

Supporting (unpaid) [carers](#) in Surrey during COVID-19: Professionals Guide (updated 8th February 2021)

Carers services still open

The Surrey Carers Team has prepared some short guidance to help you continue to support carers of all ages across the county.

Please be aware that our countywide carers service [Action for Carers Surrey](#) remains open and is providing some face-to-face support. [Crossroads Care Surrey](#) home-based care service continues to provide respite care for the carer.

What is required?	Action
Identification	Practitioners need to ensure they know who the patient’s carer(s) is/are in order to support both the carer and the patient – if possible, ask the patient “who looks after you at home?” (not everyone recognises the term ‘carer’). Carers should be encourage to register as a carer with their GP .
Support from health staff	Assess what carers need to enable them to (continue to) care, e.g. information about managing COVID-19 related symptoms (e.g. breathlessness can be particularly distressing). Remember that carers also need PPE and training how to use this if they are going to be caring for a patient at home.
	Have consideration for carers in relation to visiting arrangements in health and care settings. NHSE guidance on visiting healthcare inpatient settings Guidance on visiting in care homes
	Have available short, clear, consistent information for carers on the effect of the virus on the lungs – this is different from regular pneumonia.
	Ensure carers have a means of accessing prescribed medications (new and pre-existing), as well as supplies and equipment if they cannot go out. Discuss with carers the options available.
	Give clear advice for carers who think they may be becoming ill, e.g. who they should contact if they are unable to manage to look after the ill person (whether due to the virus or existing conditions).
	Give guidance on management of any required self-isolation. The Surrey Community Helpline is available to direct people to services that can help, such as picking up shopping, prescription collections or having someone who can be a telephone friend. Community Helpline number: 0300 200 1008 (Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm) SMS: 0786 0053 465 for deaf and hearing impaired residents only The Surrey County Council website has additional guidance for people who need to self-isolate .
	Give guidance on level of contact with the person cared for. Consider referring carer to our SUCH online awareness sessions around maintaining a safe environment.
	Ensure carers are fully informed from the outset and that they understand what is happening and why, and what to expect.
	An essential for carers is knowing who to contact when concerned (a person, not an answering machine).
	Using the Surrey Carers Prescription refer carers to online support services Action for Carers Surrey are open and support is offered to carers of all ages.
Visiting	NHSE guidance on visiting healthcare inpatient settings Guidance on visiting in care homes

National advice for carers (COVID-19)	Govt Guidance for Unpaid Carers Carers UK Advice to Carers
During transition including hospital discharge	<p>Check first that the carer is willing and able to care. If willing and able carers will need to decide on their level of contact with the patient (e.g. what is harmful and what is helpful) where they are not already living with the person cared for (often referred to as remote caring).</p> <p>DHSC updated hospital discharge guidance and the 'Looking after friends and family when they leave hospital' leaflet. NHS England also has information regarding hospital discharge.</p> <p>Discuss the risks associated with potential infection of long-standing carers with COVID-19. This will have major impact on the caring role/ patient if there is a (temporary or complete) loss of a primary pre-existing carer.</p>
COVID testing for unpaid carers	The Government has issued (and keeps up-to-date) guidance on coronavirus testing . This guidance includes who is eligible for a test, how to get tested, and the different types of test available. This is inclusive of unpaid carers who have symptoms.
COVID vaccination for unpaid carers	The Government has issued guidance on COVID-19 vaccination . Unpaid carers are included in priority group 6 of the advice from the JCVI . The Surrey Heartlands website has useful information about the vaccination programme, including vaccination FAQs . Information for carers in Surrey regarding the vaccine is also available on the Action for Carers website .
Online awareness sessions for unpaid carers about how to maintain a safe caring environment	SUCH (Supporting Unpaid Carers as Home) offers clinically tutored support sessions for unpaid carers, using a digital platform to give awareness on how to 'create a safer caring environment'. You can refer carers for these sessions using the Surrey Carers Prescription .
Carers emergency planning	Signpost carers to Action for Carers Surrey Emergency Planning Tool . Surrey County Council emergency planning information .
Carers welfare and benefit advice	Surrey Welfare Rights Unit have produced a Benefits for Carers Booklet . Benefits Advice relating to COVID-19 .
Digital support for carers	Carers can access the Carers UK digital tools and resources (free access code is: DGTL3562).
Carers self-assessment health and wellbeing tool	A Carers self -assessment health and wellbeing tool has been designed to help carers reflect of how much their caring role is impacting on their own health and wellbeing. It includes some suggested next steps.
Stop, look, care guide	A practical guide to caring based on the national guidance for paid care workers.
Carers guidance	A short guide for carers on support available across Surrey.
Support during end of life and bereavement support	Brigitte Trust remain open for new referrals for remote support Surrey Cruse Bereavement Support is operational and running online and remote bereavement support services. Action for Carers Surrey continue to offer support to former carers.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is particularly worrying for unpaid carers. Many people will have been thrown into the caring role, rapidly and be unprepared. Those who are already existing carers (e.g. for those with long-term conditions) may see their role change as new caring tasks are required e.g. management and impact of self-isolation on both the patient and the carer and finally carers will have to manage new or exacerbated COVID-19 related symptoms of breathlessness, cough, fever etc. It is therefore essential that all local emergency planning arrangements reflect the needs of unpaid carers including staff carers, caring in the community.

We would like to thank all staff who are currently supporting families and carers during the pandemic. Your contribution and support make an enormous difference and, in many cases, acts as a lifeline to carers desperately seeking support in these difficult times. Additionally, we are asking all organisations to be aware of members of staff who are juggling work with care recognising that this impacts on 1:5 of the NHS workforce. Our guidance applies equally to them.

This guidance was co-created with support from the Surrey Heartlands Independent Carers Lead.

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