

## Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your questions and comments. We have focussed on questions which summarise a key theme from stakeholders, If you do not think we have answered your question or we have missed anything please do come back to us at:

[england.learning.disability@nhs.net](mailto:england.learning.disability@nhs.net)

We will provide an update on questions and answers each Friday for the next few weeks.

### **How can we ensure that healthcare/hospital staff are able to meet the needs of people with a learning disability - in particular with regard to reasonable adjustments and decision making; particularly end of life decisions?**

There are significant concerns from families and advocacy organisations about how clinicians will provide care and treatment for people with a learning disability, Speciality guidance for clinicians has been published on the NHSE/I website linked to [here](#)

The guidance includes:

- Awareness of diagnostic overshadowing
- Health passports
- Listening to parents/carers
- Make reasonable adjustments
- Communication
- Understanding behavioural responses to illness/pain/discomfort
- Mental Capacity Act
- Asking for specialist support and advice
- Mental wellbeing and emotional distress
- Useful links

Please note that we will be reviewing the document according to feedback.

### **How can families/support and care staff caring for people in the community get access to Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)?**

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the key focus has been on improving the supply of PPE to health and social care staff to meet the huge increase in demand. This includes supply to both the NHS and independent sector. As a result of this work the supply is now starting to improve and get out to organisations including supplies for nursing/residential care homes and home care agencies.



If you are providing care to a person in the community (e.g. as a personal assistant employed by the person you are caring for or as a support organisation) and are unable to access PPE:

- Check regularly with your usual provider of PPE to see if they are getting new stock or see if you can find a local supplier
- Contact your local authority to ask about whether you can have PPE for the tasks you are undertaking
- Check the Government guidance for any updates on when you need to use PPE and how to use it:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>.

DHSC and NHSE/I teams are dealing with access to PPE supply for community teams, personal budget holders and families.

### **Is COVID-19 guidance regarding the use of the frailty score being clarified?**

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has provided an update on the [COVID-19 rapid guideline on critical care](#) which was developed to support critical care teams in their management of patients during this very difficult period of intense pressure. The guideline says that on admission to hospital, all adults should be assessed for frailty, and that other comorbidities and underlying health conditions are also taken into account.

We welcomed recent clarification on using the Clinical Frailty Score (CFS) tool. NICE has updated [recommendation 1.1](#) of the guideline to advise that the Clinical Frailty Score (CFS) should not be used in younger people, people with stable long-term disabilities (for example, cerebral palsy), learning disabilities or autism.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/news/article/nice-updates-rapid-covid-19-guideline-on-critical-care>

### **How can we escalate issues and concerns quickly?**

If you have any issues and concerns about a particular person, please:

- For health matters, please follow the official guidance [here](#) in relation to seeking medical help;
- For care matters, please get in contact with either the commissioner of the person's care or with their local safeguarding service.

Please send issues and concerns that you think need to come to the attention of NHS England to:

[england.mhldaincidentresponse@nhs.net](mailto:england.mhldaincidentresponse@nhs.net)

and/ or

[england.learning.disability@nhs.net](mailto:england.learning.disability@nhs.net)

The email addresses are regularly monitored.

A collaborative platform is being set up which will enable partners to raise concerns, share solutions, challenges and resources.

**Is NHS England and Improvement looking at developing any data about COVID-19 infection in people with a learning disability- i.e what is prevalence/risk/ co-morbidities that carry highest risk of serious illness etc?**

We have had some contact with academics and researchers who have expressed an interest in this matter and are in discussion. In addition, the national sit rep data which providers submit to NHS England and NHS Improvement on a daily basis will in time provide some specific information about learning disability, autism or both.

**What information is available about children and young people in relation to residential schools, children with Education, Health and Care plans and diagnosis of COVID-19 particularly vulnerable children?**

We are working with colleagues in the Department for Education to try to ensure consistent messaging. We have asked systems to use their dynamic support processes and at risk of admission registers to ensure they are identifying all those who should be – including those children and young people who have returned to their home area from out of area placements and schools. The demand and capacity document [linked to here](#) provides guidance and information to the system about continuation of C(E)TRs.

The Council for Disabled Children have a range of guidance, advice and information on their website in relation to children and young people.

**What are the implications for the Mental Health Act? There are increasing concerns about the reduction of statutory protection of detained patients.**

**What is the legal position about people being taken home from residential settings or supported living by family members with staff not clear about legal position re Best Interests Assessor (BIA), Power of Attorney (POA) etc?**

it is essential to retain a focus upon the rights of people with a learning disability, autism and both as the Covid-19 Bill comes into law. Given that the clauses relating to the Mental Health Act are unlikely to be 'switched on' imminently, we have an opportunity to work with the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure that safeguards and checks are built into the guidance that would accompany the introduction of these flexibilities.

**What practical resources are available to use with people with a learning disability through the Coronavirus restrictions, and for people with lived experience to use?**

The Learning Disability Professional Senate has collated two recent sets of material for people with a learning disability and for families [here](#) and [here](#). We will continue to use this FAQ to share latest material.

### **How can we address some of the following issues for autistic people?**

- **Caring for others (at home and remotely)**
- **Uncertainty**
- **Lack of control**
- **Health worries**
- **Worry around food and health supplies and belongings**
- **Coping methods and establishing new routines**
- **Short/long term mental health impact**
- **Healthy Relationships (adults)**
- **Educating and supporting children**

NHSE/I are working closely with NAS and Public Health England to create some accessible resources for autistic people. A number of stakeholders in the autism sector have been publishing helpful advice and resources, including NAS, Autistica and others.