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Guidance

# Using direct payments during the coronavirus outbreak: the most important things to know

Updated 27 April 2021

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Applies to: England

This document sets out the 7 most important things that direct payments holders, local authorities (LAs), clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), and those who provide care and support, including personal assistants, should know during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

There's more information in the full guidance for people receiving direct payments and personal assistants (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments/coronavirus-covid-19-qa-for-people-receiving-a-personal-budget-or-personal-health-budget>).

## 1. Direct payments should continue as before

They will not be stopped as a result of COVID-19.

Direct payments are still as important as any other type of care and support.

LAs and CCGs must make every effort to ensure that people's budgets and direct payments are maintained and supported.

## 2. Open communication is very important

LAs and CCGs will proactively communicate with all direct payment holders to ensure they stay safe and are assured about the LA or CCG's concern for their wellbeing.

Direct payment holders should have a point of contact at their LA or CCG who can support and advise them when needed.

## 3. The government expects direct payments to be used as flexibly as possible to manage any issues arising from COVID-19, as set out in regulations

This is very important so that people can stay safe and receive the care and support they need.

Where necessary, for example in an emergency or when it's time-critical, this may result in a varied care and support plan that is put into action without direct approval from the LA or CCG, on the basis that it is the right and reasonable thing to do so people stay safe and receive the care and support they need.

Receipts should be kept, and LAs and CCGs should be informed how the direct payment has been used during that time.

See examples of how direct payments have been used more flexibly during this time in the full guidance. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments/coronavirus-covid-19-qa-for-people-receiving-a-personal-budget-or-personal-health-budget>)

## 4. All personal care assistants are considered key workers, both now and in the future

This means they're eligible for things like free winter flu vaccinations and PPE.

Personal care assistants should also be able to support individuals when accessing supermarkets and shops, on the basis that they provide people with important care and support.

## **5. If you are a personal assistant supporting adults over 18 in England, you can access regular testing**

For testing purposes, we have defined a personal assistant as someone who is directly employed by an individual (or self-employed) to provide care and support to enable them to live as independently as possible.

This care could include support in the home, or to go out into the community. All personal assistants who provide care that requires them to come within 2 metres of the person they support and who support adults over the age of 18 are eligible for regular testing.

## **6. Anybody with coronavirus symptoms, including unpaid carers and personal care assistants, can get a test**

This includes home tests, delivered to their door.

Coronavirus symptoms are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

If you have symptoms, get a test (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>).

## **7. All PAs are now eligible for a free winter flu vaccination from their GP or a local community pharmacy**

Direct payment recipients should ensure that the PAs they employ are aware of the free flu vaccination and understand how to get it. This includes making sure that their PAs receive the proof of entitlement which can be found within the guidance for free flu vaccination (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flu-immunisation-for-social-care-staff/personal-care-assistants-guidance-for-free-flu-vaccination>).

Neither individuals nor their PAs will have to pay for the flu vaccination for PAs, it will be paid for by the NHS Complementary Scheme.

### **Further information**

There's more information on each of the points above in the full direct payment guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments/coronavirus-covid-19-qa-for-people-receiving-a-personal-budget-or-personal-health-budget>).

If the issue or concern you have is not covered in this guidance, you can email us at [pa.framework@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:pa.framework@skillsforcare.org.uk). We will consider them for future versions of this guidance.

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