**Infection control policy for support workers during the covid-19 pandemic**

This policy provides guidance on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for care workers visiting people’s homes to deliver care (domiciliary care) during sustained COVID-19 transmission in the UK. This policy is intended for care workers and support staff visiting homecare including extra care housing (i.e., where care workers visit individuals in their place of residence).

For the purpose of this policy, the term ‘personal protective equipment’ is used to describe products that are either PPE or medical devices that are approved by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) as protective solutions in managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations for the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for care workers delivering homecare (domiciliary care) in a client’s home during sustained COVID-19 transmission in England

1. When providing close personal care in direct contact with the client(s) (e.g., touching) OR within 2 metres of anyone in the household who is coughing These recommendations apply:

• whether the client to whom you are providing care has symptoms or not, and includes all clients, including those in the ‘extremely vulnerable’ group undergoing shielding and those diagnosed with COVID-19

• whenever you are within 2 metres of someone (client or household member) who is coughing, even if you are not providing direct care to them

• to all personal care, for example: assisting with getting in/out of bed, feeding, dressing, bathing, grooming, toileting, dressings etc. and or when unintended contact with clients is likely (e.g., when caring for clients with challenging behaviour)

These recommendations assume that care workers are not undertaking aerosol generating procedures (AGPs).

Note: PPE is only effective when worn properly, put on and taken off safely and combined with hand hygiene (cleaning your hands regularly and appropriately); respiratory hygiene (“catch it, bin it, kill it”) and avoiding touching your face with your hands, and following standard infection prevention and control precautions (tended contact with clients is likely (e.g., when caring for clients with challenging behaviour)

• whatever your role in care (i.e., applies to all staff, care workers, cleaners etc.)

**If a care worker is concerned they have COVID-19**

If a member of staff is concerned they have COVID-19 they should follow [NHS advice](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19).

If they are advised to self-isolate at home they should follow the [stay at home guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection).

If advised to self-isolate at home, they should not visit and care for individuals until safe to do so.

**If the individual being cared for has symptoms of COVID-19**

If the individual receiving care and support has symptoms of COVID-19, then the risk of transmission should be minimised through safe working procedures.

**Personal protective equipment**

Care workers should use personal protective equipment (PPE) for activities that bring them into close personal contact, such as washing and bathing, personal hygiene and contact with bodily fluids.

Aprons, gloves, and fluid repellent surgical masks should be used in these situations. If there is a risk of splashing, then eye protection will minimise risk.

New personal protective equipment must be used for each episode of care. It is essential that personal protective equipment is stored securely within disposable rubbish bags.

These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely, and kept separate from other waste within the room. This should be put aside for at least 72 hours before being put in the usual household waste bin.

**Cleaning**

If care workers undertake cleaning duties, then they should use usual household products, such as detergents and bleach as these will be very effective at getting rid of the virus on surfaces. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly.

Personal waste (for example, used tissues, continence pads and other items soiled with bodily fluids) and disposable cleaning cloths can be stored securely within disposable rubbish bags.

These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely, and kept separate from other waste within your own room. This should be put aside for at least 72 hours before being put in the usual household waste bin for disposal as normal.

**Laundry**

If care workers support the individual with laundry, then they should not shake dirty laundry before washing. This minimises the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.

Wash items as appropriate, in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.

Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people’s items. If the individual does not have a washing machine, wait a further 72 hours after the 7-day isolation period has ended; the laundry can then be taken to a public laundromat.

Items heavily soiled with body fluids, for example, vomit or diarrhoea, or items that cannot be washed, should be disposed of, with the owner’s consent.

**Individual being cared for does not have symptoms but is part of a household that is isolating.**

If the individual being cared for and their worker can remain at a safe protected distance from the symptomatic member of the household, then care can be provided without additional precaution. This would apply, for example, where the symptomatic family member can remain in their own room, is using separate bathroom facilities and is observing robust isolation procedures, staying 2 metres away from other family members.

Where this is not possible – and this will vary on a case-by-case basis – the same procedures should be adopted as if the person being cared for did have symptoms of COVID-19 (see above). Care should continue to be taken to limit contact with any household member that has symptoms.

See [guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance).

**If neither the individual nor the care worker have symptoms of COVID-19**

If neither the care worker nor the individual receiving care and support is symptomatic, then no personal protective equipment is required above and beyond normal good hygiene practices.

General interventions may include increased cleaning activity and keeping property properly ventilated by opening windows whenever safe and appropriate.

Care workers should follow advice on [hand hygiene](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/866065/Handwashing_techniques.pdf).

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