

17 April 2020

Dear

**Re: COVID-19**

As a recipient of Direct Payments, we are writing to provide you with some additional and updated information with regards to the COVID-19 situation. Please note the information included in this letter is correct as of the above date. Please refer to the NHS and government websites referenced in this letter for latest updates.

Please continue to refer to Public Health Wales' website at <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/> for details of how you can protect yourself against the corona virus. We would also recommend you keep abreast of the news from the BBC during the coming weeks to hear the latest government advice.

For the latest Powys information and guidance please also refer to the link below:  
<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/8833/Care-Providers---Questions-and-Answers>

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Please note Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidance has been updated since our last letter (please find the most recent guidance attached) and includes the following changes:

- Wherever possible, before a worker visits your home a phone call should be made in advance to ask if you or anyone in your household has any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Social distancing of 2 metres should be used for all non-contact activities.
- All activities that bring workers into close personal contact with you will require the use of PPE. This includes the use of
  - Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask (FRSM),
  - Disposable gloves
  - Disposable plastic apron
  - Appropriate eye protection after risk assessment of need if splashing or spraying of body fluids likely

The type of PPE used will depend upon the activity undertaken and the potential exposure. Not all items of PPE will necessarily be required.

- New personal protective equipment must be used for each episode of care.
- Any PPE provided must only be used in conjunction with national guidance.
- Effective Hand Hygiene is Essential Combined with use of PPE. Workers Should continue to practice good hand hygiene and follow national advice

All services are advised to keep up to date with the latest advice on COVID-19 via Public Health Wales (PHW) website [here](#).

If care workers are providing care to within two metres of the person they are caring for and are unable to source their own supply of PPE, please send a request to [pccsscommissioning@powys.gov.uk](mailto:pccsscommissioning@powys.gov.uk). Please mark your request for the attention of Chris Evans/Sally Heaton with a phone number for them to call you back on. Requests received and processed before 3pm will be ordered and delivered by NRS Healthcare on the following day.

Out of hours emergency PPE is now available via NRS Healthcare by calling 0345 123 6350.

### Decision making tree and Risk Assessment

Please also find attached the 'Decision making tree and risk assessment' document for you to implement. This document provides information and a risk assessment for determining essential visits and the use of PPE for personal assistants.

### Covid-19 Testing

Please also find attached a letter in respect of Covid-19 testing. Testing for Covid-19 is currently only available to staff who have symptoms within 4 days of onset and who meet the following criteria:

- A high temperature, equal to or greater than **37.8°C**  
**OR**  
A new or continuous cough, this means coughing a lot for more than an hour or three or more coughing bouts in 24 hours. If you usually have a cough it may be worse than usual.
- Working in frontline care services.

The local authority is coordinating this process. Please read the guidance attached and if personal assistants require and are eligible for testing we have attached the privacy notice, which they will need to read as well as completing the attached referral form and returning it to [PCCSSCommissioning@powys.gov.uk](mailto:PCCSSCommissioning@powys.gov.uk)

### HMRC Furlough information

Furlough refers to the temporary leave of absence for employees, due to special circumstances or economic conditions, in this case Covid-19. The Government have announced that they will

support employers to cover 80% of wages for laid off employees as an alternative to ending employment.

The most recent government guidance around furloughing published on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020 has provided clearer guidance for people who receive direct payments and/or health funding. The update provides the following information:

*Where employers receive public funding for staff costs, and that funding is continuing, we expect employers to use that money to continue to pay staff in the usual fashion – and correspondingly not furlough them. This also applies to non-public sector employers who receive public funding for staff costs.*

Although Direct Payment employers are not public sector organisations, you are employers who receive public funding for staff costs. We believe best practice will be to continue to pay personal assistants to ensure retention of as many personal assistant jobs as possible once this pandemic is over.

Where a personal assistant is not able to provide regular support to their employer, please make your local PeoplePlus office aware of the situation. There may be other people who receive direct payments who require care and support during this time who would be able to utilise the personal assistant.

If you are self-isolating/shielding and do not want a personal assistant in your home, your personal assistant should still be paid during this time for the period of your self-isolation/shielding. With reference to scenario 1 in the previous letter the 2-week review with your Social Worker is no longer required.

We would emphasise that where you do not require your personal assistant in work, please do inform PeoplePlus so they can contact the personal assistant to discuss the possibility of temporary work elsewhere. The personal assistant will return to working for you as soon as you need them.

**Important request:**

Updates will be posted at our PeoplePlus ILS website – the link below. Please bookmark the page and visit often for updates.

<https://peopleplus.co.uk/communities/direct-payment-support-services/>

**Welfare calls for service users who are shielding**

If you are identified as being at a very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (due to a serious underlying health issue) you may have received a letter from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales. This letter is intended to ensure that those most vulnerable with underlying health conditions receive the support they need. The letter advises people to stay at home for 12 weeks and contains a range of further information and advice, including if you have no-one else, how you can be supported with picking up medication and other essential items such as food.

Powys County Council Social Services will in the coming days and weeks make contact with certain groups included in the mailout from The Chief Medical Officer for Wales, these are people know to Social Services, and includes a number of people with a Direct Payment, especially those who employ a personal assistant (PA).

The phone calls will **ONLY** be made by **Powys County Council staff**, and the purpose of the phone calls are to ask you a number of questions to assess how you are managing and ensure that you have access to food, medicines and the support you require. This is especially important if you cannot continue to receive support from your PA due to coronavirus issues (you may feel you have to self-isolate or that your PA is not able to support you due to coronavirus concerns). The caller from Powys County Council will record your answers and where you indicate that you do require support, we will ensure that you receive appropriate support, either by the Council or a volunteer via the voluntary sector. We will continue to call you on a weekly basis unless you indicate that you do not need further support. You can re-instate a phone call at any time – the caller will record this and will tell you who to contact should you need to discuss this further.

Please see additional information on the Welsh Government website on support for extremely vulnerable people: <https://gov.wales/get-coronavirus-support-extremely-vulnerable-person>.

### Contact Information

If low level support is required, in the first instance please contact **Community Sector Emergency Response Team (C-SERT)** (This comprises of county organisations that offer volunteer support and emergency response services alongside partners from Powys County Council and Powys Teaching Health Board) Contact Duty Officer, Community Connector Service on **01597 828649** / [community.connectors@pavo.org.uk](mailto:community.connectors@pavo.org.uk)

If you require a high-level of care, please contact your social worker directly. If you do not have a named social worker, please call Powys County Council as follows:

**ASSIST: 0345 602 7050** (Adults)

**Front Door: 01597 827666** (Children and Young People)

We would be grateful if you would share this letter and information with your personal assistant(s).

Finally, If you haven't already, please can you – or a family member/friend – send us your e-mail address to [ilspowys@peopleplus.co.uk](mailto:ilspowys@peopleplus.co.uk). The quickest way for us to get in touch with you during this difficult time is via e-mail.

Yours Sincerely



**Paul Reynolds | Head of Social Care**

NB In the interests of sharing emergency advice and information, this letter has not been translated into Welsh, please contact us if you require a Welsh version.