Cumberland Council

April 2026

NEWSLETTER

Infection Prevention and Control for care homes across

Spring COVID-19 vaccination (April–June 2026)

From April 2026, the Spring COVID-19 vaccine will be available free on the NHS for people at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19. Care home residents for older adults are a priority group, and vaccination should be offered early in the programme.

Who is eligible this spring?

- Adults aged 75 years and over
- Residents in care homes for older adults
- Individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed

Key dates

Spring 2026 COVID-19 vaccination campaign: 13 April 2026 – 30 June 2026

What do care homes need to do?

- Identify eligible residents (and any new admissions who meet criteria) and start the consent process early.
- Check residents' NHS number/date of birth details are correct to support call/recall and records.
- Liaise with your usual vaccination provider (often the residents' GP practice/community vaccination team) to confirm clinic dates and on-site visit arrangements.
- Ensure a suitable space for vaccination and post-vaccination observation (as per provider advice).
- Record vaccination in the resident record and update any local trackers as required.

COVID-19 / acute respiratory infection (ARI): what to look out for

Most viral respiratory infections share similar symptoms and can be difficult to tell apart without testing. Monitor residents for early symptoms and for sudden deterioration.

- New or worsening cough, sore throat, runny/blocked nose
- Fever or feeling hot/shivery
- Shortness of breath, wheeze
- Fatigue, body aches, headache
- In older adults (including those with dementia): sudden deterioration in physical health or mental ability, with or without fever



Testing – quick reminders

Follow your local policy for symptomatic testing. Make sure you have a clear internal process for: who tests, who records results, and who escalates.

- Keep an in-date stock of LFDs for residents who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments (tests can be accessed via local pharmacy/NHS routes).
- During a suspected ARI incident or outbreak contact the Cumberland IPC team at **ipc@cumberland.gov.uk.**
- Record and report any LFD results.

Reporting & escalation – refresh

- Escalate early if you have 2 or more symptomatic residents with ARI symptoms
- Notify Cumberland IPC team promptly to support risk assessment, advice and access to testing/treatments.
- Keep an outbreak line list (symptom onset date, room/unit, tests, outcomes) to support decision-making.

Treatment – acting quickly matters

Some residents at highest risk may be eligible for assessment for COVID-19 treatments (typically provided outside hospitals via NHS pathways). Treatments work best if started early.

- If a potentially eligible resident develops symptoms: LFD test as soon as possible.
- If the test is positive: seek clinical advice immediately and arrange an assessment for COVID-19 treatment (contact GP/NHS 111/local pathway).
- Treatments offered to eligible people can include Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir), sotrovimab and molnupiravir (clinician will advise what is suitable).

Infection Prevention & Control (IPC)

- Reinforce Standard Infection Control Precautions (SICPs): hand hygiene, PPE, respiratory hygiene, and environmental cleaning.
- Optimise ventilation (fresh air where safe/appropriate).
- Use PPE in line with national guidance and your local risk assessment.
- Cohort/isolate symptomatic residents where possible and minimise non-essential movement until risk assessed.

Surplus & expired LFDs

- Do NOT use expired tests – check expiry dates regularly (including any stored “back-up” boxes).
- Store expired items securely and separately until appropriate disposal.
- Dispose of expired tests via your usual pharmacy return route or a licensed waste contractor, in line with home policy.

Useful links

- COVID-19 vaccine - NHS
- Management of acute respiratory infection outbreaks in care homes guidance - GOV.UK
- Infection prevention and control (IPC) in adult social care: acute respiratory infection (ARI) - GOV.UK
- Treatments for COVID-19 - NHS
- COVID-19 vaccination campaign guide spring 2026