

Dear Care Home Manager

We have all had a challenging couple of years dealing with COVID-19. We are grateful to you all for working alongside us and with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA, formerly Public Health England) to implement control measures to limit COVID-19 spreading. On behalf of Bradford Council, we would like to thank you and your staff for your continued hard work.

Following the successful roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, further control measures are now paused in most settings including adult healthcare and adult social care. Across the District we have also noticed a recent reduction in the number of COVID-19 outbreaks in care homes. However, with winter approaching we know it brings with it a greater likelihood of colds, flu and other viruses, so we must not be complacent. There are actions we can all take to help reduce the risk of respiratory infections.

This email provides an update on advice for looking after your staff and residents, preventing the spread of respiratory infections, and what to do if your care home experiences cases of COVID-19.

Living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19

The current national strategy for COVID-19 is to consider prevention and control measures for respiratory infections as a whole, including COVID and other diseases like flu.

Ventilation of enclosed environments and hand hygiene remain important measures.

To balance ventilation with the need to keep environments warm and save on energy costs, our advice is to ventilate indoor spaces when they are warm already rather than when they are cold or warming up. Opening a window or vent for as little as 15 minutes three times a day is effective in improving the amount of fresh air indoors.

COVID-19 asymptomatic testing is no longer required for staff, residents and visitors of NHS and social care settings as of 31 August 2022. However, staff and residents in NHS or adult social care settings with COVID-19 symptoms remain eligible for free NHS COVID-19 tests.

Flu and COVID vaccines

The most effective intervention to prevent the spread of flu and COVID-19 - across your residents, workforce, family and friends – continues to be vaccination.

Flu vaccine

Flu vaccinations are expected to be available from the end of September. To increase protection against respiratory viruses ahead of winter, additional age groups will now be offered the flu vaccine through the NHS including all adults aged 50 to 64 years.

If they haven't done so already, your GP service will be in contact with you to arrange dates for vaccination of your residents. Staff should also be encouraged to have the flu vaccination to protect themselves and those they care for. The flu vaccine offer remains free for social care staff through the NHS.

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence recommend a multicomponent approach to increase uptake of flu vaccination among health and social care staff. Further information and guidance can be found [here](#).

COVID-19 vaccine (autumn booster)

COVID-19 autumn boosters started being rolled out at the beginning of September.

Groups eligible for a COVID-19 booster include:

- Adults aged 50 years and over
- Those aged 16 to 49 years who are carers
- Residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults
- Frontline health and social care workers

Once again, your GP service should be in contact with you to arrange COVID-19 vaccinations for your residents. Depending on supplies they may also offer to vaccinate staff at the same time or signpost to other places where staff can access the COVID-19 booster. Like with flu, staff should be encouraged to take up the booster to protect themselves and those they care for.

Outbreak management

All care homes reporting a suspected outbreak of influenza-like illness will continue to be followed up by a local health protection team.

What to do if you have a suspected COVID-19 outbreak

If you have two or more test-confirmed cases of COVID-19 (LFD or PCR) within a 14-day interval, you might be seeing an outbreak. You must immediately notify the UKHSA Health Protection Team (HPT). Contact should not be delayed, as interventions are more effective the earlier they are started, and residents of care homes are vulnerable to severe respiratory infections.

- Use the [webform](#) where possible to notify two or more linked cases of COVID-19
- If you are unable to use the webform, the UKHSA HPT can be contacted by telephone on 0113 3860300 or email - yorkshirehumberhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk
- During times of high demand, you may be redirected to the webform to notify

As a result of the initial risk assessment undertaken by UKHSA, the measures to be taken will usually include testing of other staff and residents, and may also include:

- temporarily stopping or reducing communal activities
- closure of the home to further admissions
- restriction of movement of staff providing direct care to avoid 'seeding' of outbreaks between different settings
- changes to visiting (one visitor per resident should always be able to visit inside the care home)

Following reporting to UKHSA, Bradford Council's infection prevention control (IPC) team will maintain regular contact with you to monitor cases and provide advice. They will liaise with the UKHSA and other agencies if necessary. If you need to contact the council's IPC team, please email HPTBradford@bradford.gov.uk.

[Here is the latest guidance](#) for managing outbreaks of respiratory infections in care homes.

As winter approaches, we want to thank you for your hard work and resilience and ask for your continuous engagement to keep staff and residents healthy.

Kind regards,



Sarah Muckle
Director of Public Health



Iain McBeath
Strategic Director of Health and Wellbeing