Cumberland Council

October 2026

NEWSLETTER

Infection Prevention and Control for Care Homes Across Cumberland

Winter Preparedness

- **The winter season places increased pressure on health and social care services due to increased respiratory infections and norovirus outbreaks. These illnesses can affect residents and staff, leading to staff shortages during periods of high demand.**

- **Taking proactive steps to prepare for winter can help care settings prevent, identify, and manage outbreaks, protecting the health and wellbeing of residents and staff.**

Signs & Symptoms of Common Winter Illnesses

Flu (Influenza)

- Sudden high temperature (fever)
- Chills and sweating
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Muscle and joint aches
- Feeling tired or exhausted
- Loss of appetite

COVID-19

- High temperature
- New continuous cough
- Loss or change to sense of smell or taste
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

- Runny nose
- Cough
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing
- Reduced appetite
- Difficulty breathing in vulnerable adults

Norovirus (Winter Vomiting Bug)

- Sudden onset of nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Stomach cramps
- Mild fever
- Headache
- Aching limbs



Residents, particularly older adults, may not always present with typical symptoms. Any sudden deterioration or change from normal should be assessed promptly.

Early recognition and prompt action can help prevent the spread of infection and protect residents, visitors, and staff during the winter months.

The following steps will help you prepare for and effectively manage outbreaks within your care setting.

Vaccination and Health Protection



- Where eligible, **get vaccinated and encourage residents to take up vaccination** when offered.
- Ensure **eligible residents can access COVID-19 testing** promptly when required.
- Follow your organisation's sickness reporting procedures and **do not attend work if you are unwell** with an infectious illness.
- **Check the vaccination status of newly admitted residents and report any gaps to the appropriate person**.
- **Support eligible residents who wish to be vaccinated** by ensuring this is escalated and arrangements are made as soon as possible.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

- Follow your home's IPC procedures and know what action to take if you suspect an outbreak of infection.
- Keep your IPC knowledge up to date, including effective hand hygiene and the safe use of PPE.
- Support residents with hand hygiene, especially before meals and after using the toilet.
- Promote good respiratory hygiene by encouraging everyone to 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' and follow cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Report any resident displaying signs of infection promptly so appropriate precautions can be put in place.
- Support the timely isolation of residents with suspected infectious illnesses to help prevent the spread of infection.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Supplies

- Know where PPE is stored and report low stocks of gloves, aprons, face masks, and eye protection.
- Check that alcohol hand rub and cleaning products are in date and report any expired items.
- Use PPE and hand hygiene products appropriately to help prevent the spread of infection.
- Report low stock levels promptly to ensure essential supplies remain available throughout the winter period.

Environmental Cleaning

- Pay extra attention to cleaning frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, light switches, and shared equipment.
- Follow enhanced cleaning procedures during periods of increased illness and outbreaks.
- Report any concerns about cleaning standards or supplies promptly.
- Support a clean and safe environment to help reduce the spread of infection

Outbreak Management

- Report suspected outbreaks promptly to your local Community Infection Prevention and Control Team
- or the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) during the bank holidays or over weekends.
- Follow outbreak control measures and any additional precautions implemented within the home.
- Support colleagues by following sickness reporting procedures and infection prevention measures to help maintain safe care.
- Escalate concerns promptly if you notice an increase in residents or staff becoming unwell.

Visitors and Communication

- Encourage unwell visitors to stay away from the home until they are no longer infectious.
- Support safe visiting by promoting good hand hygiene and infection prevention measures.
- Follow local procedures to support communication during outbreaks.

ATTENTION:
This setting is in an outbreak.
Please speak to a member of staff upon entering.



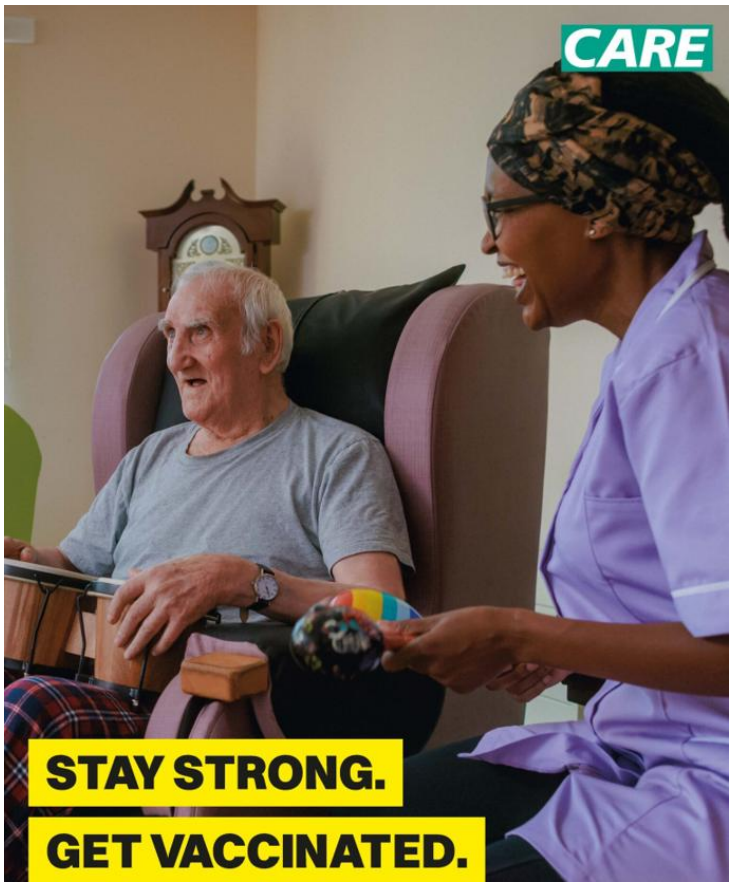
Flu Vaccination for Care Home Staff

Getting your flu vaccine helps protect you, your colleagues, and the residents you care for.

Frontline health and social care workers are also eligible for vaccination

You can book an appointment now and choose a date and time from 1st October. **Book, change or cancel a flu vaccination appointment - NHS**

For more information visit
Flu vaccine - NHS



Key Message

Remember: Good hand hygiene, early symptom recognition, vaccination and prompt reporting are the most effective ways to prevent the spread of infection and protect residents, visitors, and staff this winter.

By working together, we can maintain safe, resilient care services throughout the season.

Report all cases of infectious disease to IPC@cumberland.gov.uk