

Additional funding to help adult social care this winter

- £25 million to support care providers to access COVID-19 and flu vaccines
- Designated Settings Indemnity Scheme extended to March 2022

People who receive care and the adult social care workforce will be further protected from COVID-19 and flu over the coming months, as the government sets additional funding for infection prevention and control.

Today (Thursday 30 September) Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid has announced an additional £388.3 million to prevent the spread of infection in social care settings, including £25 million to support care workers to access COVID-19 and flu vaccines over the winter months. This will ensure social care staff who need to travel to receive their COVID-19 or flu vaccinations are paid their usual wages to do so and can be supported with travel costs.

To boost flu vaccine uptake among social care staff, GP practices will be able to vaccinate care home staff that are not registered at their practice. Uptake will be regularly monitored by region to allow a targeted approach, and more flu vaccines will be available earlier this year.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

Protecting care home staff and residents has been a priority throughout the pandemic and as we move into winter I am committed to ensuring they have the resources they need.

This additional funding demonstrates how we will continue to support those delivering and receiving care.

Everyone deserves to be cared for with dignity and respect and our wider reforms will continue to work towards our aim of a world-leading social care system.

Continued funding to prevent infection spreading and provide testing will be delivered through the Infection Control and Testing Fund (ICTF), which was first introduced in May 2020 with an investment of £600 million. Today's funding announcement includes £237 million for Infection Control measures and £126.3 million for testing costs. This will allow testing to continue for staff, residents and visitors to ensure residents can see their loved ones as safely as possible.

Minister for Care, Gillian Keegan said:

The social care workforce have continued to deliver high quality care in the most challenging circumstances over the past 18 months – showing true dedication and professionalism – and I can't thank them enough for all their hard work.

We will ensure both staff and those who receive care continue to be protected from COVID-19, as well as other illnesses, this winter.

Infection prevention and control measures to protect residents and staff include:

- Continuing to provide free PPE to protect against COVID-19 to the adult social care sector until the end of March 2022.
- Providing regular asymptomatic COVID-19 testing .
- Continuing to support care providers to make best use of technology to help remote monitoring including making pulse oximeters available to care homes that have less than the recommended number of devices.
- Continuing to support care home providers to follow guidance on restricting workforce movement between care homes and other care settings.
- Supporting providers to pay staff who are isolating in line with government guidance their normal wages while doing so.

As part of supporting good quality discharge the government will also extend the use of designated settings for people discharged from hospital to a care home with a positive COVID-19 test. This includes extending the Designated Settings Indemnity Scheme to March 2022, supported by £478 million which has already been pledged to continue hospital discharge programmes through the winter until March 2022.

From November 11 any staff or visiting professionals entering a care home will need to provide evidence of their COVID-19 vaccination or exemption status. Vaccines save lives and it is our responsibility to do everything we can to reduce the risk for those in care, who are some of the most clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

To apply for a medical exemption, individuals will be able to call 119 from 30 September and, if there is a medical reason for exemption, will be issued with an application form. Each application will be clinically reviewed and they will automatically be contacted via post with results of their application.

The government will also launch a consultation on extending free PPE beyond March 2022 for Health and Social Care on 1 October.

Vaccine exemptions

The vaccines are safe and effective. The possible reasons for exemptions are limited to continue protecting the most vulnerable in society. Examples that might be reasons for a medical exemption include:

Other medical conditions could also allow you to get a medical exemption.

Time-limited exemptions will also be available for those with short-term medical conditions.