

# Free PPE for unpaid carers

- Protective equipment to be provided to keep unpaid carers and those they care for safe
- Minister for Care encourages councils to take part as two-thirds of local authorities already signed up to assist with supply
- New distribution routes being set up to support delivery to those who need it

Following a successful pilot scheme to establish the distribution method and logistics, free PPE is now being made available to 'extra-resident' unpaid carers who need it, so they can continue to keep themselves and those they care for safe from COVID-19 if they have to move between households.

Local authorities and local resilience forums (LRFs) were informed of the extended PPE offer by letter sent on 25 January, and already almost two-thirds have signed up to support this. The Minister for Care Helen Whately is now calling for more to take part and help unpaid carers in their areas to access free PPE.

Minister for Care Helen Whately said:

Unpaid carers are the unsung heroes of this pandemic. All too often their kindness and devotion go unseen and unacknowledged by society.

I know the enormous strain this pandemic has placed on those caring for family and those they love. I'm determined to do everything possible to support them.

Working with local authorities and voluntary organisations, we have already improved access for carers to testing and supported day services to stay open safely during this second wave. I'm pleased we can now roll out free PPE for those unpaid carers who are advised to use it.

Throughout the pandemic action has been taken to support unpaid carers during this challenging year, including through tailored guidance, supported access to respite as well as £500,000 to Carers Trust to help combat loneliness.

As key workers, unpaid carers are also able to access priority testing when they have symptoms through the government's testing portal.

Professor Deborah Sturdy OBE, Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care, said:

It is important everything is done to protect those who are vulnerable and the people who care for them.

Unpaid carers provide a fundamental pillar supporting our social

care system and have the gratitude of a nation for their work before, during and after this pandemic.

The scientific advice is to wear PPE while caring and we are ensuring extra-resident unpaid carers can now access this for free.

The provision of free PPE to unpaid carers builds on the government's commitment to provide free PPE until at the least the end of June 2021 to the adult social care sector.

Over 8.1 billion items of PPE have been distributed to protect our health and social care staff.

The government's infection prevention control guidance has been continually reviewed and has evolved over time in response to the changing epidemiology of COVID-19 and the emergence of new evidence and science.

As part of this, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) social care working group has recommended that unpaid, extra-resident carers should follow the same PPE procedures recommended for domiciliary care workers.

Work with local authorities has begun to set up distribution systems nationwide following a successful pilot scheme.

Financial support is also available for local authorities and LRFs to support the roll-out, and following information sessions the majority of local authorities have signed up and more are expected.

A number of unpaid carers have been prioritised for the vaccine as part of cohort 6, in line with the independent advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. These include those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill.

Plans will be set out to further vaccinate other groups in due course.