

12 April 2021

Director of Public Health Position Statement and Guidance to ensure safe care home visiting in Hampshire

From the 12th April 2021, care home residents will be allowed:

- two regular named indoor visitors,
- one 'essential care giver' where the residents care plan identifies this need,
- additional visitors facilitated through outdoor visiting.

This is part of the Government plan on the cautious easing of lockdown restrictions. Whilst it is of course recognised that contact with families is extremely important to the wellbeing of those living in care homes, it is vital that we all do everything we can to protect our older and more clinically vulnerable residents.

It is a requirement for the Director of Public Health (DPH) to provide a regular professional assessment of whether visiting is likely to be appropriate across Hampshire, taking in to account the wider risk environment. Consequently, the [national care home visiting guidance](#) should be referenced and actioned accordingly before any visitors are admitted. The process for visitors to care homes is explained within the guidance document.

The DPH will determine the local COVID-19 environment and provide advice on restricted visiting in care homes in Hampshire. A number of factors are considered when deciding whether it is suitable locally, to permit visits to care settings, including the incidence of COVID-19 infection, incidents and outbreaks of COVID-19 infection in care settings and the local area, rates of infection across Hampshire, specific trends, the wider risk environment and care home readiness to respond to COVID-19 (see Appendix 1). These factors are kept under review on a daily basis.

The DPH communicates any updated visiting guidance on a weekly basis to the Hampshire Health Protection Board which includes representatives from local commissioners of care homes, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Infection Prevention Control (IPC) Leads and the Public Health England (PHE) local Health Protection Team (HPT), as well as the Pan-Hampshire Health Protection Collaborative Forum. Care settings will be notified when the DPH declares that visits should be restricted or prohibited in care settings in an area. The DPH position and guidance is also communicated on the [Keep Hampshire Safe](#) website. Additional restrictions may be recommended/instructed by PHE HPT and CCG IPC Leads when suspected or confirmed cases or outbreaks are reported in an individual care setting

Care Providers have ultimate responsibility for visiting policy decision which should be based on the advice from the DPH, the CCG IPC Lead and the PHE HPT. The visiting policies must be based on their own risk assessments, their testing programme, infection control measures, care home layout and vulnerability of residents. The detailed national guidance will help care homes develop and implement these policies. Communication to staff, residents and their families of the care setting visitor policy is also covered and should be followed.

Current position: The current advice of the Hampshire Health Protection Board is that care home visits can take place within strict criteria. Care home residents can nominate two regular indoor visitors. Coronavirus testing for visitors will be required and existing infection control measures such as use of PPE and social distancing will remain in place.

Additional outdoor visits can be facilitated at a window where the resident remains inside, or under an open sided gazebo/marquee. Where an outdoor visit is not possible, a dedicated 'pod'/room with good ventilation (doors and windows open) and where there is a substantial screen between the resident and visitor can be used as an alternative.

'Essential Care Giver' visitors will be able to visit more often in order to provide essential care, on a case by case basis as agreed by care home manager.

There may be exceptions in some locations that take specific circumstances into account, such as a current outbreak.

Visits in exceptional circumstances such as end of life should always be supported and enabled.

Appendix 1 – Information considered in DPH risk assessment to advise on need for care home visiting restrictions

The DPH informed risk assessment should consider:

1. Accuracy of local outbreak information and community prevalence - *Informed by daily data meetings and weekly discussion with COVID-19 Health Protection Board*
 - Local testing data
 - NHS Test and Trace (HLOW CTS) data
 - Data on uptake, results and frequency of testing.
2. National oversight in an area due to transmission risks - *Informed by PHE alerts*
3. Other testing results outside of the care home, for example community testing service/home testing. (Staff must inform the care home so that the result is factored into the decision-making process to help inform the visiting policy).
4. Routine care home testing results of staff (weekly) and residents (monthly)
5. Outbreaks and recovery from outbreaks - *Informed by daily data meetings*
6. Local intelligence on risk factors relevant to transmission in the care home, for example a nearby concentration of locations where there is a higher potential risk of transmission (for example, food processing plants). *This will be informed by the District COVID-19 data packs available on the [Public Health in Hampshire website](#)*
7. Care home readiness to respond to COVID-19 and return to essential visits only, assessment may be based on [Care Quality Commission reports](#), experience of a care home's responsiveness throughout the pandemic and other local qualitative information.

8. Live view of local conditions, via the [Capacity Tracker](#). Completing the Capacity Tracker daily will help provide assurance and early warning if there were to be an outbreak, as well as helping to provide confidence on regular reporting and that any