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THIS IS A WEB VERSION OF THE LETTER. IF YOU WOULD LIKE ANY OF THE DOCUMENTS MENTIONED, PLEASE EMAIL Jayne.vincent@sefton.gov.uk

Date: 17th December 2021

Dear Care and Community Support Provider,

Last week we shared some information with you in response to the new measures put in place because of the Omicron COVID-19 variant in the UK. As you are aware, we are now operating to Plan B as cases of COVID-19 are increasing and we are seeing more cases of the Omicron variant.

We urge anyone who shows COVID symptoms of a raised temperature, persistent new cough or a loss of taste or smell, to get a PCR test by  calling 119 or visiting [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.%20)   Mobile test units are also operating at locations in the Borough in December - [Dates and locations here.](https://mysefton.co.uk/2021/11/29/mobile-testing-in-sefton-december-2021/)

People who are out and about are still advised to carry on using rapid home test kits, which are available from pharmacists, twice a week.  If a rapid test shows a positive result they should then isolate and book a PCR test.

There continue to be additional requirements for health and social care staff, as outlined in the COVID-19: management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings guidance ([COVID-19: management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings/covid-19-management-of-exposed-healthcare-workers-and-patients-in-hospital-settings)). Staff who are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 and are not legally required to self-isolate are required to have a negative PCR test prior to returning to work and are advised to take an LFD test every day for the following 10 days.

We would also like to remind everyone how important it is that we are all fully vaccinated, and that means having the booster jab too. Vaccinations still, without doubt, provide the best clinical protection for all of us against the COVID-19 virus, which is still spreading in our communities.  We ask you to speak with your staff about getting the jab/s; whether that be the first, second or booster if they are already eligible, or to keep an eye on the latest information from the Government who have said all eligible over-18s will be offered a jab by the end of January.  Whether it’s their first, second or third, booster jab, it’s never too late to get vaccinated.

There are several places in Sefton where people can get their vaccines:

### Book an appointment using the National Booking Service

People aged 12+ can use the National Booking Service to book a COVID-19 vaccine at their nearest available site.

You can find out more about who is currently eligible for which dose of vaccine and book an appointment [here.](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/book-or-manage-a-1st-or-2nd-dose-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination/)

**Book an appointment at a GP-led vaccination site**

If you are a resident living in Southport and Formby and aged over 16, you can contact Southport Centre for Health and Wellbeing Centre by calling 01704 395830 to book an appointment for a vaccine if eligible.

If you are a resident living in south Sefton and aged over 16 you can contact Seaforth Village Surgery by calling 07979938229, or Netherton Health Centre on 0151 247 6413, to book an appointment for a vaccine if eligible.

### Find walk-in clinics for COVID-19 vaccines

You can search for walk-in sites, and find out who is currently eligible to get vaccinated at a walk-in centre, on the NHS website [here.](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site/)

**PPE Portal and PPE access over the Festive period**

The Department of Health and Social Care are encouraging providers to take part in user research for a new platform that will replace the current PPE Portal. Those who are signed up to the PPE Portal should have received an email invitation already.

They will be testing the new platform from January 2022 and hope to build a representative group across all sectors, experience levels and user needs. They are particularly interested in hearing from users with accessibility requirements, such as individuals with disabilities or those who are less familiar with online platforms.

During this time, you will be onboarded onto the new platform, and will order your PPE through the new system. There will be no change in the type or quantity of PPE that you can order. Please note that this user research does not mean that DHSC has taken a decision on whether to continue to supply free PPE to health and care sectors beyond March 2022. They will announce their decision in due course.

Why get involved:

•         Gain early access to new and enhanced PPE Portal features.

•         The opportunity to familiarise yourself with the new platform. Ahead of its full launch, this is a great opportunity to learn about the new platform and become comfortable using it.

•         Help improve the new system. Your feedback is invaluable in ensuring the platform is meeting users’ needs and is accessible to all.

What they will ask from you:

•         They anticipate your involvement to take no more than one hour a week. This includes using the new platform and feeding back your experiences. There will be a team on hand throughout the entire process to support you in using the new system.

•         They will ask you to complete some short surveys sharing your experiences of the current Portal as well as the new Portal.

•         They will also invite you to focus groups, where you can share more detailed feedback about your experiences on the Portal.

Should you wish to register your interest, please fill out this short form: <https://dhexchange.kahootz.com/PPE_Portal/viewQuestionnaire?qid=7654339>

Emergency PPE is available from Sefton Community Equipment Service Store, Unit 2c Bechers Drive, Aintree Racecourse Business Park, Liverpool L9 5AY.  If you need to place an order, please email in advance specifying what you require.  emergencyppe@sefton.gov.uk  You will be notified when your order is ready for collection from the store.  The store will be open every day during the week of 20th to 24th December between 10.00 am and 16.45.  The store will also be open on 29, 30 and 31st December during the same hours.  Collections will not then be available until Tuesday 4th January 2022 when normal opening times resume.

**DSPT – supplementary briefing on current cyber vulnerability alert**

Please find attached a briefing for Local Support Organisations in relation to the current cyber vulnerability alert - CVE-2021-44228, also known as Log4Shell or LogJam. The briefing provides answers to some of the questions asked, which you may find helpful.

**Workforce Recruitment & Retention Fund**

We are currently going through our internal governance processes with respect to a report on allocations from the fund and hope to update Providers when available.

**Specific Information for Care Homes**

**Care Home Strategic Partnership**

This week we had a meeting with care home managers to discuss the Care Home Strategic Partnership as an evolvement from the Care Home Strategic Call that has taken place over the past 21 months. One of the Care Home Managers explained to the meeting that the idea to set up a partnership came from the My Home Life Leadership Programme and the Making it Real Summit that has recently taken place. The aim being to work together and having a voice, to be able to share problems and concerns and discuss what’s needed in a safe place to make positive changes for people who live, die, work in and visit care homes.

The draft Terms of Reference are attached and at the meeting this week we discussed the Chair for the group and having in place a vice chair. A Care Home Manager kindly expressed an interest in acting as Chair.

If you have any comments on the Terms of Reference and/or you are also interested in acting as Chair / vice Chair then please email Neil.Watson@sefton.gov.uk

**Care Home Testing and Visiting**

The UK Health Security Agency issued an update on the 14th December on changes to the management of Omicron. In Adult Social Care, fully vaccinated staff and care home residents will be required to have one PCR test taken after the contact occurred. Residents should self-isolate and staff should stay off work until a negative result is received. This will be followed by daily lateral flow tests for the remainder of the 10-day period.

On routine asymptomatic testing, care home staff will continue to have one weekly PCR test. In addition, staff will be required to have three lateral flow tests a week, rather than the two tests previously required. Outbreak testing and testing after a single confirmed case remains unchanged.

Fully vaccinated residents visiting out will be asked to take a lateral flow test on alternate days for 2 weeks after a visit. Those not fully vaccinated will be expected to isolate for 14 days following a visit out.

If any providers are experiencing difficulty in accessing tests please let us know by contacting commissioningandcontracts@sefton.gov.uk and we can help investigate how this can be resolved.

The [Guidance on Care Home Visiting](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes) was updated on the 14th December and replaces previous guidance. Providers are expected and encouraged to facilitate visits wherever possible, and to do so in a risk-managed way. This guidance covers:

* visits that should happen in all circumstances
* safe visiting practices
* when different visiting arrangements are needed
* sources of information and support

Below is a letter from the Department of Health and Social Care about Omicron and the measures being put in place to support social care workers and care home residents.

**Self-certification deadline**

We wrote separately to care homes this week to forward a letter from the Department of Health and Social Care about an extension to vaccination as a condition of deployment and the self-certification cut-off.

For anyone who has registered a self-certification before the 24th December 2021, the self-certification forms will continue to be valid until 31 March 2022, so long as they have been received before 24 December 2021.

The reason for this extension is because we are aware that some people who have applied for a formal exemption have experienced a delay in the outcome of their application being notified. Extending the cut-off for self-certification will allow sufficient time for individuals whose formal medical exemption is unsuccessful to be fully vaccinated before 31 March 2022.

**IPC Webinar for Registered Care Home Managers**

The GM Infection Prevention & Control Cell webinar took place on the 7th December. A link to the webinar recording is available here: [Greater Manchester Infection Prevention and Control Cell - webinar for care homes 7th December 2021 - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdrXYZnHyaw)

The following supporting documents are attached to this email:

* Speaker webinar presentation slides
* Links to drug and alcohol services operating across Greater Manchester
* Essential Care Giver myth buster poster
* Capacity Tracker Insights for Decision Makers (Oxfordshire County Council case study)

Questions arising in the Chat

The following questions were posted in the chat during the webinar:

**Question:** Please could you clarify the requirement of vaccination for residents’ visitors?

**Response:** Family/friends, including essential care givers, do not have to be fully vaccinated to come into care homes, but they should be encouraged to get vaccinated.

**Question:** What are people’s thoughts re: Essential Care Givers and visiting during none COVID outbreaks?

**Response:** This will be dependent on the homes ability/capacity to facilitate and support. Professional visits that are essential should continue during COVID and non-COVID outbreaks with risk assessment and precautions to protect the visitors as well as the home.

The GM IPC Cell will host the next live webinar in January - an invitation will be circulated in due course. Please contact mark.brown7@nhs.net with any suggestions for topics/themes for inclusion.

This will be our last letter of 2022. If we have any urgent communications, we will send out by email.

From us, all the Health and Care partners and Councillor Paul Cummins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, we would like to take the opportunity to thank you and your staff teams for everything you have all done this year to support our most vulnerable residents. Your dedication, support and hard work is very much appreciated by us all.

We would like to wish you all and your families well for the festive season and we look forward to working with you in 2022.

Yours sincerely



Deborah Butcher

Executive Director for Adult Social Care and Health



Fiona Taylor

Chief Officer, NHS South Sefton and NHS Southport and Formby CCGs