**Coronavirus**

Social care update



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**Download the**[**CARE Workforce app**](https://workforce.adultsocialcare.uk/login?wp-linkindex=2&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care)**for the latest information, support and discount offers**





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Dear Reader,

I’m hoping good news is becoming a trend at long last.

This will be my second message in as many weeks where I can share definitively positive developments with you.

Starting with the biggest game changer first: [the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been authorised for use in the UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-authorises-pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccine?wp-linkindex=5&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care).

Rigorous clinical trials and forensic analysis of data by the MHRA means the vaccine has met the strictest standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

All being well, doses will be made available across the UK from next week.



Meanwhile, the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI) has published its [final advice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-2-december-2020?wp-linkindex=6&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care), identifying which priority groups will receive the vaccine. Care home residents, health and care staff, and the over-80s will be among the first.

Meanwhile, our NHS colleagues will be using decades of accumulated experience to deliver the biggest mass vaccination programme in history. This frankly stunning development comes hard upon another very welcome advance.

As of now, care home residents in all tiers will be able to see their families again this Christmas, thanks to a huge step up in testing capacity for visitors. In the course of the next few weeks, millions of test kits will be distributed to care homes across England. By the time you read this, the first care home visits should have begun.

I’m sure you will agree all the effort on testing has been worth it, just to see wonderful reunions happening across the country.

And if you’d like a taste of the joy visitor testing is already bringing to care staff, not just residents and their loved ones, do read this [heartfelt blog from the manager of a Cornish care home](https://socialcare.blog.gov.uk/2020/12/01/tests-tears-and-triumphs/?wp-linkindex=7&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care) which participated in the initial pilot… or watch this [moving video of a reconciliation filmed recently at an HC-1 residence](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuvL0GUAhZs&feature=youtu.be&wp-linkindex=8&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care). This is news to lift everyone’s spirits.

None of this could have happened without a huge boost in our testing capacity, rapid advances in testing technology and the combined efforts of so many dedicated agencies, sector partners and willing volunteers.

Thanks to them, care homes can now confidently balance strict infection control with the critical health and wellbeing benefits visiting brings to all involved. Please do read the [latest guidance on care home visiting](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus?wp-linkindex=9&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care) and the [testing programme now underway](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/care-home-residents-to-be-reunited-with-families-by-christmas?wp-linkindex=10&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care).

But let me be clear, visitor testing doesn’t mean a relaxation of other safety measures. Visitors and staff must continue to wear PPE and follow all other infection control procedures within care settings to minimise risk.

To further support visiting in December, an extra 46 million items of free PPE will be sent directly to CQC-registered care home providers registered on the [government portal](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ppe-portal-how-to-order-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment?wp-linkindex=11&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care). Over 220 million items of PPE have been provided to adult care homes since April.

After months of distressing isolation, separation and limited contact, it is truly wonderful to be able to share this news with the care sector and with the many families who can look forward to a happier festive season than they were otherwise expecting.

On this point, we have also published [new guidance allowing some residents under 65 to spend time with their families at Christmas outside care homes](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrangements-for-visiting-out-of-the-care-home?wp-linkindex=12&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care) subject to individual risk assessments, negative tests before leaving and a period of self-isolation upon return. To have even contemplated this possibility a few weeks ago would have seemed hugely optimistic!

Throughout this pandemic, my priority has been to focus on minimising the emotional as well as physical impact of this cruel virus. Now that we have the means to help more families spend time together this Christmas, the balance is finally tipping towards the positive.

And now that an authorised vaccine is a reality (we hope others will shortly follow), life beyond this winter looks a little brighter for everyone. Continue to stay safe and well.

Together we will come out the other side.

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**Staying mentally well this winter**



This recently published plan sets out the support in place to help people - including health and social care colleagues - stay well during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic and through the winter months ahead.

[**Read 'Staying mentally well: winter plan 2020 to 2021'**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-mentally-well-winter-plan-2020-to-2021?wp-linkindex=13&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care)

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**COVID-19 communications toolkit launched**



In response to requests for information to support COVID-19 communications, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has produced a suite of tools to help you share essential vaccine messages with your health and social care networks.

Videos, featuring our Deputy Chief Medical Officer Jonathan Van Tam (above) and others, written explainers and fact sheets are all available to download, share and use in your communications. These materials will be updated as the situation develops, so do check back regularly for new content.

[**Download COVID-19 communication materials here**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/127xxFvWKeusSg5eKjTlO5LD49wFNVTVM?wp-linkindex=14&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care)

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**Free vitamin D supplies for care homes**



During autumn and winter, [everyone is advised to take a 10 microgram supplement of vitamin D a day](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/?wp-linkindex=15&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care) for general health and, in particular, to protect bone and muscle health.

From January 2021, all residential and nursing care homes in England will receive a free 4-month supply of daily vitamin D supplements. DHSC will also offer a supply to people who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

DHSC will make available further information and guidance to all residential and nursing care home providers. We would welcome your support with this initiative to help us to protect the health of care home residents across the country.

[**Visit NHS England for vitamin D information**](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/?wp-linkindex=16&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care)

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**CQC publishes infection prevention and control report**



In response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic the Care Quality Commission (CQC) introduced Infection Prevention and Control inspections to share good practice, uphold high quality care and keep people safe.

The CQC has shared its findings from these inspections in their report ‘How care homes managed infection prevention and control during the coronavirus pandemic 2020'. Care home providers reveal what has worked, and what has caused them challenges, through the course of this pandemic.

[**Read the CQC report here**](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themed-work/how-care-homes-managed-infection-prevention-control-during-coronavirus?wp-linkindex=17&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care)

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**MHRA emphasises vaccine safety**



Dr June Raine, Chief Executive of the [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/medicines-and-healthcare-products-regulatory-agency?wp-linkindex=18&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care) (MHRA) explains how their recommendation to authorise the first COVID-19 vaccine is based upon the most rigorous assessment of every piece of scientific data. The safety of the public - and of health and care colleagues - has not been compromised.

[**Watch Dr Raine's statement here**](https://youtu.be/7I6iUKmbdI8?wp-linkindex=19&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care)

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**Contact Us**

[Complete our web form](https://contactus.dhsc.gov.uk/?wp-linkindex=20&utm_campaign=Coronavirus_social_care_update_03.12.20&utm_content=dhsc-mail.co.uk&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Department_of_Health_and_Social_Care) or write to us at:

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London

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