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Adults' Health and Care

Provider newsletter

19 December 2025

A big thank you, and best wishes for the festive season

As we reach the end of another year, I wanted to thank you all on behalf of myself and my colleagues at Hampshire County Council for your hard work, and dedication over the past 12 months. It is thanks to all of you that the most vulnerable people across Hampshire continue to receive care – including during the festive season. I'd like to say an extra thank you to those of you that are working or on call over Christmas and New Year. Thank you for keeping residents in Hampshire safe and well. I hope you all have a healthy, safe and happy Christmas, and I hope you get chance to take a break over the coming weeks.

Jess

Jess Hutchinson, Director of Adults' Health and Care

Reminder: Plan ahead for the closure of the M27 between Junctions 9 and 11

Drivers are being advised to plan ahead to avoid severe delays this Christmas and New Year as details are published for a full closure in both directions on a section of the M27 in Hampshire – this is scheduled from 8pm, 24 December 2025 to 4am on Sunday 4 January 2026.

[**FIND OUT MORE AND PLAN AHEAD**](#)

Infection Prevention and Control – guidance

The NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board has seen an increase in outbreaks within Adult Social Care settings and have shared some winter preparedness messaging.

Universal Masking Guidance for Adult Social Care Providers

Universal masking can be used to enhance patient safety and reduce the risk of transmission of infections and forms a part of a broader infection prevention and control strategy.

This strategy also includes hand hygiene, physical distancing, vaccination and ventilation to protect patients and healthcare workers all of which are included within the hierarchy of controls as outlined in chapter 1 of the [National infection prevention and control manual \(NIPCM\) for England](#)

The [Infection prevention and control \(IPC\) in adult social care: acute respiratory infection \(ARI\)](#) guidance includes the following guidance on mask wearing.

Care workers and visitors to care homes do not routinely need to wear a face mask in care settings or when providing care in people's own homes.

However, Type IIR fluid-repellent surgical masks should be worn:

- if the person being cared for has [symptoms of ARI](#)
- when cleaning the room of a person with symptoms of ARI
- if there is an outbreak of ARI in a care home and the local risk assessment favours the introduction of universal masking as one of the outbreak control measures
- if the person being cared for would prefer staff or visitors to wear a mask while providing them with care or visiting

A local risk assessment should be undertaken by a provider when considering how to support the personal preferences of care workers and visitors who wish to wear a face mask in situations beyond the above recommendations.

Providers should consider mitigations if a person receiving care finds that the use of face masks impairs communication or is distressing. This may particularly be the case when caring for people with learning disabilities,

cognitive conditions such as dementia, or people who rely on lip reading or facial recognition.

It may be appropriate in certain circumstances to consider using transparent face masks. Only transparent masks compliant with the [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency \(MHRA\) standards](#) can be considered as an alternative to Type IIR surgical masks.

You should ensure that face masks are:

- well fitted to cover the nose, mouth and chin
- worn according to the manufacturer's recommendations (for example checking the coloured side is worn outwards, unless the manufacturer states otherwise)
- worn by staff only following a risk assessment
- not allowed to dangle around the neck at any time, or rest on the forehead or under the chin
- not touched once put on
- removed and disposed of appropriately, with the wearer cleaning their hands before removal and after disposal
- changed if either moist, damaged, contaminated or soiled, uncomfortable to wear
- changed between break times and between different people's homes
- changed after providing care for someone or a single cohort of several people with symptoms of ARI

People should not wear masks which have exhalation valves or vents. Cloth face coverings should not be used in situations where surgical masks are advised in adult social care settings.

Type IIR fluid-repellent masks

- Type IIR fluid repellent surgical masks are recommended for use in adult social care. This is in line with the PPE recommendations for ARIs in adult social care.
- These masks protect the wearer against blood or body fluid splashes, and against respiratory droplets. They also protect others from the wearer's respiratory droplets.

Residential settings only:

Winter Preparedness:

Please familiarise yourself with the [UKHSA Care Home Winter Readiness Pack](#). This document has lots of guidance on how to prepare for winter infections and how to reduce the risk of an outbreak within residential settings.

Combination LFD's: Message from UKHSA South East

Existing combination LFDs

- The SARS-CoV-2 and Influenza A+B Antigen Combo Rapid Tests previously supplied have an expiry date of 31 December 2025.
Please continue to use these during an outbreak until then. Any unused kits can be disposed of as normal household waste in the new year.

New combination LFDs

- We will be replacing LFDs this winter while we continue to evaluate when and how to use these tests going forward.
- During the first two weeks of December, you will receive a further supply of five 2SAN-branded SARS-CoV-2 and Influenza A+B Antigen Combo Rapid Tests. These are a different brand but work in the same way and come in different packaging (orange and slightly rounded).
- Please ensure all staff members know where they are stored and when to use them
- If these do not arrive by the end of December 2025, please email: SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk

When to use combination LFD tests?

- Combination LFD tests should only be used when there are two or more residents who are linked and have developed acute respiratory symptoms within 5 days of each other.
- If there is only one case, or cases are unlikely to be connected (for example, different floors or units), follow usual clinical processes and standard IPC guidance.
- If in doubt, you can contact the South East Health Protection Team on 0344 225 3861 to discuss your outbreak.
- Where applicable, residents eligible for COVID-19 treatment should be tested using a standard [NHS COVID-19 LFD](#) test.

Reporting results

- All combination test results (positive, negative, or void) must be reported online using the spreadsheet system. This ensures we know tests have been used and can supply replacements. [Find out more](#).

What to do with positive results

- If your residents test positive for 'flu (Influenza A or B) you must also contact the South East Health Protection Team on 0344 225 3861, who will tell you what to do next.
 - If your residents test positive for COVID-19, then please follow standard [Infection Prevention and Control Guidance](#) and seek medical advice as appropriate.
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Care Home Framework newsletter

Read the latest [Care Home Framework newsletter](#) with useful information and Frequently Asked Questions about referrals, rates and more.

[READ THE NEWSLETTER](#)

Improved Public Health website: clearer, faster, simpler

It's now simpler to find the information and services you need on the [Public Health](#) website. Following feedback from stakeholders and a full content review, the site has been refreshed to make your experience better.

The refreshed site offers:

- A smoother user journey
- Clearer information and resources, organised by topic area
- Mobile-friendly navigation for easy access on the go

If you are looking for details on commissioned services or how to make a referral for yourself or someone else, it's all easy to find.

Take a moment to explore the updated site and familiarise yourself with what's available.

Information about the Fair Pay Agreement for care providers

The government is planning to establish an 'Adult Social Care Negotiating Body' and introduce fair pay agreements for the adult social care sector in England from 2028 onwards. This body will be a platform for worker representatives in the sector to negotiate constructively with employers and it is hoped that through fair pay agreements we will help make the sector a more attractive place to work and stay in. A consultation about these proposals is now open until 16 January 2026. Please ensure that you take the opportunity to consider and respond to this consultation.

[**TAKE THE SURVEY**](#)

Invitation to Participate in Research on Hospital Admissions and Discharge

Hampshire Care Association are inviting you to help inform and shape a county wide programme aimed at reducing hospital admissions and improving discharge across Hampshire.

You can [complete the survey](#), the closing date is 23 January.

They want to hear directly from providers about the challenges that contribute to admissions and discharge issues, as well as any ideas or solutions you may have. As key partners in the 'system', your insights are valuable and this is a real opportunity to influence change. All information you provide will be confidential and shared anonymously with health and social care leaders to inform future improvements.

At this stage, providers are being invited to complete a questionnaire. Following this, interested providers may also be invited to participate in a focus group to discuss broader themes. Details will be confirmed early in the New Year, with sessions planned for mid to late February. If you are interested, please share your details with via the questionnaire.

The survey findings will be shared with the Health and Social Care Partnership Board, which will provide updates on any changes implemented as a result of your feedback.

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