

'Friends' support guide

This information guide is to help 'Friends' supporting people they know in their local community - who may be self-isolating, social distancing or shielding.

Further support

If the person you're helping is aged 50 or over you can get further support by contacting Age Cymru Advice on **08000 223 444**, available 9:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday, or email **advice@agecymru.org.uk**

If the person you're helping is aged under 50, you can get further support by contacting Citizens Advice on **03444 77 20 20**, available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, or visit **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/**

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‘Being a Friend’

Who can be a ‘Friend’?

- Potentially anyone in Wales who is not self-isolating can be a ‘Friend’ if they know someone who needs support locally.
- You may already be a ‘Friend’

Why is a ‘Friend’ necessary?

- Many people in Wales have family nearby who are their support during this time, but others, individuals or couples, who are social distancing, self-isolating or shielding and don’t have this support may need other people they know to help them.

What would be the alternative without a ‘Friend’?

- People could become lonely and increasingly fearful, which could potentially have an adverse effect on their mental health.
- People could possibly be at greater risk of unscrupulous people they don’t know offering to ‘help’.
- People may go against advice to socially distance, self-isolate or shield – for example going to their pharmacist or having to use public transport to go shopping, potentially putting themselves at risk.
- There could be further unnecessary strain on the NHS and/or social services.

How can you become a ‘Friend’?

- You need to be already known to the person you’re supporting (neighbour, friend etc).
- The person who needs support identifies the people they would like to help them.

Ideally, this is at least two ‘Friends’ in separate households.

- Once nominated as a ‘Friend’ you can:
 - o Access support on the ‘Friends’ information hub:
www.agecymru.org.uk/friend-in-need
 - o Register for updates on the ‘Friends’ information hub.
 - o Access information and support by calling Age Cymru Advice on 08000 223 444.

What could a ‘Friend’ do to help?

Whilst following the social distancing rules and information in this guide, you could:

- Pick up groceries and shopping.
- Pick up prescriptions.
- Walk pets.
- Provide regular telephone contact and/or via online methods such as Skype or FaceTime.
- Assist people to get online, or to access services online – whilst socially distancing.
- Provide ideas of things that people can do that don’t involve going out, to keep them emotionally and physically well.
- Put people in touch with support groups, and other useful local services.
- Help people prepare for any eventualities that may arise.
- Provide reassurance with accurate and up to date information from Welsh Government and Public Health Wales.

Shopping

Many people will need support with picking up groceries or other essential items from the shops during this time.

Here are a few basic precautions for handling shopping;

1. Follow social distancing protocol and don't take unnecessary risks.
2. Don't go into the house of the person you're supporting.
3. Leave food / goods outside on the doorstep.
4. Communicate to the person in isolation that you have delivered via message or phone call. Get confirmation that the person has received it before you leave.
5. Check any packaging is sealed and the temperature of product on delivery e.g. If it's meant to be frozen, is it still frozen?
6. Recommend that recipients wash shopping wherever possible and wash their hands after touching it.
7. Remember to wash hands before and after deliveries for at least 20 seconds.
8. When out and about keep a bottle of alcohol hand sanitiser to hand.
9. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing. If you don't have a tissue, cough and sneeze into the crook of your arm.
10. Public transport should be avoided where possible. In cases where taking public transport is unavoidable, disinfect the items before being delivered
11. Take care when handling any items which may be given to people who may have compromised immune systems. The virus can live on inanimate surfaces for up to 24 hours.
12. Disinfect any surface that will be touched by the person you're delivering to.

If you're not able to go out to the shops for the person who needs supporting you can help them access this support through local organisations. You can use the contact information below.

For information on how to safely pay for goods see: **Paying for goods and services**

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If the person you're supporting needs further help and is aged under 50, they can call Citizens Advice on **03444 77 20 20**, available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Paying for goods and services

The person you're supporting will need to consider how to access their cash or to pay for goods and services whilst they're isolating at home.

Many people will be anxious about how to access funds to pay for shopping/goods. To help reduce this anxiety you should;

- Provide the person you're supporting with a receipt for any purchases made for them, and leave it in the bottom of the shopping bag. They can then check this against the amount requested in payment.
- Encourage the person you're supporting to give their post office or bank a call to discuss which available methods of accessing cash best suit their needs.
- Not take cash or cards to pay for goods or services.

There are a number of different ways to safely access cash and pay for goods and services that you can let the person you're supporting know about:

- A number of local shops and services will allow payment over the phone before pick up.
- Money transfers are an easy way to transfer money from one person's account to another person's account for payment. This can be arranged either by telephone or via online banking.
- Bank cheques can be used to pay for small services such as gardening but may not be convenient for immediate reimbursement as they could take several days to clear and thereby leave someone out of pocket.

- Pre-paid cards work in a similar way to mobile telephone top-up cards whereby the card can be topped up at Post Offices, shops displaying the PayPoint sign, or sometimes over the telephone or online. Some pre-paid cards let you ask for a second card to give to a friend, family member or someone else you trust. This card will have its own unique PIN number so that someone helping you with shopping can pay for your goods without having any effect on their own finances. However, there are a number of drawbacks, as pre-paid cards can incur charges such as transaction fees or monthly management fees.
- Store gift vouchers can often be ordered from most major retailers over the telephone, or online. You may pass them on to friends, family or a trusted volunteer shopper. However, some retailers may not allow you to spend small balances that remain on the gift voucher so you may have to spend the full amount in one go.

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Being scam aware

Unfortunately during this time there are a number of scams circulating. Please be scam aware and follow our tips below to help the person you're supporting to stay safe.

Encourage them to:

- Be sceptical if they receive an email, text or WhatsApp message about the Coronavirus, and never click on any attachments or links.
- Never provide personal data such as their full name, address, date of birth, bank details or pin numbers – scammers can use this information to steal their identity.
- Not be pressured into donating money and never make donations by cash or gift card, or send money through transfer agents.
- Never hand over their cash, cards or bank details, particularly to someone they don't know. There are many safer ways to pay for their goods. See **Paying for goods and services**.
- Always ask for a receipt for any goods and services, and check the amount they're being charged tallies with the receipt.
- Speak to their telephone line provider to get call blocking in place if they feel they need extra security about who is calling them.
- Not be worried about saying no and putting the phone down on strangers who might phone them.

Phone scams

You could help the person you're supporting to be aware of phone scams. It might be a scam if:

- They're asked to authorise the transfer of money to a new account.
- They've never heard of the company or person before.
- They've been asked to give their pin number or passwords in full (on the phone or via text) – their bank or the police will never ask for this information.
- The person says that they'll send someone to their home to collect cash, bank cards or anything else.
- They're asked to reveal personal or banking information.

If they're contacted by anyone asking them for personal details or passwords (such as for their bank account), they should take steps to check the true identity of the organisation. They should ask the caller to verify their identity by asking them to give them details that only that company would know, such as details of their service contract or how much they pay per month.

If they still have concerns about the caller's identity, they should hang up and call the company back, preferably from a different phone.

Never disclose the following details:

- four-digit card pin number, not even to the bank or the police.
- full password or online banking codes.
- personal details, such as address and date of birth, unless sure who they're talking to.

If you think the person you're supporting has been the victim of a scam, then encourage them to speak to their bank immediately and report any fraud to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.

You may find our 'Avoiding scams' guide helpful in supporting them.

<https://bit.ly/ACAvoidingScams>

More information on avoiding coronavirus scams can be found here: <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/04/coronavirus-scams-how-to-spot-them-and-stop-them/>

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Picking up prescriptions

- You can pick up a prescription on behalf of someone else. The prescription can be either electronic or a paper prescription.
- Plan ahead where possible to find out when the next prescription is due. If it can be ordered at least seven days beforehand this will help the pharmacist deal with urgent requests and queries.
- You may need to take ID with you and you will need to know the name and address of the person you're collecting for.

For further information <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/caring-carers-and-long-term-conditions/can-i-pick-up-a-prescription-for-someone-else/>

Here are a few basic precautions for handling prescriptions;

1. Follow social distancing protocol and don't take unnecessary risks.
2. Don't go into the house of the person you're supporting.
3. Leave the medicine outside on the doorstep.
4. Communicate to the person in isolation that you have delivered via message or phone call. Get confirmation that the person has received it before you leave.
5. Remember to wash hands before and after deliveries for at least 20 seconds.

6. When out and about keep a bottle of alcohol hand sanitiser to hand.
7. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing. If you don't have a tissue, cough and sneeze into the crook of your arm.
8. Public transport should be avoided where possible. In cases where taking public transport is unavoidable, ensure to disinfect the items before delivering.
9. Take care when handling any items which may be given to people who may have compromised immune systems. The virus can live on inanimate surfaces for up to 24 hours.
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Unpaid carers

The person you're supporting may be an unpaid carer for the other person/s they live with. It's useful for you to be aware of this when you're providing help.

- A carer is anyone of any age, who provides unpaid care and support to a relative, friend or neighbour who is disabled, physically or mentally ill, or affected by substance misuse.
- Carers can be involved in a whole range of practical, physical, personal and administrative tasks. Examples might include; cooking; housework; lifting, washing and dressing the person cared for; helping with toileting needs; administering medication; and providing emotional support.

It might help the person you're supporting to connect with other carers – Carers Wales are running a Care for a Cuppa every Wednesday where carers can meet virtually for a coffee and a chat: See: <https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/care-for-a-cuppa-in-wales>

There are also forums that carers can join to share experiences with people in a similar situation: <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-support/carersuk-forum>

Emergency plan

Carers Wales advise all carers to create an emergency plan – for them and all those they look after. Having a plan in place can help ease their worries if they aren't able to care for those they look after at any point in the future.

You could support the carer to complete this plan so you're aware of the support needed.

For further information on creating an emergency plan see: <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/coronavirus-covid-19/making-a-plan>

Support with caring for someone at home

If someone you support as a 'Friend' needs help with caring for someone at home but aren't sure who to contact, they can contact their local council who will be able to help them and assess any social care needs they might have.

For more information about the support available for unpaid carers during this time see:

- [Carers Wales](#)
- [Carers Trust Wales](#)

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Current Welsh Government guidance

There are currently **three** main areas of guidance, plus a host of other Welsh Government guidance on various topics related to, or affected by, COVID-19. The three main areas for the public cover:

- **Self-isolating** (for households with possible or proven coronavirus infection)
- **Social distancing** (for **everyone**)
- **Shielding** (for people identified by the Government as ‘extremely vulnerable’)

Available at: <https://gov.wales/protect-yourself-others-coronavirus>

Summaries of each of the above are as follows:

Guidance: Self-isolating (for households with possible or proven coronavirus infection)

The Welsh Government advises that this guidance is intended for:

- “people with symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus, and don’t require hospital treatment, who must remain at home until they’re well.
- those living in households with someone who shows symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus.

It’s very important that individuals with symptoms that may be due to coronavirus and their household members stay at home. Staying at home will help control the spread of the virus to friends, the wider community, and particularly the most vulnerable.

Those with symptoms and living alone should remain at home for 7 days after the onset of their symptoms. This will reduce the risk of you infecting others.

If you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus (COVID-19), then household members must stay at home and not leave your house for 14 days.

If possible, you shouldn’t go out even to buy food or other essentials and any exercise should be taken within the home.

The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in your house became ill.

If not possible, then you should do what you can to limit your social contact when you leave the house to get supplies.

Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community.

If you require help with buying groceries, other shopping or picking up medication, or walking a dog, you will need to ask friends or relatives. Alternatively, you can order medication by phone or online. You can also order your shopping online. Make sure you tell delivery drivers to leave items outside for collection if you order online. The delivery driver should not come into your home”.

Guidance: Staying at home and away from others *and*

Coronavirus social distancing: Guidance on social distancing for everyone in Wales and protecting older people and vulnerable adults

The Welsh Government advises that “you should only be outside of your home for very limited reasons, referred to in the Regulations as a reasonable excuse, which include:

- the need to obtain supplies and services for you or your household, for example food, medicine, and essential household maintenance, we encourage everyone to make this as infrequently as possible.
- to exercise locally either alone or with members of your household **[also see below for more information on exercise]**.
- to visit your GP or local health services, including the dentist.
- to deposit and withdraw money from a bank or similar establishment.
- to provide care for or to help a vulnerable person, this includes getting food or medicines for them.
- help the NHS by donating blood.
- to avoid injury or illness.
- travelling to and from work, but only where it's not reasonably practicable to work from home.
- visit a cemetery, burial ground or garden of remembrance to pay your respects.
- to attend a funeral if you're invited by the person organising the funeral, or

are the carer of a person attending the funeral, although this is subject to limits on numbers who can attend, in order to ensure that 2-metre distancing can be kept”.

The Welsh Government advises those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. This group includes those who are:

- “aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions).
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
 - chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
 - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
 - chronic kidney disease
 - chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
 - chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
 - diabetes
 - problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell anaemia or if you have had your spleen removed
 - a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy

- being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above)
- those who are pregnant”.

Exercise

The summary of the Welsh Government’s position on going out to exercise in Wales during the coronavirus “lockdown” is as follows:

- “going out to exercise is a valid reason to leave home and is encouraged;
- exercise can be combined with other – incidental – activity that is beneficial to people’s health and well-being;
- exercise should be local, involve minimal risk and be done in accordance with advice on social distancing;
- travelling by vehicle to exercise should be avoided unless there is a good reason for doing so.

To reduce the spread of coronavirus, exercise must be done within an area local to home. Exercise shouldn’t, therefore, involve going a significant distance from home and our advice is that exercise should start and finish from home”.

Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from coronavirus

The Welsh Government has strongly advised “people with serious underlying health conditions, which put them at very high risk of serious illness from coronavirus (COVID-19), to follow “shielding” measures to keep them safe.

“Shielding” means protecting those people who are extremely vulnerable to the serious complications of coronavirus because they have a particular existing health condition. It involves staying at home for at least 12 weeks, and reducing contact with other people as far as possible to reduce the risk of being exposed to coronavirus”.

In relation to “Shielding” for people who are extremely vulnerable to the serious complications of coronavirus, these are listed by the Welsh Government as::

1. Solid organ transplant recipients.
2. People with specific cancers:
 - People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer.
 - People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment.
 - People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer.
 - People having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors.
 - People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs.
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

4. People with severe single organ disease (e.g. Liver, Cardio, Renal, Neurological).
 5. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell).
 6. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection”.
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Accessing help for other, non-COVID-19, health issues

As a 'Friend' you can let the person you're supporting know that they should seek medical care when they need it and not be put off by the coronavirus epidemic. Anyone who delays seeking treatment could be putting their long-term health at risk.

Seeking medical help is one of the reasons people can safely leave home.

The person you're supporting can access medical help:

- Online: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/> (for help and advice)
- Phone: 111 (if symptoms get worse)
- Phone: 999 (if someone's life is at risk)

GP services

GP services are still available, though may be available via virtual, or other, different methods to normal.

The Welsh Government have advised that "video appointments will be offered if doctors want more information than a telephone call can provide. In these cases, surgeries can provide simple instructions about how people can access the free and easy-to-use technology that will work with their smartphone, tablet or PC".

If the person you're supporting is unsure about accessing virtual appointments, you could support them to do so.

Dental treatment

Currently all routine / non-urgent dental appointments have been cancelled.

If the person you're helping has pain, toothache, dental trauma or swelling please use the [NHS Direct Wales symptom checker](#) for dental problems and follow the advice. If they have another dental problem they can search for advice on that topic in the [NHS Direct Wales Encyclopedia](#) and follow the appropriate advice.

If they do need formal advice regarding a dental emergency, they should initially try to contact their dental practice by telephone.

They shouldn't go to the practice in person, they'll be provided with advice over the telephone regarding arrangements should they need to be seen.

If their practice is not taking calls they may need to call the number their Local Health Board normally uses for urgent dental care. This information can be found here: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/localservices/dentistinformation/>

Support with hearing aids

All NHS Audiology services in Wales offer a postal service for replacement hearing aid batteries and for repair of hearing aids. Services welcome enquiries by phone, text and email to provide help/advice for NHS hearing aid patients who are experiencing difficulties, and contact details are available on individual Health Board Audiology Service websites and social media. However, during the COVID-19 period unless specifically requested, they shouldn't visit their NHS

Audiology department. When the time comes to recommence face-to-face services, further information will be provided. For the latest updates about services in local health boards, please find contact details at the following locations:

- Aneurin Bevan UHB: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/866/page/51984>
- Betsi Cadwallader UHB: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/861/page/96704>
- Cardiff and Vale UHB: <http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/audiology>
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB: <https://cwmtafmorgannwg.wales/services/audiology/>
- Hywel Dda UHB: <https://hduhb.nhs.wales/healthcare/covid-19-information/>
- Powys THB: <http://www.powysthb.wales.nhs.uk/audiology/>
- Swansea Bay UHB: <https://sbuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/a-z-hospital-services/audiology/>

Opticians

Opticians have suspended all routine eye tests, however many remain open at certain times to support people if they need urgent or essential care.

If the person you're helping needs emergency eye care they can call a central telephone line that will direct them to their nearest optometry practice for any emergency eye care needs.

They should call: 01267 248793 or 01267 248795

A list of practices offering services are available here: <http://www.eyecare.wales.nhs.uk/coronavirus-information>

Alternatively, their regular optometrist will be answering telephone calls and will direct them

to the most appropriate place for emergency eye care if they need it.

Foot care

You may find that someone you're supporting needs help with foot care, such as nail cutting.

You shouldn't carry out any foot care, however, you can support someone to access support.

All routine podiatry services have been suspended, but there are local processes for ensuring that emergency or crisis situations can be addressed. Self-care and self-management advice has been made available to all those who will need to monitor their health conditions and to prevent deterioration at this time.

Further advice can be gained by contacting their usual services and will be provided by phone or online.

Podiatrists across Wales have made clinical assessment of the situations and conditions where an urgent response would be needed. Where there is a need to urgently treat someone, this will be carried out virtually wherever possible, or via a face to face treatment from specified sites or in the person's own home.

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If you're concerned about someone

If you have a non-emergency concern for someone aged 50 or over you're supporting you can contact Age Cymru Advice for support on 08000 223 444

If the person is aged under 50 you can call Citizen's Advice on 03444 77 20 20

If you're worried about someone's **physical health** contact the NHS:

- Online: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/> (for help and advice)
- Phone: 111 (if symptoms get worse)
- Phone: 999 (if someone's life is at risk)

If you're worried about someone's **mental health**, you can encourage them to get help and support from [Every Mind Matters](#).

They can also get support from:

C.A.L.L. Helpline (Community Advice & Listening Line)

The C.A.L.L. Helpline is a dedicated mental health helpline for Wales. It provides confidential listening and emotional support and can help them contact support in their local area, including voluntary and charitable organisations.

It's available on **0800 132 737**, or by texting **'help'** to 81066.

Alternatively, they can visit the [C.A.L.L. website](#).

Or

If people are experiencing severe distress:

The Samaritans service provides emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those that may lead to suicide.

Confidential Samaritans helpline: 116 123

Available free of charge on any phone and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Welsh Language Line: 0808 164 0123

E-mail: jo@samaritans.org

Website: www.samaritans.org

They have a specific section about mental health during the coronavirus outbreak at: <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>

Concerns about abuse

Abuse and neglect is when an adult who needs care and support is harmed, exploited or neglected through the action or inaction of others. The main forms of abuse are physical, financial, neglect, psychological, sexual and discriminatory. Sometimes an adult who needs care and support can be affected by more than one type of abuse.

If the adult who needs care and support can get support themselves if you give them the right information, advise them to:

Contact the following

Police - if a crime may have been committed, or if the adult who needs care and support or other members of the public may be at risk, dial 999 (emergency) or 101 (non-emergency).

Adult social services - at the local council for the area where the abuse has happened (via main council number).

Care Inspectorate Wales - for concerns about health and social care services 0300 790 0126.

Age Cymru Advice - for other local and national sources of support 08000 223 444.

If the adult who needs care and support cannot get support themselves if you give them the right information, and there is an immediate and significant risk to their safety and health, or that of others; call the emergency services on their behalf on 999.

If the adult who needs care and support cannot get support themselves if you give them the right information, and there is no immediate and significant risk to their safety and health, or that of others; offer to get in touch with support services on their behalf, as stated above.

Domestic abuse

If you're worried that the person you're supporting is experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence whilst staying at home there is a free helpline. The helpline can advise women, men, children and people worried about a friend or relative.

They can also visit [Live Fear Free](#) for advice (including online chat). Or they can call the helpline on 0808 80 10 800. This service is available 24/7.

Anyone in immediate danger should call 999. They can also make a silent call to the police – dial 999 – then [55 if they can't talk](#)

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Utilities

The person you're helping may need support with paying for their energy or accessing emergency support during this time. Some guidance is below:

Emergency measures were agreed by all UK domestic suppliers to prioritise those already in need, while identifying those whose circumstances may have changed during this period.

Measures include:

- Customers with pre-payment meters who may not be able to add credit can speak to their supplier about options to maintain supply, e.g. nominating a third party for credit top-ups, having a discretionary fund added to their credit, or being sent a pre-loaded top-up card.
- More broadly, any customer in financial distress will be supported by their supplier, which could include debt repayments and bill payments being reassessed, reduced or paused where necessary.
- The disconnection of credit meters will be completely suspended.

The person you're supporting may need to top up their energy supply account. It's recommended that:

- Smart meter customers should be able to top-up remotely, such as by phone, mobile application or online.
- Customers who are unable to top up their pre-payment meter are advised to contact their supplier immediately for support. They'll find the contact details for their supplier on their website or on their bill.

- Ofgem recommends customers leave the meter box unlocked if they need someone else to top up the meter.
- If the person you're supporting needs to top-up their pre pay meter, you can check where you can do this nearby at [post office or PayPoint](#), or [Payzone](#).
- If the local Post Office is temporarily closed, then posters will be available to provide details of their closest Post Office and Payzone store where the payment / top-up service can be accessed.

Emergency support

It's recommended that work shouldn't be carried out in any household which is isolating or where a person who is classed as extremely vulnerable is undertaking 'shielding' measures, unless it's to repair a fault which poses a direct risk to people's safety – for example, emergency plumbing.

If the person you're supporting has an emergency with their energy supply, please see the guidance below;

Gas leak

If they suspect they have a gas leak they should immediately phone the National Grid Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999 (free call, 24 hours a day) and report it. The operator will get an engineer to attend a gas leak free of charge.

They should open all windows, have no naked flames, not use electrical devices inside their home, and go outside to use a mobile, or to a neighbour's property. If the leak is inside their house, the engineer will make the situation

safe, either disconnecting the dangerous appliance or, where necessary, disconnecting the whole gas supply. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/what-to-do-in-an-emergency/>

They will then have to arrange for someone who is registered under the Gas Safe Register Scheme to come and do the necessary work. They can call the **gas safe register on 0800 408 5500** or visit <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/>

Water leaks

If the person you're helping has a water leak, they should also turn off the main stop tap. If water has leaked near their electrics or into any electrical appliances, they should turn off the mains electricity supply.

They may be responsible for repairing it if it's inside their property and in external pipes up to the boundary of their property. Some water companies offer free repair services for external leaks so check with them whether this is possible. If a leak is in their supply pipe and not covered by a water company's free repair service, they're responsible for repairing it. If the leak is not repaired within a certain time, the water company may carry out the repair and charge them for the work. If they rent their home, their landlord may have responsibility for paying for and arranging a leak to be fixed, [Home improvements and repairs](#) for more information.

If they own their own home, check whether their home insurance contents policy covers repairs for water leaks.

If it's not within the boundaries of their property they can contact: **Welsh Water Emergency on 0800 281 432**

Water companies don't follow national borders but catchment areas so parts of North East Wales (North Powys and parts of Wrexham) come under **Severn Trent, Dee Valley** and **United Utilities**. The contact details are below:

Severn Trent: 0800 783 4444

Dee Valley: 0800 085 8033

United Utilities: 0345 672 3723

Electrical fault or power cut

The person you're supporting should call the emergency number given by their supplier if there's a power cut, or if they suspect they have a problem with the external wiring. The number they need should be on their electricity bill.

Alternatively, they can call 105. It's free to use and they'll put them through to their local network operator who can give help and advice. If they have a problem with the wiring inside their home, or with any of their electrical appliances, they'll need to contact a qualified electrician to deal with it.

Priority service register

Gas and electric companies provide a priority services register for vulnerable and older people. The person you're supporting can sign up by contacting their energy provider.

Other available support

Care and Repair Cymru - Can provide urgent / emergency works call 0300 111 3333 visit: <https://www.careandrepair.org.uk/en/coronavirus/>

These organisations could help with central heating upgrades:

Nest - Call Freephone 0808 808 2244 (Mon-Fri 9am-6pm) or visit <https://nest.gov.wales/en/>

Western Power - Power UP – visit <https://www.westernpower.co.uk/customers-and-community/priority-services/power-up>

Simple Energy Advice call 0800 444202 Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm or visit <https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/>

Citizens Advice - Can support with consumer issues – call the consumer helpline on: 0808 223 1133 or you can talk to a Welsh-speaking adviser on 0808 223 1144.

If the person you're supporting needs further help and is aged 50 or over they can contact Age Cymru Advice on **08000 223 444**, available 9:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday, or email advice@agecymru.org.uk

If the person you're supporting needs further help and is aged under 50, they can call Citizens Advice on **03444 77 20 20**, available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Getting advice

If the person you're helping is aged 50 or over and needs advice, please ask them to call Age Cymru Advice on 08000 223 444, available 9:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday, or email advice@agecymru.org.uk or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/advice

Age Cymru Advice is committed to being the foremost information and advice service to older people in Wales. We aim to provide effective, accessible, high-quality information and advice while offering a free, impartial and confidential service. Age Cymru Advice can assist older people themselves, their family, friends, carers, or professionals.

If the person you're supporting is aged under 50, please ask them to call Citizens Advice on **03444 77 20 20** or visit their website www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

They could also get help or advice from support groups or charities that are relevant to them: [Support groups and charities](#)

Keeping well at home

There are number of things that people can do to help stay mentally and physically well whilst at home. As a 'Friend' you could help the person you're supporting be aware of what could help them stay fit and well.

Exercise

If the person you're supporting can't leave the house, it's still important for their physical and mental health, to keep moving. Whether that's turning on their favourite song and dancing, undertaking housework with a bit more gusto, or finding a workout that works for them.

There are a variety of exercises that can be done from home for all abilities.

Below are some suggestions from NHS Wales for exercise that can be done from home. They can also be downloaded as pdfs to be given to people who don't have access to the internet.

- **Sitting exercises:** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/>
- **Strength exercises:** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-exercises/>
- **Flexibility exercises:** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/flexibility-exercises/>
- **Balance exercises:** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/balance-exercises/>
- **NHS website:** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-older-adults/>

Age Cymru Tai Chi Home Programme

Age Cymru has made their tai chi work available free of charge online:

www.agecymru.org.uk/taichi

If they aren't shielding, the person you're supporting can also go for a walk outdoors if they stay more than two metres from others, although many people may be anxious about doing this.

Stay connected

Connecting regularly with friends and family, and other support is important to help stay mentally well during this time.

- You could encourage the person you're supporting to maintain regular contact with their friends, family, neighbours and other support, so it forms part of their day-to-day routine. Contact could include via email, social media, phone messaging services such as Whatsapp, video calling or via telephone.
- Some older people may be using new kinds of technology, such as video messaging apps for the first time. You could help them by supporting them with setting these up, and talking them through how to use them.
- You could help connect the person you're supporting with others in a similar situation, such as helping them to join a peer support community online or by telephone.

Keep a routine

Routine is important to keep well, especially when normal routines have been disrupted due to the need to stay at home.

You can encourage the person you're supporting to look at their routine. What they can plan in regularly each day, and to consider their usual routine and if there was anything about it that was unhelpful which they could actually have the opportunity to improve now.

You can help them to plan how they would like to spend their time by;

- writing it down, putting it on a wall.
- planning activities for different days – for example, they could set a new time for a daily home workout, and pick a regular time to clean, read, watch a TV programme or film, or cook.
- leaving space for new ideas to develop (so that they can follow their interests as they arise).
- identifying habits they want to start.

Keep doing enjoyable activities

If the person you're supporting is feeling worried, anxious or low, or they're unable to access the activities they normally do, they might stop doing things they usually enjoy.

To support keeping well at home it's important to keep doing activities, or find new ones, that are enjoyable to keep the mind stimulated. You can spend time talking to the person you're supporting about what they enjoy, and what activities they may like to try.

You could also help someone feel less isolated by connecting them with activities or relevant support groups. See also: **Support groups and charities**

Ideas could include;

- Setting time aside for reading books, magazines, listening to podcasts.
- Borrowing e-books / audiobooks. If they're a library member in Wales, the [Borrowbox](#) service can help them to do this.
- Doing crosswords, or sudoku puzzles.
- Trying drawing and painting.

- Accessing free online courses and learning apps. [FutureLearn](#) and [OpenLearn](#) have free online courses.
- Accessing online concerts or theatre shows.
 - National Theatre are showing one of their shows once week at: <http://ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk/>
 - A different Lloyd Webber musical streams each week <https://www.youtube.com/theshowsmustgoon>
- Writing, for themselves or to others.
- Photography, documenting the world around you.
- Check arts activities on Age Cymru's Gwanwyn <https://en-gb.facebook.com/gwanwyn.wales> and <https://twitter.com/gwanwynagecymru?lang=en>.

Get fresh air and sunlight, and connect with nature

This is important for physical and mental health and it can still be achieved without leaving their property.

- Keep windows open to let in fresh air when they can.
- If they have a garden space, try to spend time out there every day (weather permitting!) or sit on their doorstep.
- Get as much sunlight as they can, whilst also following advice to stay safe in the sun. <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/our-work/health-promotion/summer-health-advice/>.
- Set up a space to sit near a window with sunlight.
- Grow some plants, or place some plants on their windowsills.

Keep up to date, but fact check

It's important that people stay connected with current events, but it can be overwhelming and cause people to be anxious or confused. Tips to support people could include;

- Being careful where they get news and health information from. Find a credible source you can trust – such as [Welsh Government](#) or the [NHS website](#) – and fact-check information you get from newsfeeds, social media or other people.
- Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. Trying not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources is helpful.
- They might also want to consider limiting the time they spend watching, reading or listening to coverage of the outbreak, including on social media, and think about turning off breaking-news alerts on their phone.
- It could be useful to set a specific time to read updates or limit to a couple of checks a day.
- They could consider taking a break or changing how they use social media. It's useful to help stay connected with people but it can heighten anxiety and worry. It might be helpful to focus on viewing particular groups or pages but limiting scrolling through timelines or newsfeeds.

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If the person you're supporting needs further help and is under 50, they can call Citizens Advice on **03444 77 20 20**, available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Support groups and charities

As part of being a 'Friend' you could help the person you're supporting connect with support groups that are relevant to them. This could help them get support for a health condition or help them connect with people from a similar background to them to combat isolation and loneliness.

Health related organisations

Alzheimer's Society

Dementia Connect, from Alzheimer's Society, is a personalised support service for people with dementia, their carers, families and friends. The service connects people affected by dementia with free support and advice, currently available by phone and online.

Referral form:

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/referralform>

Here is the contact telephone number and email address:

0333 150 3456

Dementia.connect@alzheimers.org.uk

Asthma UK

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/>

British Heart Foundation

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support>

British Lung Foundation

Can provide advice on COPD:

<https://www.blf.org.uk/>

Cystic Fibrosis Trust

<https://www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk/>

Dementia UK

Have a helpline run by Admiral Nurses

<https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Diabetes UK

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

Macmillan Cancer Support

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/>

Motor neurone disease foundation

<https://www.mndassociation.org/about-mnd/>

MS Society

Specialist charity for Multiple sclerosis

<https://www.mssociety.org.uk/>

Multiple Sclerosis Trust

<https://www.mstrust.org.uk/>

National AIDS Trust

<https://www.nat.org.uk/>

Parkinson's UK

<https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/>

Terrence Higgins Trust

HIV and sexual health charity

<https://www.tht.org.uk/>

BAME organisations

BAWSO

An all Wales organisation providing generic and specialist services including training, the provision of temporary accommodation for those affected or are at risk of domestic abuse and all forms of violence such as Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Honour Based Violence, Human trafficking and modern slavery.

<http://www.bawso.org.uk>

Diverse Cymru

Diverse Cymru is a unique Welsh charity committed to supporting people faced with inequality and discrimination because of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation

<https://www.diverseecymru.org.uk/>

Race Council Cymru

<http://www.racecouncilcymru.org.uk>

Tai Pawb

Tai Pawb promotes equality and social justice in housing in Wales. We believe that all people have the right to access good quality housing and homes in cohesive and safe communities.

<https://www.taipawb.org/>

LGBT organisations

Diverse Cymru

Diverse Cymru is a unique Welsh charity committed to supporting people faced with inequality and discrimination because of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy

and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation

<https://www.diverseecymru.org.uk/>

Stonewall Cymru

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

LGBT Cymru helpline

<https://www.lgbtcymru.org.uk/>

Armed Forces organisations

There are many military charities and associations that can provide information, advice and additional resources.

Veterans Gateway for support

Veterans' Gateway is the first point of contact for Veterans, their families and carers seeking support. You can get their advice 24 hours a day via their helpline (0808 802 1212) or online via self-help guides.

www.veteransgateway.org.uk

Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion supports serving members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, British Army, Royal Air Force, Reservists, veterans and their families. Their support starts after 7 days of service and continues long after life in the Armed Forces. The Royal British Legion helps Veterans young and old transition into civilian life, helping with employment, financial issues, respite and recovery, through to lifelong care and independent living.

<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/>

SSAFA

The oldest national charity supporting people serving in the three Armed Forces, Veterans and their families. It provides a wide variety

of support in an appropriate and timely way: advice services on a range of financial, health and other issues, practical help to obtain mobility and specialist equipment, household goods for formerly homeless Veterans, support for Veterans with mental health needs and mentoring for Veterans during transition to civilian life. www.ssafa.org.uk

Condition specific support

Charities such as Blind Veterans UK and Blesma, The Limbless Veterans provide one to one support, specialist equipment and arrange social activities for people with specific conditions who have served in the military, including those in residential care. You can contact them for funding of equipment or support workers if you have any eligible residents.

<https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/>

<https://blesma.org/>

Help for Heroes

Help for Heroes provides a range of support and services for wounded, injured and sick serving (Regular and Reserves) and ex-serving personnel who have suffered illness or injuries in the service of the Nation. Help for Heroes does this through services such as:

Help for Heroes Recovery Centres in Pontypridd, Tidworth, Catterick, Colchester and Plymouth

Help for Heroes Hidden Wounds (psychological wounds)

Help for Heroes Welfare support

Help for Heroes grants to individuals and other charitable agencies

Help for Heroes Fellowships of 'Band of Brothers' and 'Band of Sisters'

<https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/>

Tel: 0845 6731760

Woody's Lodge

A charity providing safe spaces for armed service Veterans, recent leavers, reservists and those who served in the emergency services, to socialise and access a wide range of health and social services. They also provide support for families and carers.

<https://www.woodyslodge.org/>

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If the person you're supporting needs further help and is aged under 50, they can call Citizens Advice on **03444 77 20 20**, available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, or visit

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Supporting people to prepare

You can help the person you're supporting with preparing for eventualities that may arise. This can help people feel less anxious, and help things seem less uncertain in this uncertain time.

- Ensure that the person you're supporting has a second 'Friend' volunteer paired with them in a different household, as well as you.
- Help the individual construct a one-page summary for any Health/Social care worker needing to visit/have telephone contact, to assist in the future.
- Create a plan for the circumstances in which you may not be able to help them.
- If they're a carer, support them with making an emergency plan in the instance that they cannot fulfil their caring role. See **Unpaid carers**

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If the person you're supporting needs further help and is aged under 50, they can call Citizens Advice on **03444 77 20 20**, available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, or visit **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/**

If they develop coronavirus symptoms

If the person you're supporting develops coronavirus symptoms you can let them know about the information on the NHS Wales 111 website (formerly NHS Direct Wales):

<https://111.wales.nhs.uk/SelfAssessments/symptomcheckers/COVID19.aspx>

Main symptoms are either or both of the following:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature).
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).
- **a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell** (anosmia).

They shouldn't go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital if they think they might have coronavirus. They should stay at home, and use the NHS 111 Wales service instead (*unless symptoms are serious – see below*)

There are two methods for doing this:

- Telephone 111 (currently available in the following health board areas - Hywel Dda, Powys, Aneurin Bevan and Swansea Bay - including Bridgend). If they're outside this area, please call 0845 46 47; or
- Use the online coronavirus symptom checker service: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/SelfAssessments/symptomcheckers/COVID19.aspx>

If you're speaking to someone over the phone who doesn't have internet access, or isn't sure how to use the symptom checker, you could probably go through it for them whilst they're on the phone.

If symptoms are very serious, the person should ring 999. NHS 111 advises:

Call 999 now if you have any life threatening symptoms:

- Severe breathing problems (e.g. can't talk normally, turning blue and gasping).
- Chest pain (e.g. like a tight band or heavy weight in or around the chest).
- Stroke (e.g. unable to raise arm, one sided limb weakness or drooping face).
- Severe injury/heavy bleeding that cannot be stopped.
- Fitting now/unconscious (e.g. can't be woken).

Note: in helping the person to assess the potential seriousness of the issue you may also wish to ask them about any health conditions which they have, or other issues that might make them more vulnerable (for example, being over 70) – see the Welsh Government guidance section above. The NHS 111 symptom checker does also take these factors into account.

If NHS information appears to confirm that it's coronavirus, then the person will need to follow the Welsh Government guidance: <https://gov.wales/protect-yourselfothers-coronavirus>

If you develop coronavirus symptoms

- You should only support someone if you're feeling well and don't have any symptoms of coronavirus (a high temperature, a new and persistent cough or loss of taste or smell).
- Let the person you're supporting know as soon as possible that you're not able to support them for at least two weeks.
- Contact the other 'Friend' that supports that person.

If you're concerned about your symptoms, follow information on NHS 111 (formerly NHS Direct Wales)

<https://111.wales.nhs.uk/SelfAssessments/symptomcheckers/COVID19.aspx>

Advocacy

Advocacy is an important service to support people to have their voices heard, their wishes respected and to feel equal in relationships with others so that they can feel empowered to speak up and be involved based on their own choices and views.

It supports people to have their rights upheld, to express their views and opinions, to make decisions about things that affect their life, and if necessary to represent people's views at meetings.

An advocate can help someone to:

- Understand what's happening at meetings or appointments.
- Be represented in meetings so their views are heard.
- Say what matters to them in meetings or sit alongside them to give them support.
- Understand their options.
- Make their own decisions.
- Be fully involved when decisions are being made that affect their life.
- Feel in control and equal to those around them.
- Make sure their legal rights and entitlements are understood and upheld.
- Look at ways to make them feel safe if they have been or are at risk of being harmed.

The person you're helping might want or need an advocate.

They can find help in their local area here:

www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy

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If the person you're supporting needs further help and is aged under 50, they can call Citizens Advice on **03444 77 20 20**, available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/

Looking after someone's pet

If you need to walk the pet of the person you're helping, please follow the guidance below:

- You can exercise more than once a day, so can carry out the walk separately to your exercise, however, you should stay in your local area. This means any exercise should start and end at home and not involve going a significant distance from home.
- You should wash your hands before and after handling the pet.
- You should try to walk the pet on a lead at all times and avoid direct contact with other people and animals.
- You should safely hand over a pet at the front door or hallway and avoid contact with the pet's owner.
- If you're walking a pet from a household that is showing symptoms of the virus, you should make sure that the pet does not mix with animals from other households.

If you're not able to walk the pet yourself, organisations such as the Cinnamon Trust may be able to help: 01736 757 900

<https://cinnamon.org.uk/>