

Support for South Gloucestershire care providers during Covid-19 recovery

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September 2021

Purpose

This document sets out South Gloucestershire Council's engagement and support offer to care providers during the Covid-19 recovery period and beyond. The offer builds on learning from the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic and feedback we have received from providers during this time. We aim to provide information that will equip care providers to be able to safely care for their residents, service users and staff, minimising the potential for future Covid-19 outbreaks and other communicable infections.

The support plan will be overseen by the South Gloucestershire Care Provider Oversight Group (CPOG). This group oversee delivery of the care provider targeted elements of the South Gloucestershire Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) and other Covid-19 related management issues. The members of this group are South Gloucestershire Council Commissioning Service Manager, Public Health Consultant Lead for Care Providers, LOMP Programme Lead, Deputy Director Adult Social Services, Organisational Safeguarding Lead, CQC Inspection Manager for South Gloucestershire, Sirona Locality Lead, and IPC Cell Lead for South Gloucestershire. The Directors of Public Health, Adult Social Services and Commissioning have oversight of CPOG activity. Engagement with providers is done through the routes outlined in key theme 1 below and important issues are exchanged between all groups and forums including CPOG.

Our support offer to care providers includes initiatives and resources that are designed to complement the support available to care providers across Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG), including BNSSG Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) support.

This is a live document which is continually implemented, reviewed and updated. It is refreshed in line with South Gloucestershire's [Local Outbreak Management Plan](#) and other relevant national guidance.

South Gloucestershire Support: Key Themes

1. Direct engagement with providers
2. BNSSG clinical reference library
3. Supportive Environmental Health Officer (EHO) Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) care home visit pilot
4. Monitoring of Covid-19 infection data
5. Outbreak management
6. BNSSG IPC Support, including training
7. Testing assurance
8. Vaccination
9. Care Capacity Tracker
10. Infection Control and Testing Fund (ICTF)

11. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

1. Direct engagement with providers

South Gloucestershire Council will continue to have direct contact with care providers, to ensure you have the most up-to-date information and to allow you the opportunity to discuss any queries you may have with us. This will consist of:

1. Regular **e-bulletins** to care homes and community-based support providers (currently by email fortnightly)
2. **Care provider forums** chaired by commissioning managers. These forums are a platform where providers are encouraged to raise specific issues that they would like to see discussed.
 - Care Home Provider Forum (currently bi-monthly, for review in September 2021).
 - Community Based Support Provider Forum (currently bi-monthly, for review in September 2021).
 - Specialist Provider Forum (a quarterly meeting)
3. **Care Home Strategic Partnership Group** – this is a multi-agency partnership including key partners across South Gloucestershire, BNSSG, Care and Support Southwest and representatives from some of the larger chains of care providers. The aim of the group is to improve partnerships between the care home sector, statutory health services and commissioners in order to improve the experience of residents and to reduce/shorten admissions to hospital. This is done through strategic development of the care home market in respect of workforce, training, gap analysis, needs and approach to commissioning the care home service sector. The group meet quarterly.
4. **Direct letters to care providers**, such as care home visiting guidance letters.

Through these channels we will continue to promote relevant guidance, for example on IPC, including PPE use, care home visiting and outbreak management processes, and signpost you to relevant webinars and other sources of information.

We will include recommendations for providers supporting older people and those with learning disabilities or autism.

If providers have a specific issue that they require more tailored support with, they can email:

- CareProvider@southglos.gov.uk - for Covid-19 and public health related advice.
- SGCCareHomeCommunication@southglos.gov.uk - to request support from the commissioning team around issues such as high vacancy levels or staffing difficulties.

2. BNSSG clinical reference library

The BNSSG clinical reference library is a one-stop online resource containing Covid-19 information for providers, service users and their families. It is currently hosted on both the [Sirona Care & Health](#) and [BNSSG CCG](#) websites.

The South Gloucestershire Care Provider Team developed a 10-point prevention plan (10PPP) summarising key themes we felt were most important in preventing Covid-19 transmission. Further details of the points covered in the 10PPP are found within the clinical reference library.

The themes of the 10 points are:

1. Hands Face Space
2. PPE
3. Cleaning
4. Staff behaviour (including movement between settings and well-being)
5. Testing
6. Ventilation
7. Isolation policies
8. Positive case actions
9. Visiting
10. Vaccination

3. Supportive Environmental Health Officer (EHO) IPC care home visit pilot and deep cleaning training pilot

We have undertaken a pilot of supportive EHO IPC visits to South Gloucestershire care homes, which has been overseen by CPOG. The purpose of the visits was to provide 'on the ground' IPC insights and support, with the aim of preventing future Covid-19 outbreaks and outbreaks of other infections.

Now that the pilot visits are complete, we are reviewing what we have learnt in line with our initial objectives and seeking feedback from the care homes involved. We will make recommendations regarding any planned future visits, along with consideration of corresponding resource requirements to enable such visits in South Gloucestershire, or across BNSSG, as part of the wider IPC support offer.

We are also organising a deep cleaning training pilot with three care homes who have agreed to take part. This pilot will involve an initial cleaning audit of the home, face-to-face training and two additional follow up cleaning audits 9-12 months later. The purpose of the pilot is to continue to support and feedback to care homes regarding their cleaning practices to prevent future outbreaks. This pilot has been funded using part of the contingency monies from ICF funding. The training will be delivered prior to 30th September and feedback from these homes will be gained to understand the impact of the training.

4. Monitoring of Covid-19 infection data

A key role of local Directors of Public Health is to give advice about infection rates within the local community. South Gloucestershire Public Health monitors infection rates and other

sources of data daily. The latest figures for our area are published on the [Covid-19 dashboard](#) on the council's website.

5. Outbreak management

All suspected Covid-19 outbreaks or outbreaks of other infections in South Gloucestershire care homes or community-based providers should be reported to PHE Southwest Health Protection Team: 0300 303 8162 or swhpt@phe.gov.uk.

South Gloucestershire Public Health Care Provider team will contact providers with suspected or confirmed Covid-19 outbreaks to provide support in partnership with PHE and other local health and care partners including Sirona and the BNSSG CCG IPC Team.

We currently offer care providers a supportive Incident Management Team (IMT) meeting at the onset of a Covid-19 outbreak. Further support is then provided and co-ordinated by our Public Health Care Provider team via phone or email. Follow up meetings take place at the request of the provider, for example, if there is a particular concern or need for discussion such as advice regarding an admission or visit prior to the end of the outbreak.

Care providers who experience a Covid-19 outbreak will be offered a debrief meeting once the outbreak is over. This will be led by the commissioning team and supported by Public Health and other stakeholders as required. The aim of the debrief meeting will be to reflect on the outbreak and any learning to be gained, and to identify if further support or training is required or if any additional measures need to be met for quality assurance.

Following an outbreak, we will also send a survey to the provider requesting feedback on the effectiveness of the support offered and to understand what went well and what improvements we can make.

All current Covid-19 outbreaks in South Gloucestershire care providers are reviewed on a weekly basis at the South Gloucestershire Care Provider Outbreak Review meeting. This is attended by representatives from the local authority public health, commissioning and adult social care teams as well as other stakeholders such as PHE, BNSSG CCG IPC cell, Sirona, AWP and CQC.

6. BNSSG IPC support, including training

The BNSSG IPC Cell have developed and implemented a support offer to train IPC Champions and develop an IPC support network across the care sector. This training offer has emerged from reflection and lessons learned exercises from the Covid-19 pandemic conducted by the cell, local authorities and in consultation with providers.

Locally and nationally, it is recognised that there is an urgent need to embed IPC knowledge and practices and build on working relationships that have developed during the crisis. This is key to preventing any future emerging threats from overwhelming the care sector.

The aims of the training are to:

- Build confidence of IPC practice.

- Provide staff development opportunities.
- Enable ongoing access to specialist IPC support.
- Foster partnership, support and knowledge sharing through the network of IPC Champions that know your business and understand the challenges of balancing care and applying best IPC practices.
- Improve quality, audit support and evidence to support CQC assurance.

Outline of the programme:

- It is open to care workers from all care sector settings, regardless of role, and no prior experience is required.
- A mix of self-learning and tutor supported sessions.
- An introductory session then 2 hourly weekly sessions.
- Virtual training sessions will require only internet connection and downloaded Microsoft Teams access. (If a facility does not have a suitable computer or internet capability, sessions can be accessed from home on a personal device.)

The first IPC Champions training programme has just finished and the feedback has been extremely positive. Further courses are being planned and will be promoted in due course. Care providers will be encouraged to share the course information with your teams and identify willing participants. You should support attendance through protected time. Interest can be registered by email to BNSSG.COVID.IPC@nhs.net, providing the contact details of participants and their line manager. Further information, learning contract and joining instructions will then be provided.

Additional training events, such as the annual Winter Resilience webinar, will also be hosted in partnership with Bristol and North Somerset councils, PHE and BNSSG CCG.

7. Covid-19 testing assurance

Regular Covid-19 testing is an important part of the approach to help protect those in care homes and those who receive care in the community, alongside IPC measures, proper use of PPE and vaccination.

A summary of Covid-19 testing available for staff, residents and visitors for all adult social care settings is found here - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing for adult social care settings](#). We want to support providers with any challenges to testing and seek assurance that testing is being conducted according to current guidance.

The Public Health team collates, reviews, and triangulates several sources of testing data to provide assurance that all providers are carrying out regular testing in-line with national guidance. This includes:

- Suspected or confirmed Covid-19 cases in residents or staff reported by providers on the Care Capacity Tracker. The tracker is checked on all normal working days and providers are contacted if positive cases are reported.

- Results of regular, asymptomatic PCR and LFD care home testing. Public Health data analysts prepare weekly surveillance reports which identify South Gloucestershire providers with positive Covid-19 results in the past 7 days.
- Reports are also produced regularly listing the date of the last negative (and positive) Covid-19 test results for all South Gloucestershire care homes.
- Re-testing order reports for South Gloucestershire care homes are provided to Public Health by the DHSC. These reports list the number of test kits requested by and delivered to each care home. We use this data as further reassurance that our homes are engaging in regular testing.

Where data indicate that providers are not conducting regular testing in line with national guidance, we will contact them for further information to ensure testing is taking place, being correctly registered and/or to offer support if required.

It is the responsibility of the care provider to ensure they are conducting regular testing in line with national guidance. If a home is found to not be complying with testing, it would be considered a safeguarding issue.

8. Vaccination

Vaccination offers the best protection against Covid-19 both for social care staff and all those receiving adult social care. From 11 November 2021, all care home workers, and anyone entering a care home, will need to be fully vaccinated, unless they are exempt under the regulations. We want to enable providers to maximise Covid-19 and flu vaccination uptake amongst staff, residents and service users and support them with any challenges.

Our Public Health data analysts produce a regular vaccination report detailing uptake of the first and second doses of the Covid-19 vaccination by care home residents and care provider staff, as reported in the NHS Capacity Tracker. This is reviewed regularly, including at the Care Provider Oversight Group and South Gloucestershire Vaccination Group meetings which both take place on a fortnightly basis. Any concerns regarding vaccination rates are currently followed up with an assurance call from a member of the commissioning or quality team. Tailored support, including vaccine coaches, is currently being offered to care homes with lowest vaccination rates, in anticipation of the new regulations on mandatory vaccination.

A consultation was launched on 9th September 2021, to last 6 weeks, on making vaccination a condition of deployment for all frontline workers in health and care settings in England. We will review the outcome of this consultation and look to engage with providers and provide support in the coming weeks and months.

During the flu vaccination season the NHS Capacity Tracker will be used to monitor flu vaccination uptake in the same way.

9. Care Capacity Tracker

The Capacity Tracker provides strategic and operational market oversight and intelligence through comprehensive reporting analytics at a national, regional, and local level. It allows care homes, in-patient community rehabilitation, substance misuse and hospice providers to make visible their vacancies and other critical information to provide rich information across health and social care organisations. The data collected supports audit and IPC processes and enables better collective planning across the health and social care sector to swiftly resolve issues through local or national actions.

10. Infection Control Fund

The Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund (ICF) was first introduced in May 2020. It was extended in October 2020 and, by March 2021 had provided over £1.1 billion of ring-fenced funding to support adult social care providers in England for infection prevention and control.

The Rapid Testing Fund (RTF) was introduced in January 2021 to support additional lateral flow testing of staff in care homes, and enable indoor, close contact visiting where possible.

The new [Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Fund](#) consolidated these funding streams, with an extra £341 million of funding until June 2021. The purpose of this fund is to support adult social care providers to:

- a. reduce the rate of Covid-19 transmission within and between care settings through effective IPC practices and increase uptake of staff vaccination, and
- b. conduct rapid testing of staff and visitors in care homes, high risk supported living and extra care settings, to enable close contact visiting where possible

This was extended again until 30 September 2021. [Adult social care extension to Infection Control and Testing Fund 2021](#) sets out the measures that the extension supports including distribution of funds, conditions and reporting requirements.

Local authorities pass 70% of the ICTF to care homes and community-based providers and has discretion over 30% which it is being used to support non-registered providers, day centres, direct payment users and to provide additional funding where needed and the allocated funds have been exhausted.

Some of the key infection prevention measure that these funds together support are:

- ensuring that staff who are isolating in line with government guidance receive their normal wages and do not lose income while doing so.
- limiting all staff movement between settings unless absolutely necessary, to help reduce the spread of infection
- limiting or cohorting staff to individual groups of residents or clients (including segregation of Covid-19 positive residents in care homes) to minimise the number of carers attending an individual and to reduce the spread of infection
- to support active recruitment of additional staff (and volunteers) if needed to support the above two measures
- to limit the use of public transport by members of staff

- to provide accommodation for staff who proactively choose to stay separate from their families in order to limit social interaction outside work
- costs of PCR and LFT testing including staff time and costs, training, visitor testing in care homes
- costs of vaccination including staff time and costs

Providers are required to report to the LA how the funding has been used, and this is reported to the DHSC, and reviewed by internal audit. Enquiries and requests for support should be sent to icfcovid@southglos.gov.uk.

11. Personal protective equipment (PPE)

To support the social care sector in using PPE, PHE has published tailored resources on [how to work safely in care homes](#) and [how to work safely in domiciliary care](#). These include summarised tables, Q&A, and a specialised training video on donning and doffing PPE in social care settings. An [illustrated guide for community and social care settings](#) is also available.

In the [Adult social care: Covid-19 winter plan 2020 to 2021](#), the government committed to providing the adult social care sector with free PPE for Covid-19 needs until March 2021, which has now been extended until the end of March 2022. Adult social care providers can access their free PPE provision through the PPE portal if CQC-registered, or via South Gloucestershire Council or the local resilience forum (LRF) if not CQC-registered. Where there is an emergency need, providers can access the emergency PPE stockpile held by LRFs and through the National Supply Disruption Response (NSDR) if required within 72 hours. Adult social care providers should continue to order their business-as-usual PPE requirements through their usual channels.

The online [PPE Portal](#) serves all CQC-registered residential and domiciliary care providers. Providers will have received an email inviting them to register on the PPE portal. Providers can place orders through the portal once every 7 days and the amount that can be ordered will depend on the size of the provider (see [order limits](#)). Adult social care providers who are not CQC-registered and therefore not covered by the PPE portal should contact South Gloucestershire Council directly.

Rebecca Harrold
Partnerships & Commissioning Service Manager
Email: rebecca.harrold@southglos.gov.uk

Sarah Weld FFPH
Deputy Director/Consultant in Public Health
Email: sarah.weld@southglos.gov.uk

Care Provider LOMP Team:
Rebecca Ahearn (Public Health Partnership Officer)
Naomi Laws (Specialist Public Health Practitioner)
Email: careprovider@southglos.gov.uk