

Dear _____,

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Guidance for Direct Payment Users and Individual Employers

I am writing to you as you use a direct payment to provide your individual support. I realise that the situation is rapidly changing and that people using direct payments have particular support needs to be able to respond to this emergency with more confidence. With this letter I have included information that I hope will help you and your support networks at this difficult time.

Please be assured that H&F Council remain fully committed to providing care and support during this time. Essential services are running as usual and we have a daily status update call with all our care support suppliers. There are no plans to reduce care support. We have robust contingency plans in place.

Hammersmith & Fulham Council is committed to working together with Disabled Residents and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) to ensure plans are in place to support Disabled people who may be at risk of not receiving the care and support they need as a result of COVID-19.

Facilitating community-based support with residents has been a Council priority from the beginning. This means we can all help as many residents who need support as possible in the most useful ways. Please see here for a link to a statement by Councillor Cowan, Leader of the Council. <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/articles/news/2020/03/responding-coronavirus-covid-19-together>

As a Council we are aware that All eligible users of social care and Personal Health Budgets (PHBs) are Disabled people who are at greater risk than the general population. Disabled people have said therefore action is needed in relation to: communication; personal protective equipment (PPE); practical arrangements; flexibility of support; access to care and support staff, for example. We are addressing these in our plans and I have attached information on our response so far.

With this letter is also information that has been put together with the Independent Living Direct Payment Support Service (Action on Disability). The information is for people who employ their own support staff (personal assistants - PAs or paid care workers).

If you use a care agency, the agency should have their own plans to stay in touch with you and carry on providing your support.

I have also included a summary of NHS advice. The information may change so if you can please check the latest health information and advice about the virus at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/health-and-care/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information-and-advice>

other sources of information are:

<https://www.signhealth.org.uk/> for British Sign Language (BSL).

Easy read information can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874281/COVID-19_easy_read.pdf

Please also find copies of letters that you can give to your workers so they can confirm they are key workers. The Council is also allowing parking on the street in parking bays for health and emergency key workers. Please ask your worker to put a sign on their dashboard saying: "Health or emergency Key Worker in H&F" if they need to park when they are supporting you.

Hammersmith & Fulham Council is committed to working with you and all residents so together we can help people stay as well and safe as possible. We cannot get everything right without working together so please do let us know of any broader issues that we should be considering.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Redfern

Strategic Director of Social Care
Hammersmith & Fulham Council

Disabled people's priorities for action - Hammersmith & Fulham's response

Disabled people have identified the following areas for action;

1) Communication:

For new and urgent queries, contact:

Adult Social Care

T: 020 8753 6682

E: H&Fadvice.care@lbhf.gov.uk

Text Relay: 18001 020 8748 3020 (for Deaf residents)

Local community networks can be really helpful. Please do link with local networks like www.nextdoor.co.uk if you can.

Action on Disability's Direct Payment Support Service will be working with H&F direct payment users so you can keep in touch, share ideas and develop peer support. Their contact details are:

T: 020 3080 0380 E: dpsupport@aod.org.uk

2) Provide Direct Payment social care/PHB users and PAs with personal protective equipment (PPE) and coronavirus guidance in the community.

Council response:

H&F is working to ensure the supply of PPE locally. The council is distributing PPE packs to all DP users. If you and your personal assistant (PA) are struggling to access appropriate equipment please let us know.

We are providing letters so your PA can confirm their role if needed when buying essential equipment.

3) If you are not getting the support you need because practically you are experiencing difficulties.

Council response:

Please contact us if your support arrangements break down. We can work with you to put in the support you need.

The Direct Payment Support Service will look at how its Find-a-PA Service could help link people with workers on their register.

H&F is providing letters, on trust, that you can give to your workers so they can confirm they are key workers.

The Council is allowing parking on the street in parking bays for health and emergency key workers. Please ask your worker to put a sign on their dashboard saying: "Health or emergency Key Worker in H&F" if they need to park when they are supporting you.

- 4) Disabled people want information on how they can practically get food and supplies as priority customers.

Council response:

Many supermarkets are operating priority times for key workers, older and Disabled people to do their shopping. Your worker may be able to do your shopping for you if you are self-isolating (as many Disabled people will be). On-line shopping may be an option.

Plans are being developed to ensure all people at higher risk get the food and supplies they need.

- 5) Increase flexibility in how you can spend your direct payments at this time. Disabled people have set out the following examples:
- use the budget to buy personal protective equipment (e.g. Gloves, Gels, etc)
 - use funds for meal deliveries
 - suspend restrictions in Direct Payments agreements about employing relatives and paying cash
 - pay broadband and internet costs so Disabled people self-isolating can keep in contact.

Council response:

The Council supports you to use your budget flexibly to get through this situation in the best way possible. Any support of course, should be legal and appropriate to help meet your needs.