



25 January 2021

Guidance for unpaid carers

This note and Q&A provides additional information about guidance on safe PPE usage. It is important to note that the use of PPE is recommended for unpaid carers and not mandatory. Carers who would usually require PPE because of the nature of the care they provide should continue to access it through normal routes. PPE can be ordered through PPEBexley@bexley.gov.uk and they will provide guidance on how to access these items.

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 washing, cooking, shopping, and cleaning.

Unpaid care and COVID-19

Unpaid carers who provide essential care for someone who lives in another household are able to continue to do so under all local and national restrictions. It is crucial that this care is essential care only - this would include things like preparing meals and personal care such as washing and dressing.

Please review the detailed guidance on [PPE in domiciliary care](#) or the [illustrative guide](#) in order to determine which items of PPE you will need and in what quantities. Suggested PPE includes¹:

- surgical face masks (Type II) in all scenarios, with fluid resistant surgical masks (Type IIR) particularly if providing personal care or within 2m of someone who is coughing;
- gloves and disposable aprons if providing personal care or if indoors with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable;
- eye protection if within 2m of someone who is coughing or sneezing.

¹ Please contact your local authority/ local resilience forum if you are undertaking Aerosol Generating Procedures

It is very important that you follow the guidance regarding when to replace your PPE, how to put it on and how to take it off. Detailed information on when to replace items of PPE, and how to safely [put on](#) and [take off](#) PPE can be found [here](#). There is also a video available, detailing how to put on and take off PPE safely. This can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozY50PPmsvE&feature=youtu.be>.

It is important that used PPE is be taken off (doffed) safely and disposed of safely in the normal domestic waste. As this has not been generated by a healthcare worker it is not classed as clinical or healthcare waste.

Key principles of infection prevention control for carers delivering care in another household during COVID-19

All unpaid carers should maintain two metre social distancing as far as possible when visiting the home of the person receiving care. They should also maintain 2 metre social distancing from anyone else who lives in the household with the person receiving care.

It is important that you also do the following to prevent the spread of the virus:

- wash your hands often, including when you arrive, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- do not visit or provide care if you are unwell and make alternative arrangements for the care of that person
- [let as much fresh air in](#) as you can without getting uncomfortably cold.

If you have any further questions, or feedback regarding this offer, please contact: Anita Eader at PPEBexley@bexley.gov.uk

PPE for Unpaid Carers Q&A

What sort of PPE should I order and how?

How can I request PPE?

[Please contact your LA or LRF.](#)

What PPE should I use?

Please review the information provided by your Local Authority (LA) or Local Resilience Forum (LRF) on what type of PPE is recommended in different scenarios to determine what is the most appropriate PPE for you to use. Detailed information on the PPE that you will require in different scenarios can be found [here](#).

How much PPE should I request?

Please review the information on what type of PPE is recommended in different scenarios and how frequently it should be replaced to determine your needs. Detailed information on types of PPE required in different scenarios can be found [here](#).

Do I have to pay for this PPE?

No, the PPE provision to unpaid carers via their LA/LRF will be free.

How can I ensure I use PPE safely?

When should I put on PPE?

PPE should be put on before entering a person's home. If you need to be within 2m of the person you are caring for, or to provide personal care, the additional PPE required should be put on while you are still more than 2m from them. More detailed information is available [here](#).

How do I know how to safely put on and take off PPE?

It is vital that PPE is put on and taken off in a safe manner. Detailed guidance can be found [here](#) along with a visual guide on putting on and taking off PPE [here](#). There is also a video showing how to safely put on and take off PPE available [here](#). Disposable gloves and aprons are single use and you must dispose of them immediately after completion of a procedure or task and after each person being cared for, and then clean your hands. You must take care not to touch your face, mouth or eyes when you are wearing gloves.

Can I use the same PPE to care for more than one person?

You can use the same surgical face mask (whether fluid-resistant or not) to care for more than one person, unless you need to remove the mask from your face (e.g. to drink, eat, take a break). You can wear the same mask between different homecare visits (or visiting different people living in an extra care scheme), if it is safe to do so whilst travelling. This may be appropriate when travelling between households on foot or by car or by public transport, so long as you do not need to take the mask off, or lower it from your face and providing it does not compromise your safety (e.g. driving ability) in any way. You should remove and dispose of the mask if it becomes damaged, visibly soiled, damp, or uncomfortable to use. If removed, you would then need to use a new mask when you start your next homecare visit.

Other PPE such as aprons and gloves should be changed between each person you care for if you are providing care within 2 metres of the person you are caring for.

How do I safely dispose of used PPE?

Used PPE should be immediately disposed of into a sealed plastic bag. This bag can then be placed into the normal household waste. This waste should not be put out for collection until 3 days after the used PPE was placed inside it. Used PPE should never be recycled. More detailed information is available [here](#).

If I am using PPE, does that mean it is safe to have more contact with the person I am caring for?

You should still maintain at least two metres distance between yourself and the person you are caring for wherever possible. You should also ensure that you wash your hands frequently, and avoid touching your face with your hands.

What are the appropriate handwashing procedures?

You should ensure you wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or clean them with alcohol gel before putting on your PPE. You should also wash your hands after removing gloves, before removing an eye protection, and both before and after removing your face mask. A video showing how to wash your hands can be found [here](#). The complete guidance can be found [here](#).

Can I use fluid resistant surgical masks (IIR) instead of non-fluid resistant surgical masks (II or I)?

Yes. The level of protection provided by a type IIR mask is greater than that provided by a type II or I mask. A type IIR mask can therefore be used in any scenario where a type II or I mask is recommended.

What activities count as personal care for PPE purposes?

Personal care covers any activity where you will be in physical contact with the person you are caring for. This includes activities such as helping them in and out of bed, assisting them with washing, and assisting them with toileting.

What to do if anyone in the household receiving unpaid care is clinically extremely vulnerable?

If the person receiving unpaid care or anyone else in their home has been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable, they would have previously received a letter from the NHS or from their GP telling them this. Guidance on the PPE that should be worn for caring for a clinically extremely vulnerable individual should be followed – this is under [Q17 of the domiciliary care guidance](#). Please let your LA/ LRF know if you are caring for someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19.

What counts as an Aerosol Generating Procedure (AGP)?

A list of AGPs can be found [here](#). Please let your LA/ LRF know if you are carrying any of these out.

When to wear PPE

Do I have to use PPE while providing care?

Whilst it is recommended that unpaid carers follow the PPE procedures in the [domiciliary care guidance](#), it is not mandatory to use PPE as an unpaid carer and there are no penalties for not doing so.

Your previous guidance says I don't need to wear PPE, why have you changed this?

It is not mandatory for unpaid carers to wear PPE, however more recent clinical advice suggests it may be beneficial for unpaid carers who do not live with the person they care for to wear PPE.

The person I care for doesn't have any symptoms of COVID-19. Is PPE necessary?

We recommend using appropriate PPE regardless of whether the person you care for is showing symptoms of COVID-19. The virus is circulating in the community and people may be infectious despite not having noticeable symptoms.

Should I wear PPE if both I and the person I am caring for have had a negative test result?

It is still recommended in this pilot to use appropriate PPE, regardless of any negative test results for COVID-19.

Why can't I just wear a cloth face covering?

Cloth face coverings are designed to limit the spread of COVID-19 to others by infected persons, they are not a form of PPE which is designed to protect the carer from infection. Correct use of PPE will also limit the spread of the virus from the wearer if they become infected.

Are there face masks suitable for use with someone who is hard of hearing or who lipreads?

Clear face masks are not currently available through LAs/LRFs.

Caring and Covid-19 symptoms

What should I do if I develop symptoms of COVID-19?

If you develop symptoms you should isolate and get a test for COVID-19. As an unpaid carer, you are in the 'key worker' category for requesting tests and are eligible for prioritised testing if symptomatic.

If you are unwell it is important that you do not visit the person for whom you provide unpaid care, but rather make alternative arrangements. If you are unable to do so, please contact your [local authority](#) or [healthcare provider](#). If you cannot contact either of these services, please phone NHS 111.

This is also the case if you have been advised to isolate, for example by NHS Test&Trace.

What should I do if the person I care for develops symptoms of COVID-19?

If the person you are caring for develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should isolate immediately and you should assist them in obtaining a test if they are unable to do so themselves. If they test positive, they should isolate for 10 days following symptom onset. As a close contact of a case, you should isolate for 10 days from last contact. If you develop symptoms you should get a test yourself.

If the person you care for has symptoms of COVID-19 and the care you provide is essential, for example help with washing and dressing, help with taking medication, you may continue to provide care, provided you are not in a clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable group. If you are vulnerable, you should make alternative arrangements for care to be provided. If you are unable to do so, please contact your [local authority](#) or [healthcare provider](#). If you cannot contact either of these services, please phone NHS 111.