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| WHOLESTART |
|  | | People Directorate  Postal Address:  Coventry City Council  PO Box 15  Coventry  CV1 5RR  **[www.coventry.gov.uk](http://www.coventry.gov.uk)**  E-mail: independentliving@coventry.gov.uk  Phone: 02475 270 960. |
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| 27 March 2020 | |

Dear

**RE: Covid-19 (Coronavirus)**

The spread of coronavirus is a serious concern across the country, and we are living in unprecedented times. We are following advice to try to reduce the risk of infection and to minimise the risk to people who may be especially vulnerable. I am writing to offer some information and advice about how we plan to manage the weeks ahead to maintain support for Coventry residents who rely upon it.

It is possible that Covid-19 may result in high levels of staff sickness impacting on people and parents of children with disabilities who employ personal assistants or purchase support from care providers to provide home care and support. There may not be personal assistants and care workers, employed via care providers, available to meet the usual level of demand for care and support.

**Direct Payment Recipients Employing Personal Assistants**

It is recognised that you may not be able to manage without your Personal Assistant/s.

As a parent who is receiving a direct payment, you are also the employer of the Personal Assistants who are providing care/ short breaks. You are not under an obligation to remove your employees from the household. If your personal assistants are fit and well, they can continue to attend support you.

Make sure that health and safety rules and procedures are always fully explained to your personal assistants and ensure to enforce them (see the section below called **Covid-19: Infection Control, Protective Equipment and Clothing).**

To enable your personal assistants to continue working the government have described them as ‘key workers’. This is to enable your personal assistant’s children to continue to attend School, Nursery and other child care facilities during the School closure period, if they are required to work during the School day. Please see our factsheet related to ‘Key workers’ enclosed. Please note that employees do have the right to take emergency leave to care for a dependant if their arrangements break down. This right includes the unexpected need to care for a child who cannot attend school. These cases will have to be determined on a case by case basis.

Should a personal assistant fall ill, have to isolate themselves and are unable to work, you will need to make alternative care arrangements. This can include:

* Considering whether you could manage with less visits or with less time,
* Asking your other personal assistants to temporarily increase their hours,
* Consider recruiting another personal assistant,
* Registering with a care provider,
* Asking family members to support you.

All care providers operating in Coventry can be found on the Care Quality Commission website <https://cqc.org.uk/>. If you need support to find another personal assistant or a care provider, you can contact Penderels Trust on 024 7651 1611 or visit them at: <https://www.penderelstrust.org.uk/>.

Advice for employers can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

For more general health and social employment advice, ACAS, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service have developed advice for employers and employees regarding COVID-19., visit: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

Personal assistants that are unfit for work are entitled to statutory sick pay (if eligible) from day one of the absence. For advice on sick pay entitlement during the Covid-19 crisis visit: <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>

If a personal assistant is self-isolating, you can pay a retainer for this period (this means that you can continue to pay your personal assistant the same amount when they self-isolating because they or someone else they have been in contact with have Coronavirus). Your personal assistant/s have the right to remain away from work for a period of 14 days from the symptoms becoming known. You can find detailed Government guidance on staying at home due to a possible Coronavirus infection here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>).

Please refer to your personal assistant’s terms and conditions in their employment contract and contact your insurance provider for advice in relation to any of the potential events outlined above.

**Direct Payment Recipients using Care Providers**

Should significant numbers of care providers staff fall ill or must isolate themselves and are unable to work, care providers will consider whether shorter visits are possible, or reduce the number of visits. Your care workers might not be able to get to you at the originally agreed times. Your care provider will prioritise call times that are critical for medication and safety.

Care providers across Coventry are working together with the Council during these difficult times. If your usual provider has insufficient care workers to meet your needs for a short time, it may be that another provider steps in to deliver your care.

**Direct Payment Recipients and Covid-19 Symptoms/Self-Isolation**

If you decide to self-isolate because of Covid-19 there might be pay and employment contractual implications for your personal assistant/s.

Should you experience any symptoms relating to Covid-19 please follow government guidance and notify your personal assistant/s and /or care provider accordingly.

Please refer to your personal assistant’s terms and conditions in their employment contract and contact your insurance provider for advice in relation to any of the potential events outlined above.

**Support to Manage Direct Payments and Covid-19**

The Council is working closely with the Direct Payment Support Provider, Penderels Trust, who support parents of children who have disabilities with their direct payments in Coventry to ensure that people in receipt of direct payments are supported to manage their care arrangements. For support with managing your care arrangements due to Covid-19, please contact Penderels Trust on 024 7651 1611 or visit them at: <https://www.penderelstrust.org.uk/>.

If you do not have support from Penderels Trust, could you contact the Independent Living team on 024 7527 0960 or at [independentliving@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:independentliving@coventry.gov.uk) if you feel you require more support to manage your care arrangements because of Covid-19.

**Covid-19: Infection Control, Protective Equipment and Clothing**

Some families have raised concerns with us about the risks of infection created by carers coming into service users/families’ homes and would prefer to stop the carers/ personal assistants visiting and undertake the care/ support themselves. If your family decides to suspend/ stop or reduce the level of carer/ personal assistant support, please tell your personal assistant/care provider immediately and then contact your child’s social worker to inform them. If your child does not have a social worker, please contact the Children’s Disability Team on 024 7678 7980.

For further advice on infection control and the equipment/clothing that you might need to purchase, should you or the staff supporting you start developing symptoms of Coronavirus/Covid-19, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>. Please check these links above on a regular basis as they are continuously being updated.

**What does this practically mean for you?**

You are advised to use standard protective clothing where your personal assistants and care staff have no symptoms of Coronavirus/Covid-19 or a confirmed diagnosis, such as:

* Gloves
* Aprons

In addition to this standard protective clothing when your personal assistants are experiencing symptoms or have a confirmed diagnosis of Coronavirus/Covid-19, you are also advised to use a:

* Fluid repellent mask

You can use your direct payment to purchase these items of protective clothing.

Practical advice in controlling infection:

* You to self-isolate if you are experiencing symptoms, if possible, in your bedroom or another suitable room in your house,
* Keep a two-metre distance between you and your personal assistants and/or care staff if possible,
* Your personal assistants and/or care staff to wash hands for 20 seconds with soap/hand sanitiser gel before entering and leaving the property, preparing and eating food and having essential direct contact.
* Reduce all non-essential contact, e.g.
* Minimise the time taken and considering changing the way your personal assistants and/or care staff wash you e.g. strip wash instead of a bath,
* Personal assistants and/or carers to only enter rooms in the house that are necessary
* Your personal assistants and/or care staff to prepare and bring food to your bedroom door/another suitable room, if possible.

If your personal assistants and/or care staff need to enter a room, they need sterilise all the high traffic areas (surfaces and door handles) before and after use.

We are working closely with the health and social care sector regarding the supplies of personal protective equipment and to develop further guidance for you.

If you are an employer, you can purchase your own protective clothing for your personal assistants from the providers listed below.

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| [Customerservice@alliance-healthcare.co.uk](mailto:Customerservice@alliance-healthcare.co.uk) |
| [sales@wms.co.uk](mailto:sales@wms.co.uk) |
| [sales@henryschein.co.uk](mailto:sales@henryschein.co.uk) |
| [salessupport@ddgroup.com](mailto:salessupport@ddgroup.com) |
| [brent.sercombe@ddgroup.com](mailto:brent.sercombe@ddgroup.com) |
| [Nicola.fisher@ddgroup.com.](mailto:Nicola.fisher@ddgroup.com) |
| [nhsorders@wright-cottrell.co.uk](mailto:nhsorders@wright-cottrell.co.uk) |
| [steven.lenihan@careshop.co.uk](mailto:steven.lenihan@careshop.co.uk) |
| [steve.deakin@careshop.co.uk](mailto:steve.deakin@careshop.co.uk) |

However, if you have exhausted all of the options above, you can register with ‘The National Supply Disruption Line’ to obtain protective clothing Tel: 0800 915 9964 or email them at [supplydisruptionservice@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:supplydisruptionservice@nhsbsa.nhs.uk). You will need to be clear on the amount of each item you require. We are also working with health colleagues to develop an infection control factsheet for employers of personal assistants. For advice and guidance about the places you could purchase protective clothing, please contact Penderels Trust on 024 7651 1611 or visit them at: <https://www.penderelstrust.org.uk/>.

**Direct Payments and Funding Implication during the Covid-19 Crisis**

To discuss funding implications as a result of having to purchase equipment and clothing or make changes to your staff team (personal assistants) and care providers, please contact the Independent Living team on 024 7527 0960 or at [independentliving@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:independentliving@coventry.gov.uk).

**Short Breaks**

If your child is in receipt of a short break, whereby they are supported to do an activity by a personal assistant/ carer then the Children with Disabilities Team will need to review the current short break package. This is because of the government restrictions that are currently in place about leaving the home**.**  A social worker will contact you to discuss this issue further.

**General advice on using Direct Payments during Covid-19 Crisis**

Visit: <https://www.kdc.org.uk/news-events/advice-and-guidance-for-people-using-direct-payments-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

I hope that this letter has not caused you any additional anxiety. Our sole intention is to plan for the possibility of difficult times and to reduce the spread of infection. I want to reassure you that we are working to ensure that those most reliant on care and support will receive it.

If you have questions about the content of this letter, relating to your responsibilities as an employer of personal assistants or about issues regarding direct payments, please contact the independent living team.

If you have questions relating to short breaks, please contact your child’s social worker of the duty worker in the Children with Disabilities Team on 024 7678 7980. .

Yours faithfully

**Maxine Shakespeare**

**Independent Living Team**

