



Non-medical consumables, goods and services

Business continuity guidance for adult social care providers

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Introduction

This guidance provides information and advice on managing actual or perceived shortages of non-medical consumables (disposable or short-life items), goods and services and the impact on adult social care providers in England. It is aimed at all managers, owners and purchasing/supply leads.

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

Non-medical consumable, goods and services include:

- IT service agreements and infrastructure
- equipment including hoists, stairlifts and specialist aids
- waste management
- facilities management
- service maintenance contracts
- laundry services
- food including specialist food and catering contracts.

Coronavirus pandemic 2020

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 is active across the world. As a novel virus it is causing major disruption to everyday life, and to care and health services in particular. This paper does not cover detailed guidance on the impact on supplies during the pandemic, but the issues identified may act as a useful tool for providers to consider. Please see the following resources for detailed advice on coronavirus:

[Government guidance on coronavirus](#)

[CPA – Coronavirus: supplies](#)

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Disclaimer

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Key messages

It is a collective priority for those working in or with the care and support sector to make sure service continuity is maintained: the quality of life of millions of people depend upon it.

On the rare occasion when you may face a shortage of supplies, you should consider:

- Could you manage for a short time without the service or item?
- If not, could you manage with an alternative item?
- If not, do you need to have an alternative supplier available?

As an organisation providing care services in the community or in a residential setting we suggest you should:

- as part of your business continuity planning, review all the supplies and services you use – including machinery, linen and food
- involve suppliers in developing your business continuity plan and review and update it regularly
- avoid stockpiling but consider mitigations such as earlier ordering
- consider alternative sources of supplies
- consider the implications of potential international – not just local or national – supply shortages.

Guidance

You should ensure you've included any risks and issues associated with the supply of non-clinical consumables, goods and services in your business continuity plan and/or contingency plan. (See [CPA business continuity planning guidance and template](#)).

The Government works with the NHS, suppliers, providers and local authorities across the adult social care sector to support the continuity of supply of non-clinical goods and services.

Your suppliers should already have their own contingency plans in place. So, they should be able to continue to provide you with the goods and services you've agreed in their contract with you. You should work with your suppliers to ensure that's the case. If they believe they may have difficulties supplying you with goods or services in certain situations, you should consider three possible responses.

1. You might want to consider temporary flexibilities in your arrangements with your supplier. So, for example, you might agree to a temporary increase in price because they need to provide an alternative product or service.
2. You should explore whether you can continue to operate for a period despite receiving a temporary reduction in service from your supplier.
3. You might wish to explore the scope to obtain the service from an alternative supplier on a temporary basis, should your usual supplier be unable to provide the service while others can.

The most appropriate response may vary, depending on whether the disruption in supply is expected to last only for a short time, or whether it is expected to have a longer duration, and whether the disruption is due to issues with your supplier (such as a fire at their warehouse) or to factors beyond their control (such as a failure in the supply chain of a product manufactured by others).

Coronavirus

At the time of publication, the coronavirus pandemic is active across the world, resulting in reduction in production and transport for many manufacturers. Social distancing and shielding will also impact on services delivered onsite, such as maintenance of equipment in residents' bedrooms. Care providers should review their contracts with suppliers to agree priorities and arrangements for access to care settings. Please see the following resources for detailed advice on coronavirus:

[Government guidance on coronavirus](#)

[CPA – Coronavirus: supplies](#)

Check list

1. Find out what contingency plans your suppliers have in place: have they made the necessary arrangements to manage any disruption to supply?
2. Consider whether you would be able to maintain services for a period without the given service or product
3. Think about how you might use different suppliers if you need to.

Equipment (including computers, aids and adaptations and machinery)

Ensure you're up-to-date on routine maintenance of any equipment or machinery - such as hoists, stair lifts, specialist baths, or computers. Check your contract and agreements with suppliers to see if they include contingency plans for when parts are unexpectedly discontinued or in short supply.

Find out if your local health and social care services have plans to offer support if a piece of equipment fails. You may find this information from your equipment store connected to the local hospital or local authority care aids supply.

Specialist foods

Should you at any time experience shortages of specialist foods, please consult with nutritionist and healthcare professionals if you need to change diets for people with requirements such as:

- **religious requirements:** for example Kosher, vegetarian or vegan diets.
- **people with dysphagia:** ensure that any replacement food meets their needs for a safe, texture-modified diet. Any replacement foods should still be [IDDSI compliant](#).
- **people with dementia:** if you aren't already, try finger foods as an ideal way to help residents maintain their independence, dignity, and a daily routine.

All the food you serve should continue to provide a balanced diet that [follows the Government's nutrition guidance](#). Remember to consider special dietary requirements and allergies in any food substitution plans.

Catering suppliers

If you need to get another catering supplier – even if on a temporary basis - you might want to check with other local providers and your local authority about alternative suppliers. Or look at the [National Association of Care Catering](#) website where they list several catering companies – including specialist food suppliers.

Coronavirus and food supplies

During the coronavirus pandemic, many supermarkets provided priority access to small care providers and care workers, and many wholesalers opened up their services to care providers. [Details are available on the CPA website.](#)

Waste management, facilities management, service maintenance contracts

Effective management of supplier relationships is likely to form a critical component of business continuity planning activities. You may wish to consider:

- reviewing your specific operational requirements with suppliers; and
- reviewing your contracts with suppliers to identify any potential risk of shortages in supplies.

Performance and contract management

You might want to consider a pragmatic approach to managing your suppliers, such as recognising their efforts to maintain continuity through, for instance, substitution where your normal products aren't available. Where the issue is beyond the control of your supplier, you might, for example, consider providing temporary relief from specific performance measures.

Temporarily providing relief from performance measures (or changes to contractual pricing mechanisms) should be considered on a case-by-case basis and should typically only be done for a short amount of time.

In some circumstances, you might also want to consider using additional or alternative suppliers where contractual performance may be at risk.

Contractual positions with respect to force majeure will depend on the circumstances and relevant contract clauses in each case.

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 continuity of supply.

If you're unable to address service issues because of a shortage of supplies, then you should approach your local authority commissioning team. The local authority can then advise on appropriate next steps.

Resource implications

You'll need staff to develop and regularly review and update your business continuity plan, including the section on managing concerns about supplies of non-medical consumables, goods and services.

In addition, you should take account of any temporary changes in supplies or equipment that might be needed to respond to shortages. This might require you to update clients' menu plans, possibly at short notice.

Escalation process

If you experience a problem with the supply of a product or service, you should try to resolve the issue by speaking to the supplier or seeking an alternative.

If you are still unable to resolve the issue and it will impact on your ability to deliver your service, you should notify:

- your local authority and/or health commissioner (even if they do not commission services from you, as they have a general responsibility to ensure local people's needs are met)
- the Care Quality Commission.

Useful links

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

[CPA medicines and medical devices – business continuity planning guidance](#)

[CPA Coronavirus and supplies](#)

[The Government's nutrition guidance](#)

You may be able to source alternative suppliers through the following organisations, directories and links:

[Care England – buyers index](#)

[Care Home – products, services and supplies directory](#)

[National Care Association – Suppliers directory](#)

[National Association of Care Catering](#)

Contacts

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](#)