**Important information for GCIL service users regarding coronavirus / COVID-19**

**This page will be updated with any new guidance or information regarding the current coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. Up-to-date NHS guidance is available here:** [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

As service users and key stakeholders will be aware Coronavirus (COVID-19) is causing particular concern for those living and working in a social care context at the moment. There are lots of useful information available online, we have collated the most relevant articles below as well as answering some of your questions. We have included information about the measures GCIL will be taking to protect our team, so that our service users know what to expect from us over the coming weeks. If you are searching the internet for information, please be mindful of the source. There is a lot of useful information out there alongside some that’s outdated or factually incorrect. Our information sources include the NHS, HMRC, UK and Scottish Governments.

**Do Personal Assistant (PAs) have ‘key worker’ status?**

Yes. [A recent letter](https://www.sdsscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Cabinet-Secretary-and-Cllr-Currie-Letter-Social-Care-Key-Workers-30-March-2020-1.pdf) from The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Jeanne Freeman MSP, acknowledges that Personal Assistants are key workers, and also recognises that PAs will not have formal ID in order to make this known where required. GCIL Support, Take Control East Dunbartonshire & South Lanarkshire can provide PA Employers with a letter for this purpose. A template letter is also available on our website.

The UK and Scottish Government have announced new guidance designed to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. You will likely have heard about this already, but you can download a UK Government issued PDF here:

[Full guidance on staying at home and away from others](http://www.lothiancil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Full_guidance_on_staying_at_home_and_away_from_others__1_.pdf) (PDF).

GCIL advise all PA employers to follow government guidance and would highlight that PAs should be considered essential key workers so, unless you or your PAs must self-isolate due to being ill, your PAs can still travel to work and continue to support you.

In the event of an emergency, for example, caused by your regular support not being available, you first try any other back-up support options you may have such as agencies or informal family support. If nothing is available, then you should contact your local authority. Contact details are available on this page in the contacts section below.

We have also had a number of enquiries from service users worried that their PAs will not be able to get to work in light of the new guidance. It is our understanding that PAs will be considered key workers as they are ‘front-line’ social care workers (see Government guidance below). This may also mean that, if your PA has school-age children, they could be entitled to continued school provision. If this applies, they should contact their local authority / school for further information.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision)

**Access to PPE for PAs**

[NHS National Services Scotland](https://nhsnss.org/) (NSS) has set up a helpline to deal with social care supplies during COVID-19.  At the moment, the helpline is to be used only in cases where there is an urgent supply shortage and a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.  This will be reviewed regularly in the coming days and weeks.  Care service providers can reach the NHS NSS triage centre by calling **0300 303 3020.** Please note this line is currently only open to registered care services, however Scottish Government have acknowledged the need for PPE for both PAs and unpaid carers. They are currently working on a suitable solution and we will update their page as soon as scheme is put in place.

**Do PAs have the same designated time slots to access to supermarkets?**

This seems to depend on which part of the country you are in. However, we know that Scottish Care and Disabled People’s Organisations are urging Government to remind supermarkets that PAs are key workers. The ID letter mentioned above should help identify PAs as key workers.

**Furlough scheme for Personal Assistants**

Mark Bates Ltd have published guidance on the Furlough scheme in the context of social care - [click here](https://ilgsupport.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-Furlough-Leave-v2_030420.pdf) to read more. We would encourage PA employers to contact their employment law provider for more advice, as well as informing your Local Authority.

**Information for those working in a social care context**

Health Protection Scotland have produced a guide specifically for those working in a care setting, [click here](https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-social-or-community-care-residential-settings/). On 13th March, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Jeane Freeman MSP, distributed a letter providing information and links to clinical guidance dealing with COVID-19 in residential care and nursing homes.  [Click here](https://www.sdsscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Letter-from-Cabinet-Secretary-for-Health-and-Sport-Social-care-guidance-13-March-2020.pdf) to access.

A further letter was distributed on 30th March which outlines the Scottish Government’s approach to supporting the social care sector during this period. [Click here to view.](https://www.sdsscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Cabinet-Secretary-and-Cllr-Currie-Letter-Social-Care-Key-Workers-30-March-2020-1.pdf)

**Information for employers**

ACAS have frequently updated guidance available for employers and employees, which you can find [h](https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus)ere.

**GCIL Measures**

One of GCIL’s key priorities is, of course, to ensure the welfare of our staff. From the 23rd March, the GCIL team will all be working from home and all previously arranged face to face meetings and appointments will be cancelled. To contact us, you can still call GCIL reception, or your local **Take Control** Team if applicable, and one of our Admin staff will forward your enquiry to the appropriate person. Email communication will continue as normal. Please bear with us if responses are slower than normal, as we are expecting an increase in enquiries during this time.

GCIL Reception: 0141 550 4455

Take Control - East Dunbartonshire: 0141 776 2219

Take Control - South Lanarkshire: 01698 892372

**Information from other organisations you may find useful**

**ILF Scotland**

ILF Scotland will, for its funding purposes, view self-isolating PA as if they are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and fund PA employers accordingly. This has been agreed with our Sponsor. Therefore, if an ILF Scotland recipient does not wish the PA to attend work because of Covid 19, or the PA is unable to attend work for that reason, those PAs will be viewed by ILF Scotland as effectively “furloughing” in the meaning of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Their actual status will be established by HMRC subsequently. For the latest ILF Scotland information, please click [here](https://ilf.scot/ilf-scotland-coronavirus-update-2/).

**Glasgow Disability Alliance**

GDA have designed a **survey** for disabled people to complete. This will help them find out what disabled people need during the virus outbreak.

They will use this information to help identify what GDA can do and what others could do to support disabled people at a time when they are isolated and unable to access the services and support they may need.

If you are able to get online, please check GDA’s Facebook and Twitter pages for up to date information. You can also contact GDA by phone 0141 556 7103, mobile 07958 299 496, and info@gdaonline.co.uk if you need to.

We are aware that colleagues at SPAEN and the PA Network are developing an emergency register of PAs, [click here](https://panetworkscotland.org.uk/news/item/376-personal-assistants-required-coronavirus-emergency-cover) for the latest updates.

**Community Support**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of volunteer groups across Glasgow, East Dunbartonshire and South Lanarkshire are coordinating support for vulnerable people who are self-isolating and require support with someone doing their shopping, picking up prescriptions etc. Some even offer assistance with dog walking.

Below you’ll find some links which you may wish to explore. GCIL are not affiliated with any of these groups and you should use usual caution when it comes to giving out personal details, but there are plenty of good people out there looking to offer their support if you feel this is appropriate for you.

For some links, you may need to be signed up to, or willing to sign up to Facebook.

**All areas:**

**Covid -19 Mutual Aid UK**

This website appears to provide comprehensive info about local support groups – you simply type in the area and it brings all the local groups up on a map and you can click on to the one you want to find out more.

<https://covidmutualaid.org/local-groups/>

**Glasgow:**

**Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership** have teamed up with **Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS)** and **Volunteer Glasgow** to create a hub which people can contact for help or to volunteer their services. The helpline is for members of the public seeking help, such as food delivery or mental health support, and for charities who need support with offering a service to communities. Helpline number: **0141 345 0543**.

GCVS is coordinating a directory of community supports around Covid19 specifically to highlight where there are additional services that people can access at this time or where there is spare capacity for new clients.

<https://www.gcvs.org.uk/blog/glasgow-community-support-around-covid19-directory/>

**South Lanarkshire:**

**COVID-19 Community Wellbeing Line: South Lanarkshire**

A new helpline is now available for individuals living in South Lanarkshire who are self-isolating / vulnerable and whose usual support network is no longer available.

The helpline will help people to access food and other essential supplies.  The Community Engagement Team within the council have been working along with VASLAN to collate activity which is happening within communities, and to make contact with new groups and networks which are developing in response to the current situation.

Community volunteers are playing a key role in supporting the people around them.  This includes helping transport essential goods such as food to people who cannot leave their home, carrying out welfare checks where a concern has been expressed about the wellbeing of someone, and offering telephone befriending to those who are isolated.

The helpline number is **0303 123 1009** and the opening hours are as follows:-

* **Monday to Thursday 8.45 – 4.45**
* **Friday 8.45 – 4.15**

**East Dunbartonshire:**

The **OPAL** helpline is funded through East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership and run by established East Dunbartonshire charities. OPAL is available for individuals to contact when they need information about local services.

**Extended hours:** OPAL usually operates Monday to Saturday. They have extended their service and will now be operating **Monday** to **Sunday, 9am – 5pm**. **Tel:** **0141 438 2347****.**

This is only a small selection of the community support available in the areas we cover. Information changes on a daily basis and updates can be found on local Facebook pages. As we learn of new community support services, we will share on that area’s Facebook page.

**Contacts**

**Useful Numbers and websites**

GCIL Reception: 0141 550 4455

GCIL Payroll: 0141 550 4455

Take Control - East Dunbartonshire: 0141 776 2219

Take Control - South Lanarkshire: 01698 892372

**Local Authorities**

**Glasgow City Council**

Social Care Direct: 0141 287 0555 (during office hours).

If you need a service out with office hours you can contact Glasgow and partners Emergency Social Work Services on 0300 343 1505.

East Dunbartonshire Council: 0141 355 2200 (during office hours) If you need a service out with office hours call 0800 811 505.

South Lanarkshire Council: 0303 123 1008.

**NHS Inform Scotland**

This website has the latest guidance about COVID-19 from NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government, including social distancing and stay at home advice. There are also links for mental wellbeing and other COVID-19 advice links including other languages and formats.

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19>