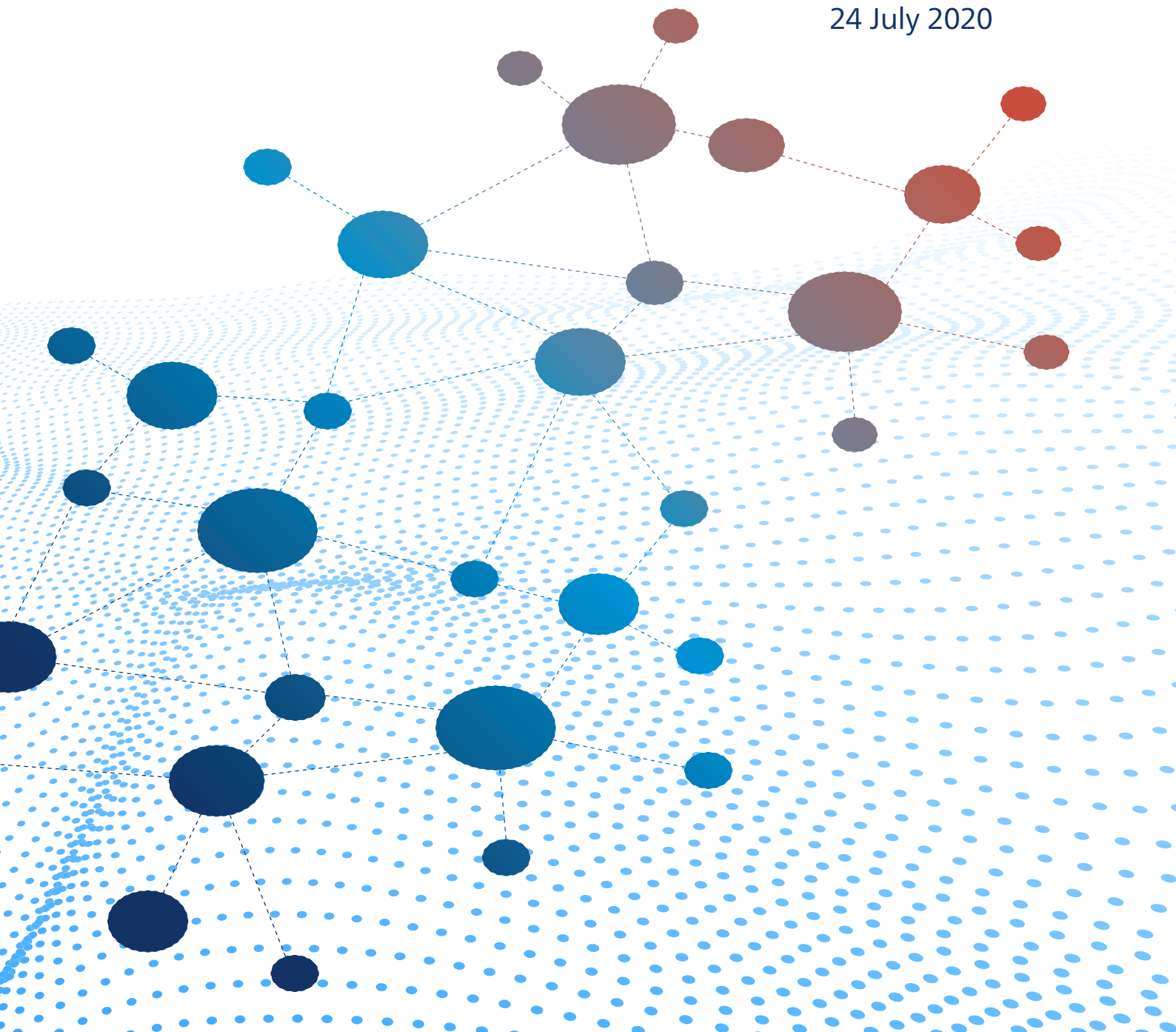


# Preventing and managing COVID-19 across long-term care services

Policy brief

24 July 2020





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WHO continues to monitor the situation closely for any changes that may affect this policy brief. Should any factors change, WHO will issue a further update.

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# Executive summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected older people disproportionately, especially those living in long-term care facilities. In many countries, evidence shows that more than 40% of COVID-19 related deaths have been linked to long-term care facilities, with figures being as high as 80% in some high-income countries. Furthermore, in long-term care facilities, the case fatality for residents with COVID-19 may be higher than in the population of the same age living outside long-term care facilities. Residents of long-term care facilities often face high risk, low preventive measures and inadequate resources to recover from COVID-19, as well as reduced access to essential health services in a context where health systems are experiencing constraints during the COVID-19 surge.

The impact of COVID-19 has additionally been high in providers of long-term care services, within long-term facilities and in other settings. A 2020 study by the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics of deaths by occupation found that the social care workforce had a significantly raised death rate associated with COVID-19.

So far, COVID-19 has disproportionately affected long-term care facilities. However, concerted action is needed to mitigate the impact across all aspects of long-term care, including home- and community-based care, given that most users and providers of care are those who are vulnerable to severe COVID-19. The response actions for long-term care will be one of the fundamental and essential steps in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic in many countries. Only by addressing long-term care will countries be able to truly leave no one behind in the response to COVID-19.

This policy brief provides 11 policy objectives and key action points to prevent and manage COVID-19 across long-term care. Its intended audience is policy-makers and authorities (national, subnational and local) involved in the COVID-19 pandemic. The brief builds on currently available evidence on the measures taken to prevent, prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate impact across long-term care services, including care providers.

While this document contains policy options and actions relevant to all long-term care settings, long-term care facilities are emphasized because they have experienced extremely high COVID-19 incidence, morbidity and mortality.

Furthermore, the policy brief addresses long-standing problems in long-term care systems, including underfunding, lack of accountability, fragmentation between health and long-term care and an undervalued workforce. The brief suggests ways to transform health and long-term care services so that long-term care services are readily integrated and provided as part of the continuum of care that includes health promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation. It is only through these measures that people in need of long-term care can receive quality, equitable and sustainable care that allows them to live in a manner respecting their basic rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity.

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