

COVID-19 Special Bulletin



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Please note the information in this bulletin is correct at the time of writing (17th April 2020). For the most up to date information and latest guidance with regards to Coronavirus (COVID-19) visit:

NHS:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

Gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Specially for carers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care/guidance-for-those-who-provide-unpaid-care-to-friends-or-family>

HELP DURING CORONAVIRUS

COVID-19 a message to carers in Devon from John Hart, Leader of Devon County Council

At this difficult time I am pleased that we are able to bring you this special edition Carers' Bulletin with information and news for you. Carers in Devon are hugely important members of our families and communities. I want to acknowledge how much carers do to keep our most vulnerable people safe and as well as possible. You are important to us, as you are to the people you care for. On 15th April, in his briefing from 10 Downing Street, Matthew Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care explicitly thanked carers like yourself for everything you are doing.



www.devoncarers.org.uk | 03456 434 435

Devon Carers can be reached on a single point of access telephone helpline for carers 03456 434 435. Calls to 0345 cost no more than calls to geographic numbers (01 or 02) and must be included in inclusive minutes and discount schemes in the same way by your service provider.

Westbank Community Health and Care, Farm House Rise, Exminster, EX6 8AT Reg. Charity 1119541. Company No. 6243811.



What you do for your families, friends and neighbours means that we can help those most in need, and those who have no-one. BUT – we need you to do what you can to look after yourself, you are important in your own right. AND – we want to help you do that.

Of course, this is a time of anxiety, and I have heard from staff how fearful many carers are, of not being well enough to care, and of the risks to their loved ones. I've been told some carers have decided to care alone because of these worries. Some unavoidable service closures are causing anxiety, and carers are wondering how they are going to manage.

We have recently written to 26,000 people we have records for saying that they are carers explaining the support available at this time, but a letter is not enough.

I want you to know that you are recognised and valued, and that we want to do what we can within the current conditions to keep you and the people you care for safe and well.

In this bulletin, Devon Carers explain how their staff are working to achieve this, and where further help can be obtained at this time. We also explain what rules care staff are required to follow to prevent the spread of the virus, and what you can do if you think they are not being followed.

All our staff, in the Council, the NHS and private and voluntary agencies are working with an army of volunteers as one "Team Devon" to keep our people safe. There is information, advice and help for you as a carer.

I've been struck by the insight, compassion and ingenuity of Devon Carers staff, who recognise how isolating the current social distancing measures can be for carers. They are already helping carers where there has been a hospital stay in new ways that don't risk health. You can also read inside about new help, if you are not already online, to help you stay in touch.

John Hart

We apologise if you have recently informed us that you are no longer a carer and have still received this bulletin. We are working through information we received recently and appreciate your patience at this unprecedented time.

Please note: services are provided on behalf of Devon County Council, if you do not want your information recorded on their systems please inform our helpline t: 03456 434 435.

Devon Carers service delivery during Coronavirus (COVID-19)

We understand this is a worrying time for everyone and we would like to reassure you that we are continuing to support carers. However, some of our services may look a little different over the next few months as we work differently to keep carers and our staff safe:

Helpline: will stay open during the hours of 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm Saturday. The team members be on hand to talk to you during these hours **03456 434 435**.

Webchat: chat online with one of our helpline team during our office hours by clicking on the 'Ask' button on our website www.devoncarers.org.uk

The helpline is **not** able to offer medical advice, if your query is concerning a medical matter, please follow the NHS advice: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

Further continuously updated information is available from the Government:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care

If you become unwell and are worried about looking after the person you care for, please contact **Care Direct 0345 1551 007**.

Website: we will keep our website updated with information and guidance including local community initiatives set up to support those in need during this difficult time, visit www.devoncarers.org.uk

Peer Support: following advice from the Government, we have decided to suspend all peer support groups until further notice. However, we are very concerned about the effect social isolation may have on your wellbeing, so we will share ideas and tips on how you can continue to have support during this time. If you haven't already accessed our Peer Support, now is the time to contact us. For further information about our Peer Support service visit:

<https://devoncarers.org.uk/peer-support-during-social-isolation/> or contact our helpline.

Training: our carers are at the forefront of our concerns and in order to safeguard you and your loved ones that you care for, we are cancelling all face to face training courses until further notice. If you would like to access an online course, please visit our online training page:

<https://devoncarers.org.uk/information-and-advice/self-help/on-line-training/free-on-line-course>

Health and Wellbeing Checks (Carers Assessments): we will still carry out all planned assessments and reviews over the telephone where ever possible. To avoid spreading infection, we will only make home visits where this is really needed, AND an individual risk assessment shows this is safe for carers and staff. During any essential visits, we will observe social distancing rules.

Carer drop-in sessions: until further notice, all carer drop-in sessions are suspended. If you require any information over the next few weeks, please look at our website www.devoncarers.org.uk or contact our helpline **03456 434 435**.

Alert Card applications: we are experiencing a welcome increase in applications for Alert Cards and are working as hard as possible to process these. Some delay is unfortunately inevitable so please bear with us. Visit our **Help During Coronavirus** webpage:

<https://devoncarers.org.uk/help-during-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Emergency planning – peace of mind for you

As a carer, it's important to have a back-up plan should something happen to you. We have produced the 'What If...' Emergency Plan to help you record important details and wishes in the event you are unable to look after the person you care for.

The emergency plan is a record that contains basic, useful information to help others when looking after the person (or persons) you care for. It includes details of pre-arranged support from statutory or private agencies as well as information regarding regular services you may use.

Visit our website to print out the sheets you need to complete and use them to record the information you wish to be known to help others, if you are no longer able to care.

<https://devoncarers.org.uk/planning-for-an-emergency-what-if/>

If you have no access to the internet, or family who can help, contact our helpline to request a copy of the plan on **03456 434 435** or info@devoncarers.org.uk

Most importantly store your plan at home and let key people know where it is kept. Choose a place that is easy to find and do not move it from there.

To find out more about emergency planning visit the Carers UK website:

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-support/planning-for-emergencies>

Alert Card recognised as identity of your caring role

We have agreed with Devon & Cornwall Police that they will recognise the Devon Carers Alert Card as a form of identification for being an unpaid carer. This will allow those carers who have to travel to provide care to someone to be able to do so. Please remember however to keep travel to an absolute minimum and only when it is essential for your own safety and that of others.

This card is for unpaid carers only who are registered with us.

To register and/or apply for an Alert Card please visit <https://devoncarers.org.uk/how-do-i-apply/>

If the person you care for pays their council tax to Plymouth Council please contact **Caring For Carers**: <https://www.improvinglivesplymouth.org.uk/our-services/caring-for-carers>

Or if they pay their council tax to Torbay Council contact:

Torbay Carers Service: <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/carers-service/>

If you are a volunteer, you will need to contact the organisation you volunteer for and ask for a letter or ID card confirming your need to travel.

Contact us on **03456 434 435**, chat online on our 'ask' button on www.devoncarers.org.uk or email info@devoncarers.org.uk

If you are waiting to get an Alert Card to show the Police that you are a carer, if challenged you could use a Carers' Allowance letter, or any letters belonging to the person you care for that show they need help.



Online help during Coronavirus (COVID-19)

We are aware that this is a very concerning time for everyone, and the situation is changing daily. Therefore we have created a new section on our website called **Help during Coronavirus** which it is hoped will offer you advice, guidance and assistance through this. The section includes the following:

Community support: a list of local community organisations, businesses, charities and support groups offering practical support such as telephone befriending, prescription delivery, home delivery or collection of meals, grocery delivery and much more

Finance information: signposting to advice on finance, benefits and how to avoid scams

Health and wellbeing: tips on healthy exercise, better sleep, healthy eating and emotional health

Peer Support: how our peer support team can help you with telephone and online support at this time

Helpful information: advice on caring for friends and family, coping with anxiety, caring for someone with dementia, guidance on shielding and protecting vulnerable people, emergency planning and equipment advice, plus much more

Coronavirus FAQ's: some of the regular questions our helpline are asked include: shopping, worries about the person you care for and concerns about your role as a carer

For more information visit: <https://devoncarers.org.uk/help-during-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Support for clinically extremely vulnerable people during Coronavirus

If you or the person you care for has received an NHS clinically extremely vulnerable letter, you will have been advised to stay at home at all times and avoid face-to-face contact for at least twelve weeks. The only exception is carers and healthcare workers who you or the person you care for must see as part of your medical care.

If you need help getting food and essentials you can [register on the government website](#) or call **0800 0288327**. The Government will arrange free weekly delivery of food direct to your doorstep.

If you have received an NHS extremely vulnerable letter, registered for support on the government website but you have not received a food delivery, or you need other help because you are isolated please call: Devon Coronavirus Emergency Helpline **0345 155 1011**.

The Devon County Council website has more information about keeping safe and getting support as an extremely vulnerable person, **and** looking after someone as a carer.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/extremely-vulnerable-people/>

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/support-for-carers/>

Sign up to receive Coronavirus updates from Devon County Council straight to your inbox!

Devon County Council are working hard to keep you informed about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation on their website, which is updated with all the latest information from the Government, the NHS and from our community. You can also sign up to their helpful regular emails which provide the latest updates straight to your inbox by registering at <http://soc.devon.cc/hofCq>

They have also launched a helpline for people who have received an NHS Extremely Vulnerable letter. If you have received one of these letters, registered for support on the government website but **have not** received a food delivery, or you need other help because you are isolated, call **Devon Coronavirus Emergency Helpline 0345 155 1011**

Stay Home | Stay Safe | Stay Scam Aware

STAY HOME

STAY SAFE

STAY SCAM AWARE

Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards Service

Commissioned by Devon, Somerset and Torbay Councils



The outbreak of COVID-19 has seen an increase in scams and doorstep traders who are trying to exploit fear and uncertainty during this difficult time. As individuals and communities, we urge you to keep safe and vigilant in the current environment and look out for scams in your neighbourhood, which often target elderly and vulnerable people.

Types Of Scams



Testing Kits and Cures

There is currently no cure for COVID-19 and limited access to testing kits outside the NHS. When these kits are available, always ensure you are purchasing from a reputable supplier.



Refund Scams

Some companies are offering fake holiday refunds for individuals who have been forced to cancel their trips. People seeking refunds should also be wary of fake websites set up to claim holiday refunds.



Doorstep Crime

There are many genuine community groups and charities that are assisting the most vulnerable, however, be alert for individuals who may be taking money under the false pretence of helping.



Financial Scams

Criminals are seeking to take advantage of the financial uncertainty many people are facing. These include calls/emails pretending to be from your bank, mortgage or internet provider, as well as increases in loan shark activity.



Donation Scams

There have been reports of thieves extorting money from consumers by claiming they are collecting donations for a COVID-19 'vaccine'.

How To Stay Safe

- If you need help, try and use people you know and trust. If you cannot do this, always ask the person for ID, preferably in the form of a driving licence and make a note of their details
- Don't assume everyone is genuine. It is okay to say no and refuse an offer
- Don't open links or attachments from suspicious emails or text messages
- Never give out your personal bank details, pin, passwords to anyone over the phone, online or on your doorstep
- Don't ring the number the caller has given you to check it's genuine. Always try to look the number up for yourself
- If buying online, only make payments if there is a padlock symbol in the browser window frame and you have carefully checked the site and website address for inconsistencies
- If you are unsure, please seek advice from someone you know and trust

We are calling on communities to look out for each other. If you see or hear anything suspicious contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **0808 223 1133**
For more advice visit our website: www.devonsomersettradingstandards.gov.uk

Top tips on taking a break at home

Caring for someone is exhausting, even more so now that opportunities to get out of the house are limited. It is important to pay attention to your own needs for rest, interests and other responsibilities to be able to continue caring effectively. Here are some tips for taking short breaks in and around the home.

Prioritise your breaks: Taking a break is a 'must' to keep you well, not a 'nice to have'.

Making time to connect with other people, to be with your own thoughts, to create and achieve will nurture your mental health. Simple things such as connecting with friends online or on the phone, taking care of your garden, making something special to eat or share can be enough to make you feel good.

You don't have to be occupying your loved one all the time: Long term conditions are tiring for both of you. 10 minutes quality time together, followed by half an hour of TV, silence or sleep is fine. Just holding hands can be enough to keep connected. Plan regular breaks to do your own thing, it can help you to be more tolerant if you have them planned ahead.

Find alternative activities to occupy you and your loved one: In these unprecedented times we can become overloaded with too much information which can affect our mental health. Try watching tv programmes where it isn't necessary to become involved in following complicated plots, for example; animal documentaries, sports or variety shows. Try new or old hobbies including jigsaws, crafts, puzzles, bird watching or reading. If the person you care for needs things to do, suggest pairing socks, folding washing, drawing or crafts that don't need your support.

Reduce the person's anxieties: Sometimes, people can feel anxious if you are not there. Try keeping the radio on (music), so the house is not silent; if you are reading or doing a crossword, try reading bits aloud every now and then so that the person does not have to ask questions to reassure themselves that you are still there. For more tips on coping with anxiety visit our webpage: <https://devoncarers.org.uk/coping-with-anxiety-during-coronavirus/>

Keep connected with friends and family: Keep connected with others using the phone, social media, cards, letters or online video chat (Skype/Zoom etc) so you can see friends and family by face timing them as well!

For more tips on coping at home and information on creating a mental wellbeing plan visit: <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-mental-wellbeing>

Staying healthy at home: Public Health England has produced some simple ideas for exercise at home and short exercise videos online that you can use, visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/move-more/home-workout-videos>

Do you have any top tips for other carers?

Email them to us newsletter@devoncarers.org.uk

Caring for Dad while he's in social isolation

The last few weeks have been difficult for us with regards to Coronavirus. I care for my 75 year old Dad, who lives on his own. He has underlying health issues, so he is following Government guidance for vulnerable adults and self-isolating for 12 weeks.

I usually visit Dad at least once a day, more when he needs me. We decided not to dwell on the things we can't do. Instead, we are trying to keep positive and think about how we can change our usual routines to make it work while keeping him safe and not feeling lonely:

- Each morning I ring him, and we make a plan for the day.
- During the day, I also ring him several times to make sure he has eaten his meals and taken his medication.
- I have contacted his neighbours, and they have confirmed they can help if he needs something urgently.
- Although he has a frozen food delivery service, I also shop for fresh food items for him. I leave it on his doorstep, walk away to a safe distance and ring him to let him know it's outside, where we have a quick chat (even if we have to shout a bit!) over the garden wall.
- The pharmacy delivers his medication, so I don't have to worry about this, which is reassuring.
- Dad uses his laptop to video chat with us – I have a rota with other family members, so he has regular contact with us all. We also play games together via video chat, Charades is a favourite with him and the children! Dad is also able to watch and listen to his grandchildren reading to him, which is something they regularly do together.

It's not easy, and I miss our daily contact with him but know as each day passes, we are closer to getting through this horrible situation. As long as I know he's safe and well, we will get through this together.



Grandad listening to a story read by his grandsons. (stock image)

My legal rights as the carer of a vulnerable person: our questions answered.

Article by Jane Swannell, Michelmores Solicitors

ALL CONTENT CORRECT AS AT 15 APRIL 2020:

I'm shielding due to my caring responsibilities and am concerned about my job.

Previous to the bank holiday weekend, employees with caring responsibilities resulting from Coronavirus (COVID-19) could be furloughed (and take advantage of the Government's Job Retention Scheme) with no further eligibility criteria required. However, employees who were shielding themselves could only be furloughed if they would 'otherwise have been made redundant'. Given that this would not be applicable in the vast majority of cases, vulnerable employees were being clearly disadvantaged as a result of the Government's drafting.

This anomaly has now been removed in the latest guidance so that there is no requirement for the employee to have otherwise been made redundant. The guidance simply states "Employees who are unable to work because they are shielding in line with Public Health guidance (or need to stay home with someone who is shielding) can be furloughed".

I am worried I can't or won't be able to afford to pay my mortgage or rent during this period.

On 18 March 2020, the Government announced that emergency legislation would be put in place to prevent landlords from starting court proceedings to evict a tenant for at least a 3 month period and for there to be a 3 month payment holiday for property owners and landlords (measures which are likely to be extended if the outbreak in the UK takes longer to eliminate than anticipated).

The following rules have subsequently been introduced:

- The increased notice period that a landlord has to provide their tenant with, before they can issue possession proceedings - up to 3 months; and
- All possession proceedings are stayed (i.e. halted) for up to 90 days.

Consequently, whilst restrictions remain in place, it is very unlikely that landlords will take steps to evict non-paying tenants and mortgage companies to take possession of mortgaged properties (particularly where a borrower has got a previously good history of paying regularly). If you or those you care for are concerned about paying mortgage or rent, we would recommend you talk to your landlord, letting agent or mortgage company and keep a written record of what is discussed and agreed about payment arrangements. It is important to be realistic about what you can afford and include in your discussions what will happen when things return to normal

For up to date or further guidance on any of the above issues, please contact Michelmores on 01392 688 688

Michelmores 

Keeping in contact on the Pod

The Pod is a social platform for carers that links you together online. It is a convenient and safe way for carers to look for information, advice, and to chat to other carers for peer support. In these uncertain times, it is a great way to share your experiences of being carers, talk about your hobbies or interests, or chat to professionals.

The Pod can be accessed through our website by registering online at <https://devoncarers.org.uk/pod/> or alternatively, you can download the free app on your mobile phone or tablet on Google Play or The App Store.



Advice on care workers visiting your loved ones

Insist that all people coming into the home wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds on arrival, during and after during their visit. Ensure you and the person you care for also wash your hands regularly. Talk to the person you care for about the hygiene and infection control measures and do not be afraid to insist these are followed.

If you can, remember to keep a distance of six feet between you and the paid care worker, and wash hands carefully after the visit.

If you have an agency care worker ask them what protective measures they are taking, if they have any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they have been advised to use and how they plan to respond if any of their staff are affected. They will need to carry out a risk assessment and take steps to protect staff, their families and all clients from the virus. Ensure the agency will work with you to ensure that the person you care for is safe. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to make contact with your care provider. If you have further worries after this, you can contact Devon County Council's Care Direct team on **0345 155 1007**.

As this situation is constantly changing, visit the latest guidance from the Government here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care/guidance-for-those-who-provide-unpaid-care-to-friends-or-family>

Our Hospital Services team response to COVID-19

Our Hospital Services offer additional help to family, friends and unpaid carers when they or the person they look after has been in hospital or in situations where they would have normally been admitted to hospital but this has not happened due to Covid-19 restrictions.

We have Hospital Liaison Workers who will keep in contact with those who are looking after someone in the six weeks following discharge, providing information, advice, and support. Family and friends will also be able to talk to the Hospital Liaison Worker about anything that is getting on top of them, including day to day tasks - and the worker will be able to look for solutions to ease this stress or strain. They can also support with practical help where needed and can help liaise with health and social care staff. Anyone can self-refer via our helpline or via email to hospitaldischarge@devoncarers.org.uk. Alternatively, they can be referred by a health or social care professional.

Now is the time to get online

With limited chances to see our family and friends face to face at the moment, it has never been more important to get online. There are many ways to keep in touch virtually: social media, video calls and online groups - and if you are unsure of how to do this, then we can help you!

The most up to date information is available online from Government, the NHS and Devon County Council.

If you need help understanding the options about going online, getting or setting up a new device or assistance using different apps such as Zoom or Skype, we can help you to get started. Contact us via our helpline **03456 434 435** or 'or click on our webchat 'ask' button on our website www.devoncarers.org.uk to find out more.

Free online carers resources

Free online resources are available for unpaid carers from Carers UK in collaboration with NHS Devon Clinical Commissioning Group and Devon County Council.

Use our FREE [Devon Carers digital code DGTL8827](#) to access the following resources:

E-learning: access advice, information and digital support

Jointly App: a central place to store important information about the person you care for including managing appointments and tasks

Free Carers UK publications: including essential reading: Upfront guide to caring / Looking after someone and Carers Rights a self-advocacy guide

Signposting: further links to resources and information

Visit <http://www.devoncarers.org.uk> scroll down to the bottom of the homepage and click on our Carers UK link to access all of this and more!

The importance of social contact during social isolation on our mental wellbeing

We are now all facing social isolation and the effects it may have on our wellbeing. We know that for many carers this may not be new, but there will be extra challenges for us all and we will need to find ways to support each other.

It is very important to continue with social contact, even if this isn't in person, because staying in touch with others and talking through any problems or worries you have will help.

It is important that you look after your own personal wellbeing during this period of uncertainty.

Accept offers of help and maintain contact with others, over the telephone, video messaging or, if you use social media, consider a Facebook, Messenger or WhatsApp group to keep in contact.

It might be useful to swap telephone numbers with neighbours or local people so that you can keep in contact and support each other: you might be able to share picking up groceries or a prescription to save you both needing to go out.

Keep checking our website for details of local community initiatives set up to support their area during the COVID-19 outbreak: <https://devoncarers.org.uk/help-during-coronavirus-community-support/>

Devon County Council have compiled a list of community support groups across the county:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/communities/support-groups>

Our Peer Support team can help you through:

Text and phone calls: let us know if you think you would benefit from keeping in touch with another carer for mutual support. With your consent, we can swap the contact details you are happy to share with another carer.

Support calls: from a member of our team – alternatively we may be able to offer regular support calls from a member of our team or a volunteer.

Online forum: chat with other carers online, either in a closed support group or openly to other carers, using our online community The Pod.

Support with IT: if you need help using your phone, tablet or pc to place orders or to keep in touch, please let us know, and we may be able to help.

If you are interested in any of the above, please get in touch with us.

Restrictions to visiting our loved ones in the hospital

Due to the latest restrictions, most hospital visits are not allowed, other than for the four following key groups. As the situation changes regularly, please contact the hospital ward to check on their individual restrictions in the first instance:

1. For children under 18 – one parent may be able to visit and stay, at a time and a length of time to be discussed with the ward staff.
2. Mothers who are expecting in the maternity unit, one partner may be able to accompany you.
3. For those on an end of life pathway, one relative or carer may be able to stay with that person as they approach end of life.
4. Those who have specific needs, such as dementia or learning disability or other specific care need, may be able to have a carer or a loved one visit, but again this will be in direct discussion with the ward.

Stay updated on social media: look out for our regular posts on Facebook and Twitter to keep you up to date with the latest news!



@DevonCarers



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