



# COVID-19: Stepping up NHS clinical support to care homes

CPA Briefing note for care homes

20 May 2020

## Introduction

Primary care and community health services are key to ensuring care homes have the clinical support they need. The NHS has committed that all care homes will be supported via primary and community support, by 15 May 2020.

The support is modelled on the Enhanced Health in Care Homes initiative which has been running in some areas of the country for some time. This briefing summarises what support should be available, what care homes can do to make the most of the scheme, and who to contact.

**Care home managers should press to be actively involved in decisions about the new arrangements. You can use this note to ensure you get what you need, and enable you to work as an equal partner with your local health colleagues.**

## Background: Enhanced Health in Care Homes

The Enhanced Health in Care Homes initiative has been up and running in some areas for a number of years. It is a way of working where GPs and other community health services provide proactive, ongoing support to care home residents and staff, rather than waiting until someone is unwell to get involved. Evidence is that it has been very successful.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, NHS England has brought forward the roll out of this additional NHS clinical support to all areas in England from October 2020 to May 2020. The [Care Home Support Package](#) published by Government on 15 May includes details on stepping up NHS clinical support to care homes – based on the Enhanced Health in Care Homes model.

**This support does not depend on whether your care homes are contracted by the local authority, or the CCG, or if you support self-funders. Every resident is entitled to the same NHS support.**

## Support to care homes

From May 2020, each nursing or residential care home should expect to have:

- **a named clinical lead** from the local health services to support them
- **a consistent weekly “check in”** by a GP and/or other local health professionals. Due to COVID-19, this will usually be done remotely, and it is sometimes called a “virtual ward round.” The weekly check should review residents whose health the care home is concerned about, discuss future treatment and whether hospital admission may be required. It may also discuss the possibility of remote monitoring, for example using oximeters, which check that people’s oxygen levels have not dropped.
- clear and consistent **out-of-hours provision**
- **ready access to hospital** admission, when clinically appropriate
- **proactive pharmacy support** to staff and residents, reviewing medication and helping organise supplies
- **support to develop individual care plans**, particularly at end of life.

If these services are not offered or provided, raise it with your local NHS. provider.

## Actions for care homes

In order to get the best support from the initiative, the CPA recommends that care home managers and their teams should:

- proactively consider and share ideas about **what would work best for their care home**. Arrangements have worked best where there have been good relationships and trust between all the health and care home staff involved. Health services should discuss and agree the arrangements with individual care homes.
- **call a doctor** if residents are unwell between the weekly check-in. The check-in does not replace visits or remote consultations if people are unwell during the week.
- expect health care workers to **respect care home staffs’ observations and judgements**. You and our staff have the best knowledge and understanding of residents’ needs and symptoms.

- **prepare thoroughly for each weekly “ward round” or “check-in”.** You should review the records for all residents and check if there you have any concerns. Write a list in advance of the weekly check of all the things to discuss and agree.
- **share information or seek the advice** and support of colleagues across other care providers. For example, this may be through a local or national care association. (See [CPA members for details of national associations](#)).

## Contacts

If your home is not receiving support, or if you have not been contacted about the scheme, you should contact your GP practice, Primary Care Network or Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to ask about what will be happening in your area.

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are groups of GPs and community health services that work together across a wider area than one practice. Care home support will often be provided by a PCN, rather than by an individual practice. You should be able to find if you are covered by a network from your local CCG website.

You can share information or seek advice from other care providers. This may be through membership of a local association, or one of the [CPA national members](#).

## Further information

[Care Home Support Package – 15 May 2020 – GOV.UK](#)

[Letter from Minister of State for Social Care on support to care homes – 14 May 2020 – GOV.UK](#)

[COVID-19 response: Primary care and community health support care home residents – 1 May 2020 – NHS England and NHS Improvement](#)

[The Framework for Enhanced Health in Care Homes - March 2020 - NHS England Presentations and resources on Enhanced Health in Care Homes – On CPA website](#)  
[British Geriatric Society](#)

[Social Care Institute for Excellence – Advice for care providers on COVID-19](#)

[CPA information on coronavirus](#)

### Acknowledgements

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