



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From DHSC Deputy Directors of Adult Social Care Delivery,
Department of Health and Social Care*

39 Victoria Street
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25 January 2021

Providing free PPE for the Covid-19 needs of Unpaid Carers

Dear Colleagues,

Firstly, I would like to thank you and the many staff across Local Authorities (LAs) and Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) for your hard work keeping carers and those they care for safe during the pandemic by distributing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the Adult Social Care sector.

Throughout the pandemic, unpaid carers have played an invaluable role, stopping people from entering formal care for preventable conditions, absorbing and reducing strain on the NHS, and providing support for those they care for.

We understand and greatly value the support and services that you already provide to unpaid carers and those they care for; and we know that some LAs and LRFs have already been providing PPE to this group during the Covid-19 pandemic. Following a successful pilot in 4 LAs and 1 LRF, **we are now extending nationally an offer of free PPE for Covid-19 needs to all extra-resident carers** (i.e. those who don't live with the person they care for).

Given the high prevalence of Covid-19, we would be very grateful if you could support this rollout as soon as you are able. Some LAs/ LRFs may have existing distribution routes that can be used for this purpose, for others, this may require establishing new processes. To support you, we have:

- a) Organised a series of webinars to answer your questions and discuss any concerns or issues about this change in policy. These will be held on Tuesday 26th January and Thursday 28th January between 2pm and 3pm. Links to these are provided in the email.
- b) Included a support pack with this letter:
 - High level findings from the pilots - Annex A
 - A detailed Q&A for LAs/ LRFs – Annex B
 - Guidance for unpaid carers about the safe use of PPE – Annex C
 - Q&A on guidance for unpaid carers – Annex D

Eligibility

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) Social Care Working Group has recommended that unpaid 'extra-resident' carers (i.e. those who don't live with the person they care for) should follow the same PPE procedures recommended for [domiciliary care workers](#)¹. They have also recommended that PPE should be made available for 'co-resident' unpaid carers (i.e. carers who live with the person they care for) who wish to utilise it; although they acknowledged the impracticalities of co-residents wearing PPE at all times.

We intend for this policy to focus on extra-resident unpaid carers, although you may use your discretion to also provide to co-resident unpaid carers. We would emphasise that the use of PPE for unpaid carers is recommended rather than mandated – crucially, we want to provide another tool locally to support the safety of carers and those they care for.

As you will know, the provision of free PPE to the health and social care sector has been extended to 30 June 2021. The department will conduct a review in April in order to inform plans for after June 2021. Further detail about the provision of free PPE can be found in the letter sent to you by Eric Finton-James, Deputy Director for PPE Operational Strategy on 12th January 2021.

In order for us to monitor the rollout of this new policy, we would be grateful if you could email the department to confirm that you have received this communication and that you will be able to support this offer for unpaid carers. You can also contact us if you have any questions or concerns at ppe-requests@dhsc.gov.uk.

Many thanks again for everything you are doing to support the adult social care sector at this very challenging time.

Kind Regards,

Julie Laughton and Catherine Davies

Deputy Directors, DHSC Adult Social Care Delivery

¹ The current guidance to domiciliary care workers is that full PPE (type IIR mask, apron, gloves, eye protection if risk of droplets) should be worn when providing personal care, or if coming within 2m of someone who has a cough. If not providing personal care but indoors, a type II mask should be worn if coming within 2m of the cared-for person, or a Type I or II if not.

List of Annexes

Annex A – Initial findings from the Pilot

Annex B – Q&A

Annex C – Guidance for unpaid carers

Annex D – Q&A on guidance for unpaid carers

Annex A: Initial findings from the pilots

To help us understand how distributing PPE to unpaid carers through LAs/LRFs would work in practice, we have been running pilots working with Leeds City Council, Essex County Council, South Gloucestershire Council, North Yorkshire Country Council and Durham & Darlington LRF, since 7th December 2020. In these pilot locations, PPE is being provided to unpaid extra-resident carers to use in line with existing domiciliary care guidance. Each LA/LRF has developed their own approaches to identifying unpaid carers and distributing PPE to them. The pilots have highlighted best practice for successfully providing PPE to this group.

- Demand for PPE from unpaid carers was **at manageable levels**. A relatively low proportion of the overall number of extra-resident unpaid carers identified by the LA/LRF has so far utilised the offer. (This may have been impacted by some of the pilot period running over Christmas).
- LAs/ LRFs approached the **distribution of PPE in different ways**, building on their own existing distribution structures and expertise.
- A **range of methods were used to help identify unpaid carers**, including reaching out to primary care networks, publishing information on the council website, linking in with staff networks, local faith groups and local community groups such as the dementia networks. We recognise that LAs/ LRFs will have different levels of capacity to identify unpaid carers; our priority is that PPE is made available for unpaid carers who wish to access it.
- **Carers' networks played a pivotal role** - helping to identify and set up links with unpaid carers.

Annex B: Q&A

What is unpaid care?

Unpaid care is care that is delivered by a family member or friend for those who, due to a lifelong condition, illness, disability, serious injury, a mental health condition or an addiction, cannot cope without their support.

Unpaid care includes a range of activities including delivering personal care such as washing, dressing, and feeding as well as help with chores such as laundry, cooking, shopping, and cleaning.

How do I know whether someone is an unpaid carer?

We understand that LAs/LRFs will have different levels of capacity when it comes to identifying unpaid carers, however we want to ensure that the offer of free PPE is available to those unpaid carers who wish to use it.

Feedback from our pilots showed a range of methods can be used to help identify unpaid carers, and local carers networks were particularly useful in helping to identify unpaid carers. Methods included reaching out to primary care networks, local faith groups and community networks as well as posting information on the council website and sending out hard copy newsletters to those carers registered with local carers hubs. Your LA/LRF may already have a carers hub/ network that could support you in communicating to unpaid carers.

How will we know what PPE is required?

Unpaid Carers are recommended to follow the same guidance and PPE procedures recommended for [domiciliary care](#). You may want to provide PPE tailored to the type and amount of care the unpaid carer is carrying out. For example, if the unpaid carer is providing personal care or is coming within 2m of somebody with a cough, full PPE is recommended. This includes:

- Fluid-repellent (Type IIR) surgical mask
- Disposable plastic apron
- Disposable gloves
- Eye protection (if risk of droplets)

If the unpaid carer is coming within 2 metres of the person they care for but is not providing personal care the following PPE is recommended:

- Type II surgical mask
- Disposable plastic apron
- Disposable gloves

How will the unpaid carers know how to wear the PPE?

Guidance for unpaid carers is attached, and follows current guidance for domiciliary care workers – this includes recommendations on which PPE items are recommended for different scenarios. At Annex C we have provided guidance on donning/doffing/disposing of PPE correctly, in the form of a training video and pictorial guidance.

It is vital that guidance is followed, and PPE is worn correctly in order to reduce the risk of transmission and avoid creating a false sense of security. Therefore, we would ask that this guidance is visible and accessible to all unpaid carers who are supplied with PPE. One way

to ensure this would be to include print outs of the PHE pictorial guidance and include them with the items of PPE distributed to each unpaid carer. Feedback from our pilot indicated that the use of webinars was another helpful way to inform the unpaid carers about correct usage of PPE.

Will we get more PPE to cope with additional demand?

LAs and LRFs can draw on existing stock to supply unpaid carers. If more stock is required, please communicate this change in demand to us via ppe-requests@dhsc.gov.uk. Please note that there is a one-week lead time for changes in demand to be processed. Please contact the team via ppe-requests@dhsc.gov.uk if you anticipate you will require additional PPE before your next scheduled delivery.

What if I am already providing PPE to unpaid carers that meet specific criteria?

We appreciate that some LAs/LRFs have already been supplying PPE to unpaid carers. In these cases, we are now asking for support in expanding the offer of free PPE to all extra-resident unpaid carers, for all Covid-19 needs.

What if I am already providing PPE to unpaid carers, but only for emergencies?

We also appreciate that some LAs/LRFs have already been supplying PPE to unpaid carers for emergencies. In these cases, we are now asking for support in expanding the offer of free PPE to all extra-resident unpaid carers, for all Covid-19 needs - not just for emergencies.

Does this include young carers?

Young carers can be included in this offer. LAs/LRFs have discretion over who they provide PPE to; whilst the policy is intended to focus is on extra-resident carers, you may wish to supply to co-resident young carers as well.

In line with the Children and Families Act 1989, either on request or on the appearance of need, local authorities must carry out an assessment of a young carer's needs for support, as set out in The Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015.

Is this offer limited to extra-resident unpaid carers? Or can we supply PPE to co-resident carers as well?

We intend this policy to focus on free PPE for extra-resident unpaid carers, however LAs/LRFs may use discretion in deciding whether they also provide co-resident unpaid carers with free PPE for their Covid-19 needs.

What if the unpaid carers identified require FFP3 masks and gowns for Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP)?

We don't anticipate that there will be a high demand for the specific PPE required for AGPs, as it is unlikely that extra-resident unpaid carers perform these procedures. Where this need arises, we would ask that you use the provisions you already have and if there is an increased/ongoing need then we will be able to provide this on an emergency/ad-hoc basis.

Can we supply to unpaid carers that require PPE for their business as usual (BAU) needs?

Similar to the offer to the Adult Social Care Sector, this is PPE for needs arising from COVID-19. Carers who would usually require PPE because of the nature of the care they provide should continue to access it through normal routes.

Annex C – Guidance for unpaid carers

It is vital that those unpaid carers identified use PPE correctly in order to keep both themselves and those they care for safe.

Unpaid Carers are asked to follow the same guidance and PPE procedures recommended for domiciliary care workers – the ‘How to work safely in domiciliary care in England’ can be found [here](#).

List of illustrative guides on donning/doffing of PPE from Public health England (PHE).

- **PPE guide for community and social care settings** - [What PPE to wear and when – an illustrative guide](#)
- **Quick glance sheet of recommended PPE** (Attached to email)
- **How to put on PPE** - PHE ‘How to work safely as a home carer guidance’ (Attached to email)
- **How to remove PPE** – PHE ‘how to work safely as a home carer guidance’ (Attached to email)
- **When to replace PPE** – PHE guide for community and social care settings (attached to email)
- **Training video** showing how to put on and take off PPE can be found [here](#). Please note although the video is titled as being for workers in care homes, the content is just as relevant for home care.

Annex D – Q&A on guidance for unpaid carers (Attached by email)