# Coronavirus Bill: health and social care measures

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**This Commons Library briefing paper provides information on the key health and social care measures in the Coronavirus Bill, which was introduced in the House of Commons on 19 March 2020 (Bill 122).**

#### Download the full report

* [Coronavirus Bill: health and social care measures](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fresearchbriefings.files.parliament.uk%2Fdocuments%2FCBP-8861%2FCBP-8861.pdf&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260699771&sdata=sI2jYMJ73xb7m%2FVSeW7gOMes6QDBARReLc9pZDTlewU%3D&reserved=0) (PDF, 246 KB)

It is becoming increasingly likely that SARS-CoV-2 (coronavirus) and the associated disease, covid-19, will become a significant epidemic in the UK. The NHS and social care sector will have to manage increasing numbers of patients needing medical treatment. Health and care services will also face pressures from staff shortages due to sickness, imposed isolation and caring responsibilities. The Government has identified that urgent legislative measures are needed to support the NHS and social care, and to increase the available health and social care workforce in particular.

This briefing paper is one of a collection of Commons Library briefings on the [Coronavirus Bill](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fservices.parliament.uk%2Fbills%2F2019-21%2Fcoronavirus.html&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260709784&sdata=Tg7%2BWBvAGpcpkWDMfe%2Fo185xLi2Q9jxzw7fvMrDmdYs%3D&reserved=0) (the Bill). It deals with the key health and social care provisions of the Bill.  The other briefing papers, dealing with other parts of the Bill and general background, are available on the Commons Library website ([Coronavirus Bill: Overview](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcommonslibrary.parliament.uk%2Fresearch-briefings%2Fcbp-8857%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260719771&sdata=FJoAvz08GhxyrywUy0qhqbnXNDDn6ZyewfPOhHYcCJQ%3D&reserved=0)).

The Bill includes measures to allow the emergency registration of certain health professionals and students, and would support recently retired NHS staff and social workers to return to work without any negative repercussions to their pensions. Measures to support volunteers are also intended to ease pressure on frontline NHS and adult social care staff.

The Bill would extend state-backed insurance to ensure new and existing NHS staff can care for patients if, for example, they are working outside of their normal areas.

The Bill includes measures to help services continue to operate effectively during periods of significant staff shortage, by reducing the administrative burden on frontline staff and allowing tasks to be performed more quickly. To support this, the Bill enables the following changes to the way care is provided during an emergency period:

* enabling local authorities to prioritise care for people with the most pressing needs; and
* allowing NHS providers to delay undertaking NHS continuing healthcare assessments for individuals being discharged from hospital.

Given there are likely to be high rates of coronavirus related staff absence, organisations may find it very difficult to comply with the procedural requirements set out in Mental Health legislation. The Bill also makes temporary modifications to the procedural safeguards around the detention (“sectioning”) of patients with severe mental illness for treatment or assessment in hospital.

The Bill also introduces new powers in Northern Ireland and Scotland around public health which are aimed at ensuring powers are equivalent across the UK.

Further information is available in the [Explanatory Notes](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fpublications.parliament.uk%2Fpa%2Fbills%2Fcbill%2F58-01%2F0122%2Fen%2F20122en.pdf&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260729765&sdata=bI4uY6XIggJ2F4Zj9heOakzxpWTkKONHdsdxcSJ%2FCVo%3D&reserved=0) (Bill 122-EN) and [Impact Assessment](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fpublications.parliament.uk%2Fpa%2Fbills%2Fcbill%2F58-01%2F0122%2FCoronavirus%2520Bill%2520Impact%2520Assessment%2520final%2520pdf.pdf&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260739756&sdata=GTsK7dWqyYI1%2BOGV%2BGC%2BfA8sVBh7BUIdNC%2B5WYbN1QE%3D&reserved=0) for the Coronavirus Bill, which were published on 19 March 2020.

See also:

* [Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) news story, Emergency bill to strengthen coronavirus (COVID-19) response plans, 17 March 2020](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fnews%2Femergency-bill-to-strengthen-coronavirus-covid-19-response-plans&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260749756&sdata=9I5yJIgropu7t5l1mgDOYC8LMH4UNBUPQtk8UX8kFhI%3D&reserved=0)
* [DHSC briefing, Coronavirus bill: what it will do, 17 March 2020](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fpublications%2Fcoronavirus-bill-what-it-will-do&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260759749&sdata=GyKAM9Q172H4R4LqMpX%2BqGzPpBFouhBI8sddeMTAfpU%3D&reserved=0)

The NHS and social care sectors are already taking a wide range of actions to prepare and respond to the coronavirus outbreak. Information and guidance on the coronavirus response for health and care professionals and organisations can be found on the [Public Health England](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fcollections%2Fcoronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260779737&sdata=uxd7mypxoEeA5eS%2Ff0XuGJTQqUaSrntxDAKaQxmIlJ4%3D&reserved=0) and [Gov.uk website](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fcollections%2Fwuhan-novel-coronavirus&data=02%7C01%7C%7C438687d2f34a4e7b867d08d7d233cece%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637208992260789739&sdata=8LP5d77V5y11l5ZZzWYqFain%2BQjS1siRYWWU1RVf93Y%3D&reserved=0)s.

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