



# Department of Health & Social Care

19 January 2021

Dear colleagues

I am honoured to have the opportunity to work with you as the first Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care. My role is to support the social care nursing profession and the wider care workforce to reach its full potential, in terms of skills and the quality of care and I look forward to working closely with you over the months ahead.

I would like to firstly pay tribute to all of you for your incredible hard work and dedication to the people you care for throughout the pandemic. You have undertaken vital roles in the enormous collective effort to manage our response to COVID-19. Your ability to maintain some semblance of continuity and normality in the lives of those you care for, in the midst of so many restrictions, setbacks and disruptions, is incredible.

Secondly, I want to share key information and news about our response to the pandemic, focusing especially on the need for continued vigilance on our infection protection measures.

The Prime Minister made clear his intention that care home residents and staff be offered the COVID-19 vaccination by mid-February. Thanks to the incredible hard work across the country, more than 2.9 million of the most vulnerable and their carers have already been vaccinated. You will be contacted when it is your turn to be vaccinated with the first dose. I strongly encourage all colleagues to take the COVID-19 vaccination as it remains the most effective protection against the virus. I'm hopeful we will start to see the positive impact of the vaccine soon.

As you know, the emergence of a new, more infectious variant has led to rapidly rising COVID-19 cases in our communities and care homes, putting our health and care system under increasing pressure. The announcement of an **additional £269 million of funding to local authorities will help support and protect the social care sector**, by boosting workforce capacity and supporting rapid testing for staff and visitors when circumstances allow. In light of the new variant and rising prevalence, there is [updated guidance](#) to care homes on increased staff testing using lateral flow device (LFD) tests to identify and isolate more positive cases.

**It is a legal requirement for staff who test positive for COVID-19 to self-isolate for 10 full days following the date of the test, even if they are asymptomatic.** If they remain well after this period, they can then return to work after their isolation period. This is essential to avoid the risk of transmission and ensure staff and residents in care remain safe.

One of the most effective ways to protect those most vulnerable to the virus, are the infection prevention and control measures that help reduce outbreaks in care settings. It is essential that staff maintain good infection control and follow the guidance at all times, including to and from work and during breaks. Transmission can happen at any time, including when making drinks or sharing lifts. Basic precautions including hand hygiene,

cleaning, safe disposal of waste, safe management of equipment, linen and bodily fluids and maintaining physical distancing, are all essential to minimise the risk of infection. **It is important that you continue to follow these precautions following vaccination, to avoid infection while the body builds up protection.**

**All staff must wear PPE and follow guidance whether they are supporting people with COVID-19 or not. It is important that staff wear their PPE properly, change it carefully and stay stocked up.** There is a range of guidance and resources to support care workers with the correct use of PPE in [care homes](#) and [domiciliary care](#) settings. A [training video](#) on donning PPE in social care settings, and an [illustrated guide](#) is also available.

Following the initial announcement of free PPE provision to health and social care workers until March 2021, the scheme will now be extended to June 2021 to better support this critical stage of vaccination and mass testing programmes. You can continue to access free PPE for your COVID-19 needs through the PPE [portal](#) if you are CQC registered. If you are not CQC registered, you can access PPE through the Local Authority/ Local Resilience Forum (LRF) route.

I would also urge you to take up the offer of the additional resources available from your CCG, such as pulse oximeters and staff training.

I want to thank you all again for your ongoing commitment to keeping staff, residents and the community safe and well cared for, throughout this very challenging time.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Sturdy', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Prof Deborah Sturdy OBE,  
Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care

*If you're not already signed up, the ASC COVID newsletter will help your team stay in touch on the latest policy, guidance and blogs. The free CARE app also contains up-to-date information for anyone who works in adult social care and you can now find me on twitter at [@sturdy\\_deborah](#)*