

# Winter Preparedness 2023/24

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## Information for Wirral Care Home Managers

Winter pressure on services can be eased through being better prepared. Being vaccinated and maintaining simple infection prevention and control (IPC) practices, will help to keep your staff and clients safe and help to reduce absence at work. There are steps you can take to be better prepared, including:

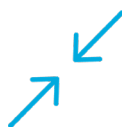
## Simple steps for managers to keep care homes safe this winter



**Support your staff to get vaccinated for flu and COVID-19.**



**Reduce risks of infection and keep people well by maintaining infection prevention control precautions.**



**Minimise the spread of infection by advising staff who are unwell to stay at home until they feel better.**



**Prompt recognition of cases of infection and outbreaks is essential to prevent poor health outcomes.**



**Limit any negative impacts on service delivery throughout winter by keeping business continuity plans reviewed and up to date.**



**Ensure the environment is suitably warm and well-ventilated on occasions throughout the day.**

# Be proactive. Take the following actions to keep care home residents and staff safe and well this winter.

1	Familiarise yourself with the updated <a href="#">guidance</a> and advice from Government.
2	Review absence management policies and procedures for staff as per UKHSA <a href="#">guidance</a> .
3	Ensure ALL staff and residents have been offered their <b>COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccine</b> in partnership with the General Practice/Community Pharmacy. Both vaccines will be offered as per national guidance. If you need further information or support with low vaccine uptake, please contact <a href="mailto:healthprotectionservice@wirral.gov.uk">healthprotectionservice@wirral.gov.uk</a>
4	Highlight to staff the <a href="#">symptoms of acute respiratory infection</a> (ARI) and <a href="#">norovirus</a> to ensure early identification of an infection.
5	Ensure your visiting policy is up to date and in line with national <a href="#">guidance</a> and local arrangements.
6	Review, update and circulate business continuity and contingency plans with staff to help raise their awareness. Ensure that plans include actions/arrangements during periods of adverse weather and surge.
7	Ensure care home infection control policies are in line with <a href="#">national guidance</a> , up to date, and accessible for ALL staff to read.
8	Maintain a central record of all residents' vaccination status and latest <b>kidney function</b> test to support antiviral prescribing in the event of an influenza outbreak.
9	Keep records of all residents' eligibility for <a href="#">COVID-19 treatment</a> .
10	Familiarise yourself with <b>antiviral pathway</b> arrangements in and out of hours and make sure that the care home can put actions in place if advised to do so.
11	Nominate staff members to act as the outbreak coordinators to manage working practices and care home environment on every shift.
12	Educate and reinforce <a href="#">5 moments of hand hygiene</a> and hand hygiene product choice amongst all staff. Please note: Promote the use of soap and water during outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness, as alcohol gel will not kill bugs like norovirus and Clostridioides difficile (C.diff). Ensure hand hygiene facilities are in good working order and products are well stocked
13	Ensure that sufficient <b>personal protective equipment (PPE)</b> is available for staff, <b>placed in appropriate dispensers</b> , and that staff are trained in its safe use and disposal. Access <a href="#">COVID-19 PPE guidance</a> and PPE guide for <a href="#">non-aerosol generating procedure</a> .
14	A regular audit program should be implemented to include hand hygiene, PPE and the environment. Audit templates can be accessed through the <a href="#">Community IPC digital hub</a> .

15	Ensure COVID-19 testing kits are available and accessible, to help manage outbreaks and for residents who are eligible for <a href="#">COVID-19 treatment</a> . Please access guidance <a href="#">here</a>
16	Educate and reinforce <b>hand and respiratory hygiene</b> to all staff, residents and visitors.
17	Ensure cleaning and disinfection products are available, including a chlorine-based product (1000 ppm). Increase the frequency and intensity of cleaning for all areas (in increased incidents of infection/outbreak), focusing on shared spaces and frequently touched surfaces. Ensure appropriate linen and waste management systems are in place.
18	Educate staff on early recognition of outbreaks and reporting processes.
19	Consider how you would cohort people in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. For example, try to limit staff movement between facilities, where care homes are part of a group, and within settings, if possible.
20	Ensure isolation/outbreak signage is available and displayed in an outbreak situation.
21	If an outbreak is suspected, you should contact the Community Infection Prevention and Control Team in hours (Monday to Friday 9-5pm) via 0151 604 7750 / <a href="mailto:ipc.wirralct@nhs.net">ipc.wirralct@nhs.net</a> or UKHSA Health Protection Team out of hours via 0344 225 0562.
22	Keep your NHS Capacity Tracker updated.
23	Ensure the environment where people spend time is suitably warm with temperature not below 18°C. Take simple measures to reduce draughts and ensure heating systems are maintained and in good working order.
24	Consider ventilating rooms when they are not in use and monitor room temperatures.
25	Sign up for <a href="#">cold-health alerts here</a> and ensure that your care home is prepared to mitigate cold weather effect on people's health.
26	<p>During adverse cold weather:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that rooms, particularly living rooms and bedrooms, are kept warm and that clients have access to other ways of keeping warm (for example blankets) if needed.</li> <li>• Ensure that plans are in place to monitor body temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure.</li> <li>• Prevent falls - Identify points of higher risk of injury in your care home in the event of ice and/or snow, such as at entrances and exits and open areas, and prioritise these for clearance or gritting when snow and/or ice occur.</li> <li>• Day-to-day practices may be disrupted. Staff may find difficult to commute to work. Ensure business continuity plans are in place to mitigate any impact.</li> <li>• Visit <a href="#">guidance</a> for further information.</li> </ul>
27	<p>Encourage staff and residents to keep hydrated.* Consider implementing protected drinks time throughout the day in care homes, display the <a href="#">hydration poster</a> on the back of toilet doors and offer hydration leaflets to staff, residents and visitors. Please contact <a href="mailto:healthprotectionservice@wirral.gov.uk">healthprotectionservice@wirral.gov.uk</a> to request printed hydration materials.</p> <p>*(If advised to restrict fluid intake by a healthcare professional follow this advice)</p>