



## **E-NEWS UPDATE...** **Coronavirus Guidance ONLY**

### **FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LALC**

*Please note that Lindsey Westman will be working from the office from Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March. Lindsey's working days are Monday, Tuesday and Fridays, and her emails are not generally accessed on a Wednesday and Thursday, therefore **ALL** general council related enquiry emails should be sent to myself [katrina.evans@lalc.co.uk](mailto:katrina.evans@lalc.co.uk) or [amy.bestwick@lalc.co.uk](mailto:amy.bestwick@lalc.co.uk) who will be working remotely for the foreseeable future and both have access to emails via their phones. Queries with regard to training events and invoices etc can still be directed to Lindsey and she will reply on her return.*

*The office phone will be directed to the office mobile when there is no one in the office. However, I (Katrina) will be on hand to take calls where possible or return calls. The number is 07422 963475.*

*We have had an offer from one of our Clerks in the South Holland area offering to help any councils should their clerk not be available. If there are any other Clerks that may be available to help councils in their areas, providing they are safe to do so, please let me know and we will pull together an emergency database.*

*I have also attached a draft emergency plan that Bracebridge Heath Parish Council has produced in advance of them meeting next week and given me permission to share.*

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First and foremost, my message is please do not panic but follow the guidance as it is released and LALC will ensure that all information is sent at the earliest opportunity and uploaded onto the website. Also, public safety and that of members and officers is paramount.

For councils that are already thinking about their Annual Parish Meetings and Annual Parish Council Meetings the advice that I (from LALC) am issuing is the following:

The Chairman could call an extraordinary meeting at the earliest opportunity to discuss and resolve the implications of the council not being able to meet and put a plan in place.

The council could resolve to postpone the Annual Parish Meeting (held between 1 March and 1 June), should the risk of a public meeting become too high and hopefully NALC/The Government will provide further advice regarding this over the coming days. If it is outside of the legal framework of holding an APM, I would not expect councils to be challenged under the circumstances

**In addition, to the guidance above sent last week – it is looking unlikely that Councils will be able to hold their Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Council Meeting in May until further notice. We would advise that the Chairman remains in post (if possible) until such a time as the Council can meet again. If the Chairman resigns and there is a Vice Chairman, then they would step into the breach. At the next meeting, the first item on the agenda would be to elect the Chairman. Further guidance may allow for councils to meet remotely, via video conference for the Annual Council Meetings – we are still waiting for a decision to be made**

We have received many phone calls/emails into the office with regard to meetings being cancelled or not meeting the quorum to enable them to meet. Should councils find themselves in a position whereby they are not quorate (3 or 1/3), then the clerk would need to have an email consensus of the meeting being cancelled due to members not wishing to meet due to the risk of the Coronavirus. The clerk would then take the decision to cancel the meeting. The clerk **SHOULD** have delegated powers to make certain decisions in consultation with the Chair & Vice Chair ... round robin email to members ... etc to ensure business continuity. There has been much speculation that during this period, councils may be able to use skype (or other methods) of meeting remotely. This may be an option, as well as email, phone calls – and comments etc collated by the clerk. If it has not been possible to hold an extraordinary meeting to adopt a 'plan of action', then the council would need to remotely agree for the clerk to have delegated powers to act on behalf of the council, to be ratified at the next possible meeting. I would just like to remind members that councillors, including the Chairman, do not have any decision making powers as an individual. Decisions can only be made as a collective. This is why it is essential for the clerk to have delegated powers. Meeting remotely via skype, email etc WILL ONLY BE A TEMPORARY MEASURE. We cannot alter our Standing Orders to reflect this as it is not what the legislation dictates ... this is why council needs to adopt a plan of action.

**I would just like to reiterate the above guidance. Many councils have not been able to call an extraordinary meeting and clerks do not already have delegated powers in place. My advice would be that the council communicates, via one of the methods above in order to implement a plan and give delegated powers to the Clerk/RFO. All decisions made remotely, should be noted and ratified at the next meeting, whenever that may be. Notes should be published on the website for the public to see in line with transparency and to evidence that the council is continuing with business in the best way that they can.**

**NALC are hoping to make a statement today, which we will ensure is uploaded onto the website for all to see. Please keep viewing the website for information.**

With regard to office closures, this is a decision for the council to put arrangements in place for home working, who can/cannot work from the office, limitations on visitors and prohibit the public. I appreciate many clerks work from home, and the council as the employer needs to ensure the safety of the officer whether it be at home or in an office.

We have also received other messages with regard to councils helping their communities. Please see details from the email circulated from LRF in the Lincolnshire County Council Section of this E-News. Councils may already have provision within their Community Emergency Plan, those that do not and wish to help are able to do so and any cost implications would be s.137 expenditure. Please ensure where volunteers are enlisted that the council's insurance provider is informed and relevant risk assessments are undertaken.

With regard to LALC's training events and meetings, we have taken the decision to cancel all training up to 21 April 2020, when this will be reassessed. Delegates will be informed directly. I am sure that councils still have many questions and we will try to answer these best we can, however my advice would be to visit the websites as indicated daily and we will endeavour to get information to you all as soon as we can. LALC officers will be working remotely over the coming weeks and we will take guidance from NALC and the Government as well as our Executive Committee as to what is best for the Association and continuity of business. For any urgent queries that I may not have covered in this email, please send me an email and I will do my best to answer if I can.

For all other general enquiries, please STAY CALM AND CARRY ON ..... But stay safe!

Kind regards

KJEvans

Katrina Evans - Chief Executive

**Notes EO MSTC 16th March 2020 – coronavirus**

(CTRL + CLICK TO ACCESS, OR AVAILABLE VIA THE LALC WEBSITE)

**Bracebridge Heath Emergency planning discussion document 160320**

(CTRL + CLICK TO ACCESS, OR AVAILABLE VIA THE LALC WEBSITE)

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**Coronavirus Bill amendment on local authority meetings**

Yesterday the government's own amendment to the Coronavirus Bill on local authority meetings went through the House of Commons. As you know NALC has been pressing this issue with government. You can find this new Clause 20 on pages 16,17,18 [https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0122/amend/coronavirus\\_daily\\_cwh\\_0323.pdf](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0122/amend/coronavirus_daily_cwh_0323.pdf)

I am sure you will share our relief that local (parish and town) councils are included in the definition of a local authority for this clause. NALC is continuing to engage directly with government on this Bill, which is now being considered in the House of Lords. There is no confirmed time frame for when this will come into effect for local councils and we will continue to press for this to happen as soon as possible.

Therefore, I think it goes without saying that we need the help of county associations to ensure your MPs are briefed and kept up-to-date! And by local councils too where they can and have good links to MPs, including some of our larger councils.

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**CORONAVIRUS — INFORMATION FOR LOCAL (PARISH AND TOWN) COUNCILS**  
**-up to date as at 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020**

**ABOUT**

This page has been created to provide local (parish and town) councils with information related to the coronavirus. It should not be used as a substitute for government advice, however, there are some practicalities specific to local councils where we hope this information will help you plan ahead and manage your risks. If you would like further advice and support on any of these topics for your local council then please contact your local county association. This is a fast-moving situation and we will be updating this page regularly.

## **SOURCES OF ADVICE**

The coronavirus situation is fast-moving and there is an increasing amount of misinformation online. We should be using government advice to inform decisions and be checking that advice regularly.

The government's main source of advice on coronavirus includes information on the social distancing alongside a wide range of other information

If you would like to keep up-to-date with the government information as it comes out then you can sign up to their Covid-19 response bulletin

Public Health England (PHE) has FAQs that will be updated regularly

This guidance, developed with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, aims to assist employers and businesses in providing advice to their staff

You may find the advice from ACAS useful in considering any employment-related matters that may impact your local council

For further reading, the Local Government Association has published a very useful list of different government advice sources

## **ENGAGING WITH THE GOVERNMENT**

On 17 March the government produced an outline of what will be covered by a Coronavirus Bill, which their aim is to introduce as new fast-tracked legislation. Some topics that local councils may find most relevant to their work are related to “managing the deceased with respect and dignity” if the local council is also a burial authority, and also “delaying and slowing the virus” has information regarding delays to elections.

NALC is engaging with Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) about audit and with the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as a matter of urgency on a range of issues. A summary of some of the issues we are raising with MHCLG is below:

Holding of statutory meetings — such as annual parish meeting and the annual council meeting. We are communicating the concerns that councils have around their ability to hold meetings within the statutory deadlines.

Audit deadlines — We are communicating the concerns that local councils have around their ability to hold meetings within the statutory deadlines.

Elections — With the change of date around elections we are seeking clarification on the implications of this.

Democratic decision-making (e.g. if councils are unable to be quorate for an extended period of time) — We are communicating the difficulties that councils are experiencing or expecting. This includes the question of phone/online attendance

On 16 March 2020, local government secretary Robert Jenrick MP addressed over 300 council leaders and sector bodies in a call on the government's response to coronavirus. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting councils to focus their efforts on the priority area of social care, providing vital support for vulnerable people and supporting their local economies — read the full press release on MHCLG's website. NALC is awaiting confirmation that these changes will be applicable to local councils, plus legislation will need to be passed for this to come into effect and we are seeking clarification on the detail. In particular, the MHCLG press release states: The deadline for local government financial audits will be extended to 30 September 2020 It will consider bringing forward legislation to remove the requirement for annual council meetings to take place in person

It will consider bringing forward legislation to allow council committee meetings to be held virtually for a temporary period

We will provide further updates as we find them out.

## **MANAGING RISKS TO THE COUNCIL**

We would recommend that local councils consider different scenarios and what actions might help mitigate any risks to the council. This will vary for individual councils and it may be that no specific actions or changes are required. As examples:

It may be helpful to review your scheme of delegation to ensure it is fit for purpose and would ensure minimal disruption to the work of the council if councillors are not able to attend meetings and committees. For example, you may wish to consider if certain decisions could be delegated to the clerk, in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman, as a contingency plan in case council meetings are postponed due to the coronavirus

You may wish to review critical functions or services and consider how these would continue in the case of staff absence

You may have local residents with queries about coronavirus, in which case we would advise you signpost them to government information and advice as highlighted above

## **HOLDING LOCAL COUNCIL MEETINGS**

NALC strongly encourages councillors and staff to follow government guidance on social distancing and self-isolation. This is particularly important if anyone is in an at-risk group as identified by the guidance. We would encourage local councils to consider if they need to hold scheduled meetings at all. The health and safety of councillors, staff and the public should be your primary concern. If local councils do follow government guidance on social distancing and social isolation and so they do not hold scheduled meetings, including annual council meetings, NALC's opinion is that the likelihood of a successful legal challenge is low.

We are expecting government guidance on holding meetings remotely early next week, and NALC will also produce further guidance next week. In the meantime, if local councils decide to not hold meetings and take decisions by email or other remote methods NALC feels it's likely that afterwards if there were a challenge that the courts will accept that exceptional times called for exceptional measures. In the absence of government guidance, we would suggest for now only taking decisions remotely for truly urgent issues. In this case, local councils should evidence their decision making as best they can, for example by asking councillors to confirm their votes by email to the clerk for the clerk to keep as a record of the decision.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE FINANCIAL YEAR-END AND AGAR?**

After the completion of the accounts and AGAR at the close of the financial year (31 March), they must be certified by the responsible financial officer (RFO) of the authority, considered and approved by full council by no later than 29 June, published before 1 July to comply with the public rights period, with any external auditor report and certificate published by 30 September. Local councils will start receiving their AGAR forms from auditors next week. We are confident that there will be government guidance soon on how the completion of accounts and AGAR can be conducted without the need for a physical council meeting. We will provide updates as soon as we know more.

## **WILL THE ELECTIONS IN MAY BE AFFECTED?**

The Cabinet Office confirmed to NALC that the local elections scheduled on 7 May will be postponed until May next year, with legislation brought forward shortly in the Covid-19 Bill. The Electoral Commission wrote to the government on 12 March calling for elections to be delayed until the autumn.

On 18 March, Cabinet Office issued the below guidance to electoral administrators about forthcoming elections before legislation postponing them will come into force. We expect this information to be filtered down to local (parish and town) councils by principal councils:

The government will give its full support to returning officers who make the decision to suspend their polls. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has provided assurance that criminal prosecution in these circumstances is highly unlikely.

Bringing forward measures within the Covid-19 Bill to postpone the scheduled local and mayoral elections due to take place in England and the scheduled Police and Crime Commissioner elections due to take place in England and Wales on 7 May this year until the next ordinary day of the election on 6 May 2021.

However, it's recognised that there will be a small number of polls between now and the date of Royal Assent which will not be covered by these provisions.

The delivery of polls rightly sits with returning officers who are statutorily independent and responsible to the courts.

Running a poll in present times is likely to come with significant concerns about the wellbeing of those involved, which may be thought to be unfair to both staff and the public.

It would be both reasonable and consistent with the national position for a returning officer to suspend any poll scheduled within this period, including those due to take place on 19 March.

The hard work of returning officers is appreciated during these difficult and challenging circumstances.

The Cabinet Office is responsible for the implementation of this legislation.

We will provide a further update when more information is available.

## **LOCAL COUNCILS SUPPORTING THEIR COMMUNITIES**

Local councils are ideally placed to inform and support residents as they already do in so many spheres — from assisting during flooding and other emergencies to supporting vulnerable or lonely people. And this will almost certainly be the case in the current situation. Cllr Sue Baxter, chairman of NALC, met Nigel Huddleston MP (DCMS minister and their representative on COBRA) on NALC's Lobby Day on 10 March, who saw a potentially big role for parishes during the current period, including keeping an eye on vulnerable people and encouraging new volunteers to come forward to help.

NALC has also engaged with PHE and communicated the desire from local councils to support their communities and the need for information on how best to do this within the scope of government advice on social distancing. PHE is launching further guidance to support community activities next week which we will share widely.

We know already the coronavirus has affected every community in a multitude of ways, with local councils doing a brilliant job in difficult circumstances. Playing their part to support the community and its residents, businesses and groups at this challenging time.

Such as Woodbridge Town Council, Suffolk, which has set-up an emergency response group of councillors and volunteers which will assist with collection/delivery of medicines, shopping, walking the dog or simply being a voice at the end of the phone. Or Hagley Parish Council, Worcestershire, which is acting as an information hub and plans to publicise restaurants offering a delivery service and contact details for NHS helplines. And Backwell Parish Council, Somerset, has a dedicated team of over 30 volunteers who can organise to have someone check in regularly with the elderly or at high-risk either by phone, Skype or FaceTime.

You can read more about their work, and that of other local councils, in our newly published Coronavirus case studies publication.

But we want to continue to gather your stories about how local councils are responding to the current situation. Which we can share with other local councils to provide inspiration, and importantly to support our engagement with government. Please spend a few minutes to tell us what you are doing in this short survey. Or you can simply email NALC at [info@nalc.org.uk](mailto:info@nalc.org.uk) or tweet us @nalc.

## **CORONAVIRUS AND CYBERSECURITY**

NALC partners Microshade have provided additional advice for local councils as fraudsters are exploiting the spread of coronavirus to facilitate various types of fraud and cybercrime — read of the blog.

### **STATUTORY SICK PAY**

The Statutory Sick Pay (General) (Coronavirus Amendment) Regulations 2020 were made on 12 March 2020 and came into force on 13 March. They amended the Statutory Sick Pay (General) Regulations 1982 and provide that statutory sick pay will be available to anyone isolating themselves from other people in such a manner as to prevent infection or contamination with coronavirus disease, in accordance with the guidance published by Public Health England, NHS Scotland or Public Health Wales and effective on 12 March 2020, and by reason of that isolation is unable to work. The government has said that the Statutory Sick Pay will be payable from the first day (not, as previously from day four) and that employers with fewer than 250 employees will be able to reclaim the cost from the government up to a maximum of two weeks' Statutory Sick Pay. The Secretary of State is required to keep the operation of the Regulations under review and they will cease to have effect eight months after they come in to force.

National Joint Council guidance on working from home

On 17 March the National Joint Council for local government services has issued guidance for councils and council staff on working from home.

### **DATA PROTECTION AND GDPR**

On 12 March the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) released a statement to reassure organisations seeking to support their communities at this time. It includes this information:

"Data protection and electronic communication laws do not stop Government, the NHS or any other health professionals from sending public health messages to people, either by phone, text or email as these messages are not direct marketing. Nor does it stop them using the latest technology to facilitate safe and speedy consultations and diagnoses. Public bodies may require additional collection and sharing of personal data to protect against serious threats to public health.

The ICO is a reasonable and pragmatic regulator, one that does not operate in isolation from matters of serious public concern. Regarding compliance with data protection, we will take into account the compelling public interest in the current health emergency."

To support this statement the ICO has also produced further guidance around data protection and coronavirus.

### **CiLCA DEADLINES PUSHED BACK**

In light of the ongoing Covid-19 situation, all CiLCA candidates who are currently registered will be granted an additional three months to complete their portfolio. This extension will be automatically granted for all candidates and you will not need to contact the CiLCA administrator. This automatic extension will be reviewed at the end of June. In the meantime, all registered candidates who have attended relevant training should continue to submit work when it has been completed to an appropriate standard. New candidates are reminded that they should not register for CiLCA until they have a training programme in place.

***This page was last updated on 20 March 2020.***

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**Personnel  
Advice &  
Solutions Ltd**

**CURRENT ADVICE BASED ON THE GOVERNMENT POSITION**

If an Employee has a high temperature or new continuous cough, Government advice is for them to stay at home for 7 days. They will qualify for Statutory/Contractual Sick Pay for the whole 7-day period. If their symptoms develop into illness, they will be treated as being on sick leave and will need a Doctor's note after 7 days. This will have to be supplied at a later date and backdated to the 7th day of the illness.

If an Employee is advised to self-isolate by either their Doctor or NHS 111, they need to do so for 14 days. They will qualify for Statutory Sick Pay for the whole 14 day period. They should receive some notification from the Doctor who advised them to self-isolate, this will need to be supplied to the Employer.

If an Employer decides to send staff home without the presence of symptoms or medical advice, the Employees are entitled to full pay.

If a business decides to close temporarily, staff would be entitled to a statutory daily guaranteed payment of £29 for 5 days within a 3-month period.

If schools close. Parents who are directly responsible for the care of children up to 18 years old are entitled to Time off for Dependents (Emergency Leave). This is unpaid and would normally entail a reasonable period of one day. For longer periods, staff can either request paid leave, or take up to 4 weeks unpaid Parental Leave, both of which require Employer approval. This can be withheld if too many staff are already absent.

*Please note: This information is subject to change depending upon Government announcements.* In light of the Government announcements of 16th March if staff decide to self-isolate due to having either a high temperature and/or a persistent cough, they must self-isolate for 14 days. During this period, they receive statutory contractual sick pay from day one, dependent on what their Contract says.

If a company needs to lay staff off on a temporary basis, they can require Employees to use any remaining holiday entitlement. However, they must provide twice as much notice as the amount of leave to be taken. For example, if an Employee is required to take 5 days leave, they need to be given 10 days' notice.

These notes are advisory only, please contact us directly before taking any specific action.

Please check our website for future updates.

<https://www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk/newsletters.php>

For further advice please see:

[www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus)

[www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response](http://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

<https://www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk/newsletters.php>

DATE OF ADVICE – 16TH MARCH 2020

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Published research can be viewed at <https://ssrn.com/author=2701127>

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# LIVES. SAVING LIVES FOR 50 YEARS

19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

To all Lincolnshire Town and Parish Councils,

LIVES needs your help during the current coronavirus outbreak in Lincolnshire. We desperately need extra funding now to keep our Community First Responders on the road.

LIVES is a local, Lincolnshire based charity who provide a rapid 999 emergency medical response throughout the whole of Lincolnshire. Our highly trained volunteer Community First Responders and Medics give their free time to attend to 999 medical emergencies within your local community. Because they are based in the heart of their communities, our Community First Responders arrive before an ambulance 81% of the time, being there for you and your neighbours when minutes matter.

**As a charity, LIVES rely on £1.4million in public funding each year to keep their army of volunteer Community First Responders and Medics on the road. Coronavirus will demand more funding**



A significant part of our fundraising for the Community First Responders is through events, challenges and activities. While the cancellation and postponement in the coming months is absolutely necessary, this will have an impact on our fundraising income.

We are also using our reserve funds to provide specialist training and supply additional personal protective equipment (PPE) to our Community First Responders and Medics; giving them extra protection against the virus when attending medical emergencies in your local community.

Regardless of how the coronavirus develops, medical emergencies do not stop. Communities and other services rely on the support and care that LIVES provides. The residents of Lincolnshire will still suffer cardiac arrests, have diabetic episodes and strokes, children will still get sick and road traffic accidents will still happen.

I am aware that most of you will be closing down for some months and the help that you can all give will differ, However, there are so many ways you can help.



- Donate online ([www.lives.org.uk](http://www.lives.org.uk))
- Postal donation (address below)
- An article in your local parish magazine
- Information shared on Parish/Town Council website
- Information shared on Parish/Town Council social media
- Share our social media posts (<https://www.facebook.com/LIVESHeadQuarters>)

**We need your help to make sure that our Community First Responders and Medics are still able to be there for your friends, family, neighbours and colleagues when they need help the most.**

Tiffany Allen  
Corporate & Grants Fundraising Manager

**LIVES**  
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Registered charity number: 1098364 / Company number: 4680981



**LIVES.ORG.UK**



## **Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK**

Updated 23 March 2020

### **Background and scope of guidance**

This guidance is for everyone, including children. It advises on social distancing measures we should all be taking to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). It is intended for use in situations where people are living in their own homes, with or without additional support from friends, family and carers. If you live in a residential care setting [guidance is available](#).

### **We are advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures.**

This group includes those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as [asthma](#), [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease \(COPD\)](#), emphysema or [bronchitis](#)
- chronic heart disease, such as [heart failure](#)
- [chronic kidney disease](#)
- chronic liver disease, such as [hepatitis](#)
- chronic neurological conditions, such as [Parkinson's disease](#), [motor neurone disease](#), [multiple sclerosis \(MS\)](#), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- [diabetes](#)
- problems with your spleen – for example, [sickle cell](#) disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as [HIV and AIDS](#), or medicines such as [steroid tablets](#) or [chemotherapy](#)
- being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- those who are pregnant

Note: there are some clinical conditions which put people at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. If you are in this category, next week the NHS in England will directly contact you with advice about the more stringent measures you should take in order to keep yourself and others safe. For now, you should rigorously follow the social distancing advice in full, outlined below.

People falling into this group are those who may be at particular risk due to complex health problems such as:

- people who have received an organ transplant and remain on ongoing immunosuppression medication
- people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy

- people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia who are at any stage of treatment
- people with severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma (requiring hospital admissions or courses of steroid tablets)
- people with severe diseases of body systems, such as severe kidney disease (dialysis)

### **What is social distancing?**

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

They are to:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
2. Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
3. Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information
4. Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
5. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

Everyone should be trying to follow these measures as much as is practicable.

We strongly advise you to follow the above measures as much as you can and to significantly limit your face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible, particularly if you:

- are over 70
- have an underlying health condition
- are pregnant

This advice is likely to be in place for some weeks.

### **Handwashing and respiratory hygiene**

There are general principles you can follow to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- washing your hands more often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser when you get home or into work, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who have symptoms
- cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home

### **What should you do if you develop symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)**

The same guidance applies to the general population and those at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19). If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 (high temperature and/or new and continuous cough), self-isolate at home for 7 days. You can find the full guidance at [stay at home](#).

### **Getting assistance with foods and medicines if you are reducing social contacts**

Ask family, friends and neighbours to support you and use online services. If this is not possible, then the public sector, business, charities, and the general public are gearing up to help those advised to stay at home. It is important to speak to others and ask them to help you to make arrangements for the delivery of food, medicines and essential services and supplies, and look after your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

If you receive support from health and social care organisations, for example, if you have care provided for you through the local authority or health care system, this will continue as normal. Your health or social care provider will be asked to take additional precautions to make sure that you are protected. The advice for formal carers is included in the [Home care provision](#).

### **What should you do if you have hospital and GP appointments during this period?**

We advise everyone to access medical assistance remotely, wherever possible. However, if you have a scheduled hospital or other medical appointment during this period, talk to your GP or clinician to ensure you continue to receive the care you need and consider whether appointments can be postponed.

### **What is the advice for visitors including those who are providing care for you?**

You should contact your regular social visitors such as friends and family to let them know that you are reducing social contacts and that they should not visit you during this time unless they are providing essential care for you. Essential care includes things like help with washing, dressing, or preparing meals.

If you receive regular health or social care from an organisation, either through your local authority or paid for by yourself, inform your care providers that you are reducing social contacts and agree on a plan for continuing your care.

If you receive essential care from friends or family members, speak to your carers about extra precautions they can take to keep you safe. You may find this guidance on [Home care provision](#) useful.

It is also a good idea to speak to your carers about what happens if one of them becomes unwell. If you need help with care but you're not sure who to contact, or if you do not have family or friends who can help you, you can contact your local council who should be able to help you.

### **What is the advice if I live with a vulnerable person?**

If you live in a house with a vulnerable person refer to our [household guidance](#).

### **Looking after your mental wellbeing**

Understandably, you may find that social distancing can be boring or frustrating. You may find your mood and feelings are affected and you may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping and you might miss being outside with other people.

At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. There are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this time such as:

- look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the [NHS website](#)
- spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to the radio or watching TV programmes
- try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs
- keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can, or get outside into the garden



You can also go for a walk or exercise outdoors if you stay more than 2 metres from others.

**Further information on looking after your mental health during this time is available.**

### **What steps can you take to stay connected with family and friends during this time?**

Draw on support you might have through your friends, family and other networks during this time. Try to stay in touch with those around you over the phone, by post, or online. Let people know how you would like to stay in touch and build that into your routine. This is also important in looking after your mental wellbeing and you may find it helpful to talk to them about how you are feeling. Remember it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust and in doing so you may end up providing support to them too. Or you can use a [NHS recommended helpline](#).

### **Advice for informal carers**

If you are caring for someone who is vulnerable, there are some simple steps that you can take to protect them and to reduce their risk at the current time.

Ensure you follow advice on good hygiene such as:

- wash your hands on arrival and often, 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 if you are unwell and make alternative arrangements for their care
- provide information on who they should call if they feel unwell, how to use [NHS 111 online](#) coronavirus service and leave the number for NHS 111 prominently displayed
- find out about different sources of support that could be used and access further advice on creating a contingency plan is available from [Carers UK](#)
- look after your own well-being and physical health during this time. Further information on this is available [here](#)

### **Summary of advice**

Group/ Action	Wash hands more often	Household isolation for 14 days <sup>*</sup>	Self - isolation for 7 days <sup>**</sup>	Social mixing in the community <sup>***</sup>	Having friends and family to the house	Use remote access to NHS and essential services <sup>****</sup>	Vary daily commute and use less public transport	Home working
0 – 69	Yes	Yes	Yes	Advised against	Advised against	Advised	Advised	Advised
70+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Any age Member of vulnerable group with an underlying health condition <sup>1</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Pregnant women	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised against	Strongly advised	Strongly advised	Strongly advised
Those with serious underlying health conditions	As above, but further bespoke guidance will be provided by the NHS next week							

\* if one member of your family or household has a new continuous cough or high temperature

\*\* if you live alone and you have a new continuous cough or high temperature

\*\*\* noting cinemas, theatres, pubs, bars, restaurants and clubs are now all required to close. If you meet others when you are outdoors (for example, on a walk) ensure that you stay at least 2 meters away.

\*\*\*\* for example via telephone or internet

<sup>1</sup> such as anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year