

August 2020

# Care Homes Visiting Arrangements

## 1. Purpose

This document has been issued jointly by Hampshire County Council (Public Health and Adult Social Care Teams) and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups in Hampshire. It is endorsed by the Care Home Support Board, which is a strategic Board set up during Covid-19 to enable key organisations to work together to oversee the support available to care homes in Hampshire throughout this pandemic and beyond. It forms part of the overall [Care Homes Support Plan](#) which is a dynamic plan, detailing the work to date and future planned work to support care homes at this challenging time.

Following restrictions on visits to care homes since March 2020 on 22 July 2020, the Government published [guidance on arrangements for limited visits to care homes](#). The guidance was further [updated](#) on 31 July 2020. This national guidance is designed to help care homes develop and implement policies in relation to Care Home Visits. Communication to staff, residents and their families of the care setting is also covered.

Care home visiting restrictions are now being lifted carefully and measures are being put in place to ensure safe arrangements. We welcome the new measures and are very supportive of the plans to extend visiting arrangements so that residents can have more contact with their relatives and friends when safe and appropriate to do so. We recognise the detrimental impact and the distress caused to many families because of the necessary restrictions. The need to keep families apart has been to ensure the safety of residents, families, and staff but has not been without a significant impact to the health and wellbeing of many people.

The information in this document is intended to support care home providers to implement the national guidance safely and responsibly.

We hope you find this guidance helpful and informative.

Information is available regarding the [cases of Coronavirus in Hampshire](#), please select the data dashboard tab to follow the most up to date information on prevalence and new confirmed cases. This information is updated regularly and provides an update on case numbers across the Hampshire County Council area.

Guidance requires that prior to visits being allowed in care homes, the Director of Public Health (DPH) in every area should provide information on the suitability of visiting in the local authority area, taking into account infection rates in the county

and local area and the wider risk environment. The Keep Hampshire Safe information referred to above will provide this information.

**It is therefore not necessary to consult with or seek permission from the DPH, the Local Authority or Clinical Commissioning Groups Teams who support care homes to resume visits. Care settings should base their own visitor policies on their individual risk assessments, their testing programme, infection control measures and vulnerability of residents, as set out in the national guidance.**

Guidance in respect of care home testing can be found [here](#). If you have any queries in respect logistical issues relating to missed deliveries or missed collections at a care home please contact the Coronavirus Testing Call Centre on 0300 303 2713 or email [COVIDCareHomeTesting@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:COVIDCareHomeTesting@dhsc.gov.uk)

We also recommend providers refer to the guidance available from the Care Providers Alliance.

Public Health England Health Protection Teams and Clinical Commissioning Groups Infection Prevention and Control Leads will issue specific instructions when there are suspected or confirmed cases in a care setting.

If it becomes necessary to introduce restrictions due to an increased risk in a geographical area or setting these will be declared by the DPH and notified to the local Health Protection Board. In this event, it may be necessary for visits to be restricted or prohibited in a care setting in an area, for the safety of residents and staff and to minimise the risk of transmission. Care settings in a geographical area will be contacted proactively, should this be necessary. In the event of an outbreak in a care home and/or evidence of community hotspots or outbreaks leading to a local lockdown, care homes may need to rapidly impose visiting restrictions to protect vulnerable residents, staff, and visitors.

## 2. Our guiding principles

Below are some guiding principles to consider and work within, to support the safety of staff and individuals:

- Care providers have ultimate responsibility for visiting policy decisions which should be based on available advice and support of local and national Public Health Teams and Infection Prevention and Control Leads.
- Care providers should support the NHS Test and Trace system, by ensuring contact details are available for any visitors.
- Each setting will be unique in terms of its building specification and the people it supports. Each location must therefore consider its own situation and adapt the guidance where appropriate, making any additional requirements necessary.
- Each setting must identify those individuals (residents and staff) who are at high risk (clinically extremely vulnerable) from Covid-19 and ensure they are following the up to date guidance on “shielding” to protect them.

- Care providers will ensure that they communicate effectively with individuals, families, and other key stakeholders in an open and transparent way about their approach to visiting.
- Care providers will need to monitor the Covid-19 situation and be ready to react to and change these principles and any resulting measures which should be appropriately scaled up or down as and when necessary.
- Care providers will need to vary their responses to enabling visits to care settings as Covid-19 risks change within their local community.
- Care providers will review their Visiting Policies as they learn from their implementation and as the wider Covid-19 situation and guidance and advice is updated.
- Visiting should adopt a person-centred approach and the individual needs and views of each resident considered. In the case of someone who lacks capacity, the views of any Power of Attorney or Guardian should be central to the decision (if an individual lacks capacity, the principles of the Mental Capacity Act should be applied). Any decisions reached in discussion with those involved, their friends or advocates where appropriate, should be fully documented with rationale behind decisions clearly recorded.

### 3. Recommendations for providers

It is recommended that providers develop a local visiting policy. Care homes should base their visiting policies on their own risk assessments, their testing programme, infection control measures and vulnerability of residents.

The local visiting policy should contain:

- Considerations before making a visit
- Arrangements in place such as when and where visiting can take place and any booking system
- Risk assessments in place
- Expectations during a visit including infection control procedures
- Need to report any subsequent illness after a visit
- Protocol for visits (indoor and outdoor)
- Visitor declaration – to be completed on arrival confirming the absence of symptoms and giving contact details for track and trace purposes.
- Guidance on infection control procedures within the setting
- Guidance on use of PPE

Any decisions around admitting visitors remain the responsibility of providers and ultimately the Registered Manager. It is recommended that risk assessments are carried out, considering the most up to date government guidance and local information. Service-wide risk assessment should also be accompanied by appropriate individual risk assessments. Providers may wish to develop a short individual visiting plan for each resident.

Communication to staff, residents and their families of the care setting is key, and we recommend that families are kept up to date and fully informed.

Care providers should take a staged approach to re-establishing visitors to the setting, as necessary, and in conjunction with the guidance and risk assessments.

In the event of any suspected or actual outbreak of Covid-19, or a suspected or known case of Covid-19 within a care setting, visiting restrictions may need to be immediately implemented. It is recommended that contingency arrangements are in place, should it be necessary to introduce further restrictions.

Visits may occur in several ways, to be implemented as part of the staged approach. Examples include:

- Window visits: this will need safe ground floor window access for both residents and their visitors, and the relevant social distancing and PPE measures will need to be observed.
- Garden visits: relevant PPE measures and social distancing will apply; independent access to the garden will be needed to avoid visitors moving through the care setting; providers will need to consider how to facilitate garden visits in different weather conditions; and how to ensure cleaning of areas and any items used between visits.
- Drive-through visits: these can be facilitated visits in car parking areas, again any relevant PPE measures and social distancing will apply.
- Designated areas within a care setting: must facilitate good ventilation, social distancing, and ease of access by residents/tenants; these must be possible with a limited visitor journey through the residential area. An example might be the use of a conservatory as a designated visiting area.
- In room visits: these visits may continue to be facilitated as appropriate in line with national guidance in relation to essential/end of life visits to ensure the person can die with dignity and comfort, taking into account their physical, emotional, social and spiritual support needs.

#### **4. Suggested resources and tools**

Appendices (or separate documents):

- Appendix 1 - Example Visitor Declaration
- Appendix 2 - Example Risk Assessment
- Appendix 3 - Example Letter for Families

#### **5. Further information and contacts**

<https://careprovideralliance.org.uk/coronavirus-visitors-protocol>

<https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/advice-and-information/2020-07-24/what-you-need-know-when-visiting-care-home-new-guidance-covid-19>

You can keep up to date with available [guidance for providers](#)

If you have any queries please contact [Providerc19@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Providerc19@hants.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1 - Example Visitor Declaration

**Following revised government guidance, we are now pleased able to accept visits in the following circumstances:**

XXXX

**Visits will take place in X (e.g. the sunroom area at the front of the care home)**

This reduces risk of someone who is asymptomatic inadvertently taking the virus deeper into the care home. This is a critical safety measure to protect your loved one, the other residents and our staff.

**You are asked to read the information below and agree to the necessary actions that are being asked of you. Please answer each question and sign the document at the bottom.**

- 1) You have not tested positive for Covid-19 in the past 14 days
- 2) Have you felt unwell recently – especially with a cough, breathlessness, tiredness, a temperature or vomiting or diarrhoea?
- 3) Have you been in contact with someone, in the past 14 days, who is suspected of having or is confirmed as having Covid-19?
- 4) Have you been told by your GP or other NHS professional that you should not be visiting a care home?
- 5) Please supply your contact details: these may be used by Public Health as part of the 'Test and Protect' strategy, should there be a necessity following your visit to the care home.

Home or Mobile Number .....

Address.....

.....

By signing this you agree that you will follow the Infection Prevention and Control procedures that we have in place here at XXXXXXXX Care Home.

Thank you for your support.

I agree to minimise my movement around the home where possible.

Full Name.....

Visiting.....

Signed..... Date .....

Appendix 2 - Example Risk Assessment

<b>Risk Assessment</b>			
<b>Date</b>		<b>Care Home Name</b>	

Risk Assessment of:	Care Home - opening to visitors			Risk Ranking	High/Medium/Low
What are the Hazards?	Who might be harmed?	What precautions are already in place?	Risk Level	What further action is necessary, by whom, & by when	
<p>That Covid-19 (or other infections) are introduced to the care home via a visitor</p>	<p>A resident becomes infected because of exposure to the virus through visiting.</p> <p>Other residents become infected.</p> <p>Staff become infected.</p> <p>The visitor is exposed to Covid-19 in the care home and infects others in their household and/or others in the community, requiring self-isolation for them and their household, potential health</p>	<p>Company visitor policy during Covid 19 in response to national guidance on policies for visiting arrangements in care homes.</p> <p>The home to be free from infection for more than 14 days before accepting visitors.</p> <p>Health Covid checks of all visitors prior to visit.</p> <p>All staff wear masks at all times.</p> <p>Where possible service users to wear masks during a visit.</p> <p>Monitoring residents for signs and symptoms of infection.</p>	<p>Severity x Likelihood</p>	<p>The visiting policy should be made available and/or communicated to residents and families/ friends, together with any necessary variations to arrangements due to external events. Consider how this is shared and in what format. Confirm receipt and agreement.</p> <p>Make arrangements to enable bookings for visitors – ad hoc visits cannot be enabled.</p> <p>Book visits in advance for a specific day and time.</p> <p>Plan for maximum 30 minutes length per visit.</p> <p>Review the status of the service daily to ensure the situation has not changed. If the</p>	

	<p>consequence of Covid-19 infection.</p>	<p>All staff follow Infection Prevention Control guidelines, including regular hand washing on entering and leaving the care home and regularly throughout the shift. Clean clothes at start of each new shift.</p> <p>All staff wear appropriate PPE in line with current guidance. This includes at work and in the community, e.g. on public transport.</p> <p>Risk assessment for use of PPE completed identifying variations in use of PPE e.g. Droplet Generated Activities.</p> <p>Handwashing facilities, both soap/water and hand sanitiser/gel are available immediately on entering the care home and on leaving.</p> <p>Staff have increased their cleaning regime across all public areas and within any visiting areas, in line with current guidance. Identify Cleaning products used (Link to Safety</p>	<p>situation has changed take appropriate action to notify visitors and consider cancelling/postponing visits.</p> <p>Identify a designated area for visits to take place, ideally at the front of the building to minimise footfall through the building and one that can be sanitised quickly and easily. Consider location and facilities for outside visits.</p> <p>A face covering and any further PPE as appropriate (e.g. mask, gloves, and apron and visor as appropriate with a risk assessment) to be worn by the visitor. Consider the provision of PPE should the visitor not have their own.</p> <p>Staff to complete health check questions with the visitor including taking temperature readings before the visit. (Symptoms include a raised temperature, a new and persistent cough, a loss of taste or smell and a generally feeling of being lethargic and unwell)</p> <p>Staff to check if the visitor has had known contact with a person who has been tested positive for Covid19 or potentially has symptoms of Covid19.</p>
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		<p>Data Sheet and COSHH Risk Assessment).</p> <p>Staff have received updated training in Infection Prevention Control and undergone Fit Testing Training/have Public Health England Guide to Donning and Doffing.</p>	<p>The visitor will cleanse/decontaminate their hands for 20 seconds either using hand washing facilities or hand sanitiser/gel pre and post visit.</p> <p>Visitors to minimise the number of personal belongings they bring with them e.g. mobile phone, handbag, coats etc.</p> <p>If refreshments are to be offered, consider disposable cups or allocated cups to be sanitised and placed in the dishwasher on a high temperature immediately after visit.</p> <p>Remind both the visitor and care home resident that there must be no touching and a 2-metre distance should be maintained.</p> <p>Resident to cleanse their hands following the visit with support from staff if required.</p>
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	<b>Name of Assessor</b>		<b>Name of Manager</b>
<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Signature of Assessor</b>		<b>Signature of Manager</b>



## Appendix 3 - Example Letter for Families

Dear Family, Friends & Carers,

COVID-19 – visiting [name of care home]

Over the last few months, we have been working incredibly hard to reduce the impact of COVID-19 at [name of care home]. We know that the restrictions in contact with your relative's friends and friends has not been easy and we would like to thank you for your co-operation and support.

Although as a country we are slowly lifting restrictions on the general population that were in place to stop the spread of COVID-19, we still need to take extra care to protect the residents of [name of care home].

The Government has provided an **Update on policies for visiting arrangements in care homes**, updated 31 July 2020, to support us in planning to allow visitors back to our home. The full guidance can be found by clicking on the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>  
Or visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for **Update on policies for visiting arrangements in care homes**

The decision on whether to allow visitors, and in what circumstances, is an operational decision and therefore ultimately for the Registered Manager of [Name of care home] to make dependent on individual circumstances and assessment of risk.

I am therefore writing to you to ask you to help us protect your loved ones by taking a few very simple steps.

1. Please contact the home to arrange a visit on [Telephone number] or via e-mail at [dedicated e-mail address]. We have devised a booking system to ensure visits are managed safely and the number of people coming to our home at any one time is minimised.
2. We are limiting the numbers of visitors to xxx wherever possible.
3. Visits will be limited to 30 minutes, observing current social distancing guidelines.
4. On arrival visitors will be asked some health screening questions, to wash/decontaminate their hands thoroughly or use the hand sanitising gel/liquid provided and to have their temperature taken.
5. Please minimise the number of belongings you bring with you, for example bags, mobile phones, wallets etc. This minimises the number of items that have contact with surfaces around our home.
6. You will be required to wear a suitably fitting face covering/mask for the duration of the visit. We can provide these if you are unable to bring your own or do not have one.
7. Social distancing measures will remain in place, which means a no-touch approach during visits. This extends to hugging, handholding or kissing.

8. You will not be able to use facilities such as toilets (unless for emergencies), however refreshments will be provided.
9. If possible when you visit, please either walk or use your own transport. Avoiding public transport further reduces your chances of coming into contact with people who are infected. If you do need to use public transport or a taxi, then we advise that you wear a face covering/face mask when travelling.

Finally, but very importantly, if you are showing any symptoms which could indicate coronavirus, please do not visit. If you do, we will need to refuse entry. As you will be aware, these symptoms include a raised temperature, a new and persistent cough, a loss of taste or smell and a generally feeling of being lethargic and unwell.

All the measures above will help us to protect our residents, staff and visiting loved ones – keeping everyone as safe as we possibly can.

The past few months have been very difficult for everyone, and we are so pleased to be able to begin opening [Name of care home] to visitors again, albeit cautiously, and in a way that is as safe as possible for all, following the latest Public Health England guidance in everything that we do.

For those of you who would prefer not to visit but to continue to keep in touch in other ways, such as by phone, Skype, Zoom or post, please be assured that we will continue to do everything we can to support this.

As we move forward, we will review our visiting policy regularly and will update you again as soon as we feel able to introduce further changes.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Registered Manager, [Name of care home].