



Protecting people's safety, equality and rights during the coronavirus outbreak

April 2020



Easy read version of CQC blog: 'Protecting people's safety, equality and rights during the COVID-19 outbreak'



About this booklet



We are the Care Quality Commission. We check services like hospitals and care homes to make sure they give good health and social care to people.



We also check that health staff follow a law called the Mental Health Act. This law helps them decide if a person with a serious mental illness needs to be kept and treated in hospital.



This booklet tells you what we are doing to support people while the whole country is dealing with a new illness called 'coronavirus' and the new things we are doing to try and protect people



What are we doing?



We will still be checking services, including those that use the Mental Health Act. And we will visit them if we find something, or are told something, that worries us. It is important we do this to keep people safe.



However, we are doing a lot fewer face-to-face inspections and visits to check people who are affected by the Mental Health Act because of coronavirus.



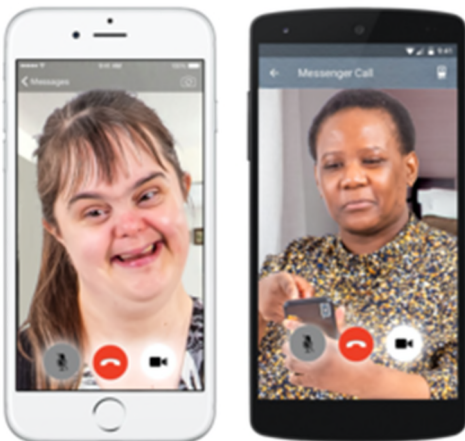
We are looking across all services to try to make sure no-one is unfairly treated because of coronavirus. For example:



- People that have specialist health and social care needs who have long-term conditions may have difficulty getting their usual services and support.



- Because everyone is being told to stay at home to help stop the spread of coronavirus, this can make it harder for people staying in services away from home to see their families and friends.



- We are asking services to work very hard to support people to use different ways, like video calls, to keep in contact with their families and friends.



Human rights and equality



Because people are being told to stay at home, there will be fewer people visiting health and social care services. This means services may become more 'closed' during the coronavirus outbreak and this might affect people's safety.



We are using the work we are doing on closed cultures to help us check services during the coronavirus outbreak.



This will mean we can take action where we are worried that people may not have their human rights or equal rights respected.



We are also looking at how other groups will be affected by the coronavirus outbreak, like:



- people with dementia



- people from Black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds



- older people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)



- pregnant women.



These groups will have some of their services affected, so they may get less support with:



- advocacy to help them speak out



- their mental health



- check-ups.



Other work we are doing during the coronavirus outbreak includes:



- Asking people for their feedback about the services they use – particularly when they do not have access to the internet.



- Giving helpful information to services to help them make sure that equality and human rights are respected, including in alternative formats like easy read.



- Developing new information for our inspectors and services about helping people to see their families and how to use the Mental Capacity Act.



Making sure we hear people's views



It will probably be harder for us to get the feedback from people who use services and their families during the coronavirus outbreak because:



- Services are busier.



- We are visiting services less often.



However, it is even more important during this time that people give us their feedback on their care in other ways.



Our Mental Health Act reviewers will be working with local advocates, and other groups to reach people and families on the phone or to use our online feedback form.

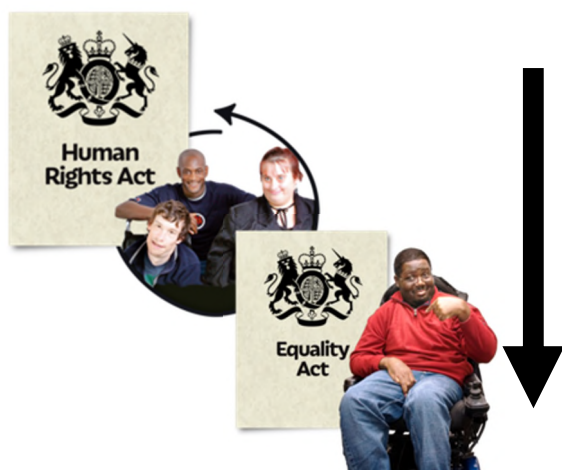


We are trying to get as many people as possible to give feedback on their care by using our webform at:

www.cqc.org.uk/give-feedback-on-care



Keeping people safe



People with mental health conditions, or a learning disability or autistic people may not get the right care and support they need, or they might not have their human rights respected during the coronavirus outbreak. This is because:



- They might be staying in services like secure hospitals where people can be kept away from others under the Mental Health Act to keep them safe.



- They might not be able to get their normal treatment near where they live.



- Staff who normally look after them might be off work because they are ill with coronavirus.



- Some people are urgently being moved to other services they are not used to. For example, some children staying in special schools are being moved to secure hospitals because their schools are being closed.



- People may not get the information they need in a way they can understand because staff are ill or too busy.



We will make sure we check these services to keep people safe and take action where we need to.



We have written a letter with other organisations to the government to say how we are worried about those people who are kept in hospital under the Mental Health Act.



We will work with health and care staff and other organisations to make sure that people get information they can understand.



Find out more



If you want to give feedback on your care – it can be good or bad – fill out our form at:

www.cqc.org.uk/givefeedback



Or you can call us on:

03000 61 61 61