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Guidance

Getting support outside of your home

Updated 6 November 2020

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-people-outside-of-their-home/supporting-people-outside-of-their-home>

If you need support from others while outside your home, this guide explains what you and the people helping you should do to limit the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The people who provide support to you could be:

- family or friends (who may or may not live with you, or be in a support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>) with you)
- carers
- staff in services that you use (such as at a railway station)
- volunteers

Social distancing rules

National restrictions began in England on 5 November 2020. Find out about the new restrictions and what you can and cannot do (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>).

Meeting indoors

You can meet indoors with anyone in your household or support bubble.

Meeting outdoors

You can meet outdoors with anyone in your household or support bubble. You also can meet outdoors with one other person who is not in your household or support bubble. This must be in a public outdoor place.

This limit does not include:

- any children under the age of 5
- if you're disabled and require continuous care, any carers that are employed or volunteer to support you (up to 2 carers)

This means you and your carers can meet outside with one other person and their carers (providing there are no more than 2 carers per person).

If you're vulnerable

If you're vulnerable and need care or assistance or need to avoid risk of harm you can be supported by someone:

- indoors
- in any outdoor setting

This includes if you are:

- over 70
- pregnant

It also includes if you have an underlying health condition – for example, if you:

- are visually impaired and need to be guided around unfamiliar settings
- have a learning disability and need support to stay safe
- have communication difficulties and need support to communicate with others

It must be reasonably necessary for anyone who is not in your household or support bubble to provide you with care and assistance.

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>), you should reduce social contacts as much as possible. However, if you feel it is essential for your physical or mental health, you can continue to meet with people. This is a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased risk of infection.

What ‘getting support’ means

Getting support when outside your home could be for:

- getting around safely in unfamiliar settings
- communicating with others
- going shopping
- exercising

If you’ve had problems going out on your own while maintaining social distancing, getting help like this could allow you to get out of your house more easily.

It could also enable you to enjoy social and leisure opportunities while reducing the chance of accidental contact with people around you.

Optional badges: showing others that you need support

Some people may feel more comfortable showing something that says they have a disability, or that they might need help with social distancing.

You may find these resources useful:

- ‘please give me space’ badge (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/please-give-me-space-social-distancing-cards-or-badges>)
- Hidden Disabilities Sunflower badge and lanyard (<https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/>)

Who should help you

To minimise the risk to yourself and others, it is usually best if you get support from either:

- someone within your household or support bubble
- your carer (if you have one)

If this is not possible then you may be supported by someone else if you and they take other precautions (details below).

The people who can help you may include:

- family or friends who do not live with you
- staff in services that you are using
- volunteers

What everyone should do when they provide support to you

A person can support you if they do not have any of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is particularly important if you are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>).

People providing support to you should follow advice on maintaining good hygiene. They should:

- wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser
- avoid touching their face, particularly their eyes, nose and mouth
- catch any coughs or sneezes in a tissue or their elbow
- put used tissues immediately in the bin and wash their hands afterwards

If you find it hard to communicate, you should ask the person who supports you to write down a plan. The plan should explain to others what help you need in case the person who normally supports you gets COVID-19 and cannot support you. You might also want to take this plan with you when you're out, in case of an emergency.

When the person who supports you writes the plan they should:

- involve you as much as possible
- write down any important contacts (family, neighbours, friends or professionals) who can be called upon to help you
- include information about all the support you need
- work with local social care and health staff to develop and share the plan

Getting support from someone in your household or support bubble or your normal carer

You should follow social distancing guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>) as far as possible with those outside your household and support bubble. This means keeping (2 metres or 6 steps apart from other people. In certain settings, you are also required to wear a face covering (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#when-you-do-not-need-to-wear-a-face-covering>), unless you have a reasonable excuse or are exempt from wearing one (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#exemptions>).

If you believe you need new or extra support, you should contact your local authority's adult social care service. They can give you advice and information on what support may be available, and whether you can get it.

Getting support from someone who is not in your household or support bubble, or is not your normal carer

Where you need support from someone who is not in your household or support bubble and is not your normal carer, you and they should try to either keep:

- 2 metres away from each other
- one metre away and take extra precautions

Extra precautions could be:

- spending as little time as possible closer than 2 metres from each other
- avoiding face-to-face contact – side-by-side contact is better. If you need to have face-to-face contact, keep it to as short a time as possible
- wearing a face covering (unless you're unable to) if you're going to be supported indoors, or get close-contact support for a long time indoors or outdoors

If you need help with communication due to a health condition, you can ask for someone to take their face covering off so that they can communicate with you. You can ask for this either verbally or in writing.

If you're in a larger group, such as when you are attending a funeral or support groups, the same person in that group (or people, if you need support from more than one person at a time) should support you at all times.

Getting support from volunteers or organisations

You may get support in situations where the person helping you may also be helping many other people during the day. For example, you might get help from people working in:

- voluntary organisations
- businesses, such as larger shops
- train stations
- hospital clinics

When asking for support you should explain what help you need and give them your name and contact details.

The organisation providing you with support should keep a record for 21 days of:

- your name and contact details
- who provided support to you
- when they provided support

The organisation will keep this record to help NHS Test and Trace. If NHS Test and Trace contact you, you must follow their guidance.

Before you get support, the organisation or volunteer will:

- ask whether you have symptoms of COVID-19 (or if you have been advised to stay at home or self-isolate)
- wash their hands before providing you with support

You and the person providing the support should follow the guidance above for getting support from someone who is not within your household or support bubble and is not your normal carer.

When you get the support, you and the person helping you should:

- maintain social distancing
- wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser
- wear a face covering if you can

If you have symptoms

If you or someone in your household has symptoms, you should follow the stay at home guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>).

More information is available on what to do if you have developed symptoms and receive informal care or support from family and friends (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care>), including who you can ask for help.

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