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

- Scotland: call your GP surgery or call [111](#) if your surgery is not open
- Wales: call [111](#) (if available in your area) or call [0845 46 47](#)
- Northern Ireland: call [111](#)

Even if you are not showing symptoms, it's important to use this service if you've been in close contact to someone with the virus or if you've been to one or more of the places listed on the [NHS website](#) in the last 14 days.

Being prepared

If you feel that you may have to forego your care duties, look to put a contingency plan in place and, if you can, make cover arrangements with trusted neighbours, friends or family members.

[Read our advice on creating a contingency plan](#). Here, we explain how many different sources of support can be used to bolster your plan. For example, you can: ensure key information is made readily available for professionals; draw on networks of community and family support; and explore what technology can be used to support someone you look after when you can't be in the same place at the same time.

In this section, we also explain how [getting a carer's assessment](#) could be the first step to gaining additional vital support if you need it. It's your chance to discuss any help you need as a carer. And if you've already been assessed, it is always worth double checking that you are receiving everything you're entitled to.

If you are in receipt of benefits, the Department for Work and Pensions have issued the following statement: 'DWP have confirmed that ensuring that people continue to receive payments as normal will always be a key priority'.

In addition, you could check with the local authority of those you care for to see whether they have an Emergency Plan in place. You can find their contact details

here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>. The local authority should also publish this plan on their website.

What else can I do?

It is a good idea to let your GP or medical professional know that you are a carer. See our guidelines on how you could go about this on our [Let your GP know](#) page.

If you're concerned about someone you know being discharged from hospital earlier than expected, take a look at our [tailored guidance on 'Coming out of hospital'](#). Whether you need to take on caring responsibilities for the first time or need to resume your role as their carer, this will provide some tips on what to expect to help you feel more prepared.

Do I need to stay away from others?

You only need to stay away from public places (self-isolate) if advised to by the 111 online coronavirus service or a medical professional. The NHS website has specific guidance on what action you should take and when, if necessary. [Read their guidance](#).

How do I protect someone I care for?

In the first instance, it is advisable to protect yourself and others by simply following the hygiene and infection control guidelines illustrated on the [BBC's video](#) and included under [How to avoid catching or spreading coronavirus](#) on the NHS website.

If you live with those you care for

If you think you've been in close contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, call 111 for advice (or see relevant contact details above) as soon as possible and tell them that you are a carer. If you were planning to go away, take a look at the NHS website's [advice for travellers](#).

If you do not live with those you care for

Call 111 (or relevant number given above) for advice if you suspect you are at risk and tell them that you are a carer. If necessary, make plans for alternative face-to-face care for the person you care for, for example by calling on trusted neighbours, friends or family members. [Read our advice on creating a contingency plan](#).

Care workers and other home help

If you have paid care workers, cleaners or other helpers coming into the home of the person you care for:

- Ensure that they are following stringent hygiene and infection control measures as set out by the NHS. If they are employed through an agency and you have any doubts, contact the agency to ask them about what protective

measures they are taking.

- Talk to the person you care for about the [hygiene and infection control measures](#) they should expect someone coming into their home to follow. They should not be afraid to insist that these are followed.
- If possible, ensure soap is made readily available and towels are frequently changed.
- As well as following the steps above, if they are employed by an agency:
 - speak to the agency about their contingency plans and how they plan to respond if any of their staff are affected
 - and if the care worker or other helper shows symptoms of coronavirus, do inform the agency. They will need to carry out a risk assessment and take steps to protect staff, their families and other clients from the virus. The agency should work with you to ensure that the person you care for is also safe.

Guidance for working carers

If you're juggling caring with work, you will no doubt be wondering what measures to take if affected by the coronavirus. We've put together some guidance to help:

What if I have to take time off?

If you have been advised to 'self-isolate' by NHS 111 or a medical professional, you must tell your employer as soon as possible. This does not need to be in writing. Your workplace's usual sick leave and pay entitlements will apply. The government has promised that Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be given from day one of self-isolation. You should check your contract of employment to see if your employer offers contractual sick pay on top. You may also be asked to certify your absence.

By law, for the first seven days of sickness, you are not required to provide medical evidence to your employer. However after seven days, it is at the discretion of your employer to decide what evidence, if any, they need from you. Due to the unusual nature of the situation, the government has strongly advised that employers use their discretion. For workers that are ineligible for SSP, support will be available through Universal Credit and contributory Employment and Support Allowance.

Can I work flexibly?

As a carer, you have the statutory right to [request flexible working](#). Also check with your employer if you are adequately set up to work remotely if this becomes necessary.

What if I need to take time off to help someone else?

As an employee, you also have a statutory right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off from work to see to an emergency or unforeseen matter involving your partner, child, parent, grandchild, or someone who relies on you for care. There is no fixed amount of time you can take off. The time off is unpaid unless your employer is willing to give paid time off as a contractual right. Also check your work policy on care leave.