

COVID-19 Contingency Planning

Maintaining safe staffing levels – challenges, impacts and mitigations

A section of your COVID-19 Contingency Plan dedicated to maintaining safe staffing levels can help you:

- identify potential challenges that could impact negatively on staff safety and sustainability of care,
- understand possible impacts on service provision and your workforce from these challenges, and
- explore potential mitigating measures to help maintain your service.

Below are some examples of potential challenges, impacts and mitigating actions you may wish to include in your own staff contingency planning.

Contingency Planning Challenge	Possible impact on the workforce	Potential mitigation measures	Additional resources and guidance to support your contingency planning
Staff sickness and increased isolation of staff	Staff need to isolate or take sick leave. Insufficient staffing numbers to deliver services.	You could: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Establish 'Team bubbles' or mini-teams to provide support to individuals / groups and minimise contagion risks.■ Create robust plans to ensure you can remain operational and maintain standards of care and support if impacted by high numbers of staff sickness or isolation (e.g. 20%, 30%, 40% impact on staffing).■ Plan for the loss due to sickness / resignation of core members of your staff team (e.g. frontline manager, nurse, HR lead or trainers).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ COVID-19: personal protective equipment (PPE) plan (Department of Health and Social Care: DHSC). <p>Access the plan here.</p>

- Train other staff to cover specific responsibilities, such as domestic workers supporting people at mealtimes.
- Have a team of bank staff who can cover gaps in the rota.
- Ensure delegated individuals who take over are capable and confident to pick up in their absence.

Staff picking up extra shifts

Whilst short-term this can support consistency of care, longer term, this can result in staff taking time off sick or experiencing burnout. This could have a negative impact on the health and well-being of staff members of all levels and, if not addressed, could then have an impact on organisational/workplace culture.

A long-term negative effect from this can be that staff become unhappy in their role and leave the organisation, which in turn will disrupt consistency of care.

You could:

- Take steps to ensure there is additional support in place (See 'Staff health & well-being' section).
- Provide 'Back to work' support to those staff returning from isolation.
- Offer regular well-being checks with staff; the more personalised this is, the greater the potential impact on the staff member (e.g. introduce a limitation on number of shifts individual staff members work to rotate shifts safely and fairly and allow sufficient rest times.
- Develop a succession plan to help you manage long-term absences or resignations.
- Complete exit surveys to understand any further changes you could make which may support employees stay with you.
- Tell staff and the people you support about any changes to staffing as a result of staff shortages, and how this could impact them.

Staff Health and Well-being

A decrease in staff health and well-being can bring a range of challenges:

- Staff morale declines
- Staff health and well-being declines
- Staff become unhappy and leave their job

Loss of staff for the organisation, potentially resulting in a challenge to deliver services.

You could:

- Provide access to support for health & well-being. This could be in the form of support sessions, access to organisational health and well-being resources and access to national resources to support staff health and well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on those working in the sector so your planning could consider all aspects of health & well-being. For example, some staff have experienced an impact on their sleep patterns so access to sleeping aid type resources could be of use.
- Provide access to vaccinations and ensure flu jabs are taken by staff members at the earliest opportunity to minimise chances of flu impacting staffing levels. If a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, your organisation could prioritise this as appropriate
- Offer regular well-being checks with staff; the more personalised this is, the greater the potential positive impact on the staff member.

- Keeping your team motivated Webinar (Skills for Care).
- Dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on your staff Webinar (Skills for Care).
- Using technology to support your staff and each other (Skills for Care and Digital Social Care).
- NICE guidance: preventing infection and promoting wellbeing (NICE).
- Managing bereavement (Skills for Care).

The above webinars can all be accessed through the Skills for Care website [here](#).

<p>Staff deferring annual leave</p> <p>Increased use of annual leave</p>	<p>Staff members may have been deferring annual leave while the pandemic continues. This could be to support the organisation during these challenging times but there is a risk that leave could be back-loaded at year-end, resulting in staff shortages to cover all package of care at that time.</p> <p>An increase in leave requests, if accepted, can put strain on staff not on leave.</p> <p>A denial to a leave request could impact on staff well-being.</p>	<p>You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop and implement a staffing cover plan. This could draw upon the numbers of staff you have, their availability for different shifts and their ability to be flexible at short notice. Your plan could also identify those most likely to be affected by winter challenges or a second wave of COVID-19. For example, staff members with younger children who may require parental support at short notice if schools close locally or nationally. ■ Over-staff your service where possible to a level that avoids poor standards of care when impacted by staff shortages. ■ Consider the impact on staff annual leave, including options and priorities for approving leave and allowing options to carry over into post-emergency phases. ■ Review the annual leave taken thus far to help plan for any challenging time periods when a high number of staff are on/could be on annual leave. ■ Identify staff members who are able to be flexible and responsive within a short timeframe and could cover additional shifts. 	
<p>Parental leave, family leave or special leave</p>	<p>Increased demand on staffing support.</p>	<p>You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop local and/or national plans for parental and/or family leave which could impact on staffing resources. (Due to shielding, childcare, closure of schools). 	

<p>Ongoing access to adequate supplies of C19 testing kits</p>	<p>Inadequate planning for test kits during the ongoing CoV-19 pandemic could result in inadequate supplies being available for staff to safely deliver services</p> <p>Inadequate testing in services could result in increased risks of contagion and transference.</p>	<p>You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Begin planning now; consider how many tests you may need, how regular you should order and prepare for worst case scenarios and a second or future waves of the CoC-19 pandemic. ■ Use on-line ordering systems. ■ Identify a lead person to manage the testing and resource the testing process. ■ Consider storage of the kits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Test and Trace Government guidance (DHSC). <p>Access the guidance here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ COVID-19 antibody testing guidance (DHSC). <p>Access the guidance here.</p>
<p>Disruption to everyday services under local and national lockdowns</p>	<p>Schools could close and staff members may be unable to cover shifts at short notice.</p> <p>Hospital appointments could be cancelled or moved at short notice</p> <p>Staff L&D and maintaining of required training could be impacted.</p>	<p>You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a training element in the contingency planning. This could consider bringing forward some refresher training and postponing non-essential training. ■ Contact learning providers to understand their plans during another lockdown and consider alternatives if they are likely to close. ■ Refer to staffing cover plan developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using technology to support the people you care for Webinar (Skills for Care, April 2020) <p>Access the Webinar here.</p>
<p>New packages of care</p>	<p>Time required to assess people's needs and build relationships.</p> <p>Additional staffing resource required.</p>	<p>You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a recruitment and retention plan and link this to your contingency plan. ■ Activate a recruitment drive as and when needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Admission and care of residents in a care home during COVID-19 guidance (DHSC). <p>Access the guidance here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coronavirus (COVID-19): providing home care guidance (DHSC). <p>Access the guidance here.</p>

<p>Cancellation of packages of care</p>	<p>Staff not having a sufficient number of working hours.</p> <p>Having to reorganise what the affected staff members will now do.</p>	<p>You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ activate an advertising campaign to promote your care services. ■ contact local commissioners of care to notify them that you have available resources (there may be a locally coordinated/ area-wide bank staff strategy this could feed into). 	
<p>Increases in hospital admissions and discharges</p>	<p>Increased demand on staffing support.</p> <p>Increased risk of contagion from visiting hospital and in relation to discharges from hospital.</p>	<p>You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ work with trusted assessors and hospital discharge planning teams to ensure robust hospital admittance and discharge plans are in place, retaining flexibility as these are likely to need adjusting as guidance changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coronavirus (COVID-19): admission and care of people in care homes guidance (DHSC). <p>Access the guidance here.</p>
<p>Adverse weather and travel delays</p>	<p>Staff unable to deliver calls to people in the community.</p> <p>Staff unable to get to their place of work.</p> <p>Support may not be delivered at the agreed time of day due to delayed staff.</p>	<p>You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop a communication approach to notify and update customers of potential disruptions or delays (e.g. ‘communication tree’ approach). ■ Refer to staffing cover plan developed. 	<p>There are a range of free and accessible digital solutions that can assist with planning for travel time, for adverse weather and for journey planning in.</p>