



Fuel supplies and transport

Business continuity guidance for adult social care providers

Published 24 July 2020

Introduction

This guidance provides information and advice on managing actual or perceived shortages of fuel and the impact on adult social care providers in England. It is aimed at all managers, owners and workforce/personnel leads within adult social care providers in England.

Guidance of particular importance to residential or home care services is highlighted throughout.

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Disclaimer

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Key messages

National, regional and local contingency plans already exist to manage fuel shortages. Your own business continuity and/or contingency plans should cover the supply of fuel, its impact on your services and the ability of your staff to travel to and for work. This will be similar to your plans for extremely bad weather, which can affect travel.

Guidance

The availability of fuel within the UK is generally very good. In most circumstances, the fuel industry is well prepared to respond to supply disruptions without it impacting on the wider public. However, it is still important for organisations to consider all eventualities, including the possibility that fuel supply unavoidably falls below the level of demand. A disruption could be caused by a number of factors, including scarcity of supply, a technical problem with part of the fuel supply infrastructure, industrial action or public protest.

You should therefore consider how you would cope with a potential fuel shortage, which may impact on travel arrangements, or even heating and cooking facilities.

Supply disruptions can be exacerbated if people buy more fuel than usual. The best advice is for people to keep to their normal purchasing routines. This will minimise the risk of temporary fuel shortages and allow any that do take place to be resolved quickly

In the event of a **minor fuel disruption**, you should continue to apply the normal rules of responsible fuel use. You should:

- remind staff about responsible fuel buying and fuel conservation. Messages, which already apply in normal circumstances, could include:
 - buy fuel normally. This is responsible behaviour that'll avoid creating problems. Keeping a fuel tank topped up could lead to unnecessary shortages.
 - drive considerately, helping conserve fuel
 - avoid using the car where possible, taking public transport, walking or cycling
 - prioritise fuel for work travel over personal use.
- consider temporary accommodation on site or within walking distance for residential service staff

- consider if a home care services carer should stay overnight with clients. You would, of course, have to negotiate this with the client and/or their family or next-of-kin
- monitor the impact on staff ability to attend work – particularly for home care staff
- ensure central government and local authority messages are cascaded to staff.

As part of your business continuity planning, you should ensure you have a good understanding of the fuel products you rely on and your supply chain.

If a fuel disruption becomes more significant, Government may implement measures that are directed towards supporting the fuel industry in ensuring the impact on the public is minimal. However, health and social care services need to consider all eventualities, including the possibility that fuel supply unavoidably falls below the level of demand.

During this time, it would be advisable that organisations start to consider the following measures:

- **car sharing:** develop a plan with your staff so they can coordinate car sharing based on their journeys and shifts.
- **flexible shifts:** a degree of flexibility on start and finish times is likely to be needed. For staff who don't deliver direct care, consider home working if possible.
- **mutual aid:** it may be possible to pool home care visits between providers to make 'runs' more fuel efficient.
- **reduced frequency of visits:** it may be possible to reduce the number of times in a day/week that an individual client receives care visits.

When issuing communications, messages need to be communicated sensibly, proportionately and in co-ordination with those being issued by the LRF and Government.

In the highly unlikely event of **a national fuel disruption**, the Government would issue more detailed guidance, and the CPA would share relevant information with its members.

Any changes to the care received by a person, whether the duration, frequency, or the provider, should be agreed, where possible, in advance between the local

authority commissioning team, the provider, and the person receiving care and support.

In the event of a sudden and unexpected significant increase in the price of fuel, you might consider whether to compensate your staff for any additional travel costs. If this might involve a significant pressure on your finances, you should consider talking with your local authority commissioning team to explore whether there's scope for these additional costs to be recognised. Under the 1976 Energy Act, Government has powers to regulate fuel prices in emergency situations. However, in the majority of cases, competition within the sector is sufficient to keep fuel prices under control, even in the event of a disruption.

Local authorities' role

Local authorities have a duty to ensure the wellbeing of people who are in the care system – including the people you support.

You should expect your local authority to check that, as part of your contingency planning arrangements, you've taken all reasonable steps to ensure you have plans to manage any concerns about fuel and transport.

If you can't address service issues because of fuel shortages, then you should approach your local authority commissioning team.

The local authority will be able to advise on local fuel supply resilience measures that are in place, for example coordinating mutual aid from other local providers. You should be prepared to be called on to support other local providers in the same way.

Escalation process

If you can't resolve issues to do with any supplies, you should contact your local authority commissioning team. They in turn may contact your Local Resilience Forum representative, or they may suggest that you contract the LRF direct.

If the issue is likely to affect your ability to deliver your service, you should also alert your local Care Quality Commission contact.

In the event of a significant regional or national disruption to fuel supplies, reporting and incident control structures will be set up by local and central government. Providers should look to their LA for communication of key messages and report concerns to them in the first instance.

Resource implications

As well as setting aside staff time to review and update your contingency plan, you might need to consider other resources – including free resources – such as:

- staff and their family/friends who'd be willing to car share
- carers and relatives who may also be willing to give staff a lift to work
- taxi fares
- overnight accommodation costs – including staff time, subsistence and expenses if needed
- staff use of unused beds or camp beds in your care home
- staff who live close to your service and who can accommodate other staff staying overnight.

Case study: Osborne Care Homes

Osborne Care Homes operates two care homes in Clevedon, North Somerset and Aberdare, South Wales. Having been encouraged by the Welsh local authority to create a contingency plan for its care home in Wales, the owners repeated the process for the home in England.

The main challenge was to assess which issues could arise that were within their control and which were not, and to prioritise the actions to reduce risks and ensure service continuity. The management team embraced the contingency planning process to ensure it could be carried out if and when needed, and shared details of the plan with the local authority.

As a small organisation, it could adapt to situations quickly and the management team was confident of the ability of its staff to manage potential risks. For example, the local authority in Wales put together a fuel prioritisation plan to ensure safe working numbers of staff in case of fuel shortages. For its home in England, the business says it will follow the approach in its cold weather plan, ensuring it knows which staff live close by and can therefore get to work on foot.

Useful links

[CPA business continuity planning guidance and template](#)

[Government guidance on business continuity management for fuel shortages](#)

[Summary of Government Response tools in the National Emergency Plan for Fuel](#)

Contacts

There are many people and organisations who may be able to help.

- A local care association or one of the national associations which make up the Care Provider Alliance could offer peer support, resources and advice.
- Other local services, or networks such as the Skills for Care Registered Manager Forums, which can provide peer support for first line leaders.
- Local authority and health care commissioners – who may have concerns, but who won't want to see a service close unless it is unavoidable.

The following organisations may be able to provide you with additional guidance and support.

[Care Provider Alliance](#)

[Associated Retirement Community Operators](#)

[Association for Real Change](#)

[Association of Mental Health Providers](#)

[Care England](#)

[National Care Association](#)

[National Care Forum](#)

[Registered Nursing Home Association](#)

[Shared Lives Plus](#)

[United Kingdom Homecare Association](#)

[Voluntary Organisations Disability Group](#)

[Local care association - contacts](#)