

December 2025

I would like to extend my appreciation for your flexibility and resilience to continue to provide support to those who need it most. Your determination, and your dedication to the people you care for does not go unnoticed and we are extremely grateful for all your efforts.

Although services will continue to run over the festive period and many staff will be working, we sincerely hope that you and your teams will have some time to rest and recharge, even if it is short.

Kind regards and warmest wishes for the festive season and New Year

Lynn Johnson
Interim Head of Market Management

1. System Pressures

Wexham Hospital and the wider health and social care system are currently experiencing significant pressures relating to hospital discharge. There is likely to be increased demand for discharges in the run up to Christmas.

Thank you for doing everything you can to support discharges and people who require support in a timely way, during a period when your staff rotas can be challenging.

The assistance that you may be asked to provide includes but is not limited to:

- discharge from hospital to short term home care
- providing home care for people at the end of their period of reablement
- discharge from hospital into care homes

We want to ensure that people are discharged to the right services to meet need in a timely manner.

2. Discretionary Fee Uplift 26/27

We have already had some feedback from providers about the need for earlier notification and timescales for implementation of discretionary fee uplifts in 26/27.

We have already started work to identify options for the process and to determine the Council's inflationary fee uplift for 2026/27 and would encourage care providers to submit any comments or concerns about this and the implementation process to Fee.Uplifts@slough.gov.uk

We will confirm the date for a bespoke Care Connected Forum in January to focus on fee uplifts early in the New Year.

3. Gifts to Slough Borough Council Staff

At this time of year some of you have previously shown your appreciation for support you have had from Council officers with a gift.

Whilst we appreciate the sentiment, the Council has a gift policy to avoid conflicts of interest, and staff are not able to accept gifts of any kind.

To avoid any embarrassment please do not make any offer of gifts, including alcohol or flowers, to a Council officer. A simple thank you is lovely and just as much appreciated. Thank you for your understanding

4. Lateral Flow Testing Across Care Homes

Key points to remember:

- If a resident is severely unwell, seek urgent medical help as usual (via GP, NHS 111 or 999).
- If two or more residents have suspected or confirmed flu (positive test, or symptoms where testing isn't possible), then call the UKHSA Team on 0344 225 3861.
- After using the Combo Rapid LFDs, the online form must always be completed for all results (negative, positive, or void). This will also automatically trigger a request for replacement kits to be sent: [COVID-19 and flu tests in ARI outbreaks in adult social care homes – GOV.UK](#).

If you have any queries please contact SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk

5. Health and Safety Executive Care (HSE) and Support Worker Health and Safety at Work Reminder

As winter approaches, days become shorter and the weather generally becomes poorer, it is a good time consider and revisit everyone's responsibilities around

health and safety in the workplace, and particularly the responsibilities of employers to their employees.

We want to take the opportunity to remind all care and support organisations of the need to take proactive and practical steps to ensure the welfare and safety of workers, particularly those working alone and/or in the local community or in people's homes. While this is not an exhaustive list, we intend the following to act as a reminder to review some practical requirements:

- Risk assessments are carried out, documented and regularly reviewed with full employee involvement and input. This includes ensuring that risk mitigation and elimination measures, and action plans are regularly reviewed, up to date, appropriate, and agreed.
- Lone and community working is risk assessed, and appropriate risk mitigation and support measures are in place – key areas for consideration will include travel, environment, pets, preventing and managing violent situations, safe systems of work, means of contact, and reporting/monitoring mechanisms.
- Employees receive health and safety training, and access to information and guidance.
- Reporting and monitoring systems are in place.
- Practice is regularly monitored, reviewed, and learning taken and actioned.

Further information and guidance in relation to safety in social care is available from

The Health and Safety Executive on its website - [Health and social care - HSE](#)

6. Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) - Fair Pay Agreement Process in Adult Social Care – DEADLINE 16 January 2026

As part of the Employment Rights Bill, the government intends to implement an Adult Social Care Fair Pay Agreement negotiating body and process.

DHSC has opened a consultation about the process which will close on 16 January 2026. You can access further details about the consultation including how to respond to it using this link

[Fair pay agreement process in adult social care - GOV.UK](#)

7. Training

East Berkshire Care Home Support Team has the following free training:

Promoting Falls Awareness – any care home staff including care home team leads, clinical leads and managers.

The aim of this session is to develop more detailed knowledge and skills on falls within the Care Home environment including

- Falls Awareness
- Falls Risk Factors
- Falls prevention
- Falls Risk assessments and Care plans
- Falls Audits and analysis

To register click [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](#)

Champions - planned for the last Thursday of the month.

Open to all designated Falls and Postural Care Champions or representatives from care homes.

Thursday 29th January 2026 14:00-15:00 Falls Focused –Topic: Parkinsons and Falls.

To register click here [Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](#)

8. Cyber Action Toolkit for Small Businesses

The **Cyber Action Toolkit** is a free tool from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), designed to give sole traders and small businesses clear, practical step-by-step actions to improve their cyber security.

It helps you put the foundations in place, track your progress and build stronger protection at your own pace.

For more information, [please click here.](#)

Contact us

We welcome your feedback and suggestions for future items for this newsletter – please get in touch via ASC.ContractManagement@slough.gov.uk

Information provided in this bulletin is correct at time of issuing.