

Guidelines for relatives visiting residential and nursing homes

November 2020

At this time the rate of COVID-19 community transmission still needs to be carefully managed and care homes need to ensure that all the necessary and appropriate precautions are in place, to protect both the health & safety of those being cared for and the staff employed.

Maintaining some opportunities for visiting to take place is critical for supporting the health and wellbeing of residents and their relationships with friends and family.

Decisions about visiting

This guidance applies from November 2020 and takes into account the latest national guidance published by government on 5th November 2020.

Each care home is responsible for assessing and balancing the risk between the benefits of visiting on wellbeing and quality of life, and to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to social care staff and vulnerable residents.

This risk assessment must formally take into account the advice of the local Director of Public Health who also has legal powers to issue directions to care homes, which can include instructions to stop visits to the home (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

Care homes are accessing all available testing, ensuring staff have a weekly Covid-19 test and residents are tested once a month, wherever possible.

Further information on how decisions are made is available on request.

Temporary closure to visitors due to COVID-19

In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 in a care home or local or national guidance, the home will quickly move to stop face to face visiting (except in exceptional circumstances such as end of life) to protect vulnerable residents, staff and visitors, and to follow local policy arrangements.

During care home closures where face to face indoor visiting is not possible, alternative ways of communicating between residents and their families and friends should be discussed and offered, and the care home will do their best to keep residents in touch with families.

Visiting will not be re-started until it is clear that it is safe to do so.

Before visiting

- All visits must be pre-arranged with the manager at the home. This is to ensure there are enough staff to keep visitors and residents safe, and that all policies are followed e.g. cleaning.
- Visits will be restricted to one single, constant person, where possible. In exceptional circumstances more visitors may be possible, please contact the care home manager who will consider the situation and advise families accordingly.
- Visits may be cancelled at short notice if they cannot be safely carried out in accordance with government guidelines or where the resident is unwell.
- Care homes support NHS Test and Trace and will be keeping a temporary record of visitors in the event contact tracing is required.
- Visits should happen in the open air wherever possible, but we recognise that for many residents and visitors this will not be appropriate in the winter. Some care homes may use temporary outdoor structures – sometimes referred to as ‘visiting pods’ or have a dedicated room just for visiting.
- Visits may need to be restricted in time and frequency to ensure safety for residents, staff and visitors.

During your visit

- You must follow any guidance or procedures put in place by the care home, to ensure everyone complies with infection prevention control.
- Visitors will have to answer questions on whether they have any COVID-19 symptoms (a high temperature; a new continuous cough; a loss or change to your sense of smell and taste).

If you currently have or have had COVID-19 symptoms in the last 10 days, you and anyone who you have had contact with, will not be allowed to enter.

You should not attend if you are unwell with symptoms other than COVID-19 to avoid passing on any other illnesses to the residents.

- If you have been advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, you will not be allowed to enter so please do not attend.
- All visits will be supervised by staff to ensure compliance with infection prevention and control measures.
- You must wash your hands with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer gel when entering and leaving.
- You should avoid coming into contact with other residents.
- You may be offered a visit that is outside, in a mobile visiting pod, or inside with screens, to limit the spread of infection, depending on the facilities at the care home and health and wellbeing needs of the resident.

- You will need to wear a face covering throughout the visit, unless screens are provided, and additional Personal Protective Equipment may need to be considered if the care home thinks this is required.
- You will be given support on how to communicate if face coverings are required, for example, speaking loudly and clearly, keeping eye contact, not wearing hats or anything else that might conceal your face further.
- Social distancing (between visitors and residents, staff, and visitors from other households) must be maintained at all times – during the visit, and around the care home building and grounds. Skin to skin contact such as kisses, handshakes or hugs, should be avoided.
- Seats will be provided 2 metres apart in a designated area and these must not be moved.
- Gifts should be left with staff and given to the resident once they have been sanitised. Gifts must be placed in a plastic bag, any food items must be shop bought and in sealed packets.
- Visitors will not be able to use facilities such as coffee shops and toilets (unless for emergencies), to limit the spread of infection.

Further information

- If you have any queries please contact your local care home manager.
- We will regularly review our guidance to care home visiting.
- National guidance published on 5th November 2020 on care home visiting is available online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

Useful information

Risk Assessment Example



Sample Risk
Assessment Care Ho

COVID-19 health questionnaire for visitors



Care Home
Screening Questioni