

Visiting at Care homes

Frequently Asked Questions for visitors

The aim of this document is to provide you with answers to questions that you may have if you are hoping to visit someone in a care home.

Guidance is correct at time of publication. To ensure you stay up to date, see the national guidance linked below.

National guidance;

[Summary of guidance for visitors - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Visits out of care homes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

The care home manager and staff have the job of keeping everyone safe and helping everyone have a good experience of visiting. They need your support. Please help them out.

When you visit you are not just coming into your loved one's home, you are also in the home of many other residents. So please follow any advice and instructions that the care home staff give you to keep everyone safe.

When you are in and around the home, please be careful to observe social distancing from residents, staff and other visitors. Please make sure you wear whatever PPE you are asked to correctly and keep it on.

Care homes are putting new arrangements in place from Monday 12 April.

Please bear in mind that it may take care homes a short while to make the changes they need to get everything ready.

Local information on testing;

What you need to know about getting a test for coronavirus and the Local Tracing Service in Hampshire: [COVID-19 testing and contact tracing | Health and social care | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://www.hants.gov.uk)

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Frequently asked questions- Visiting in Care Homes

Will I be able to visit someone in a care home?

Where possible care homes are encouraged to support visiting. There may be some circumstances where visits are not possible e.g. Where a care home has an outbreak or positive cases of COVID-19 at the home.

All care homes should seek to enable indoor visits for up to two named visitors where the visitor has been tested on arrival at the care home and returned a negative result.

The visit should be agreed following careful risk assessment and with the continued use of extra precautions, such as PPE and social distancing. The overall decision will be made by the Care Home Manager following these risk assessments. If the home is able to accommodate it, both named visitors may be able to attend at the same time.

In addition to the two named visitors, all care homes should seek to enable additional visitors through outdoor visiting, such as window visits where the resident remains inside, or visits under an open sided gazebo/marquee. Visitors and residents participating in outdoor visiting must remain at least 2 metres apart at all times.

Outdoor visits are the preferred approach wherever possible however if a risk-assessment identifies that an open-air visit is not appropriate, 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. This is unless there are exceptional circumstances for example, end of life.

** A substantial screen can be defined as a screen that reaches from the floor to the ceiling.*

What is an Essential Care Giver?

Some residents may have a care or support need that cannot easily be provided by care home staff, or not without causing distress. This might be help with washing and dressing where the resident becomes distressed unless it is done by a loved one.

Other examples could be where the resident is refusing to eat unless they do so with a loved one present. Or where a family member or friend can calm down challenging behaviour more easily than care home staff.

It is likely that the requirement for this support from the resident's loved one will already be part of (and documented in) their care plan. It will not be necessary for everyone.

In such cases, and with the agreement of the care home, the Essential Care Giver will be enabled and supported to provide this care and they will be able to visit more often. They will have access to the same PCR and rapid lateral flow testing and PPE arrangements as a member of care home staff. People taking on the role of Essential Care Giver will receive further instructions and details on how to fulfil this role from the care home.

Essential Care Givers do not need to be the same person as one of the two named visitors. A resident can have an essential care giver (where that is agreed with the care home) as well as the 2 named visitors. This could mean the resident has nominated a total of up to 3 people who will make regular visits.

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Each resident will be different, and the exact arrangements will need to be agreed between the care home, resident and their family/loved one. This should follow an individualised assessment of the resident's needs. Clinical care and medical tasks such as the administering of medication and physiotherapy remains the responsibility of the care home.

You should speak to the care home manager if you think your loved one would benefit from this type of visit.

How many times can I visit, and can others visit?

The Government are not setting rules about how often you can visit, or how long you can stay for. This will vary from place to place, depending on what the care home decides they can do safely and comfortably.

There will probably be some limits. The Government are asking visitors to be supportive of the care home and recognise that the home will need to 'share out' visiting appointments so everyone gets the chance to have one.

Indoor visitors are limited to up to two named visitors. This is in order to limit the overall number of visitors to the care home and/or to the individual, and the consequent risk of disease transmission from multiple different routes.

Additional visits may be facilitated for others. These visits should take place outdoors as described above.

Visiting should always be arranged through the booking system that that home has established.

Can children and young people visit?

It is possible for someone aged under 18 to be one of the two nominated visitors, if the resident, family, and the care home all agree that is appropriate. Any children visiting (apart from babies and very young children) should be counted towards the maximum number allowed for the visit.

Visits including babies and very young children, generally under the age of 2, may also take place with the agreement of the care home manager. These children do not need to be counted as an additional visitor. As is the case with visitors of all ages, there should be no close physical contact between babies or young children and the residents they are visiting.

It is very important that any children visiting can follow IPC measures carefully. This will include social distancing, PPE use (where appropriate), and advice on minimising physical contact. Children and young people must be able to follow any instructions the care home staff provide.

Children aged 11 and over should wear the same PPE as adult visitors. Children under the age of 3 should not wear masks, for [safety reasons](#).

The Government do not currently recommend that children under the age of 11 participate in regular asymptomatic testing. If a test is to take place for a child, it should be done with appropriate consent and guidance.

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It is possible for a young person under the age of 18 to be an essential care giver. This would be more appropriate for older teenagers, and must be with the agreement of the care home manager who must satisfy themselves that the young person is confident, capable and willing to provide the care or support agreed.

Do I need to have received my vaccination before I can visit?

It is strongly recommended that all visitors and residents take up the opportunity to be vaccinated when they are invited to do so through the national programme, to help make visiting safer, however you can still visit if you have not been vaccinated, or if the person you are going to visit has not been vaccinated.

Even though you and your loved one may have had the vaccine it is still very important to follow all government advice and be careful with PPE and social distancing to reduce the risk of infection.

What is visitor testing? (UPDATED)

The Department of Health and Social Care has supplied Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests for visitors at CQC registered care homes. This includes training for staff to deliver the tests, guidance on how homes manage the process and the environmental requirements needed for testing to take place.

The results of LFD tests are available quickly so that the visitor will take the test on arrival. The visit can only take place indoors where there is a negative test result, and is subject to approval from the care home.

Testing on-site at the care home is the preferred approach, however you should speak to the Care Home staff to understand their policy. Some homes may accept proof of a negative test taken on the day of the visit, such as through assisted testing at an LFD site, or self-testing at home. The care home will give you information on how to access home test-kits and specific instructions when recording your results.

A Government privacy notice sets out what happens to your data. [Cornavirus \(COVID-19\) self-test for staff, service users and visitors in adult social care settings: privacy notice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/privacy-notice/coronavirus-covid-19-self-test-for-staff-service-users-and-visitors-in-adult-social-care-settings-privacy-notice)

Testing does not completely remove the risk of infection associated with visiting and it is essential that you follow the care homes policy with regards to PPE, social distancing, and hand hygiene.

What should I expect if I am being tested on-site as a visitor?

Visitors will need to be prepared to:

- Consent to testing and sharing test results
- Register their own test kits online, or consent to sharing personal information if a staff member supports them with registration
- Complete a self-assisted throat and nasal swab
- Prepare to wait 30 minutes for a result before visiting
- Wear PPE during testing and visit
- Follow all other infection control protocols and safety requirements during visit
- Complete a confirmatory test if the first test is positive

Care homes may provide a letter to visitors prior to their first visit that outlines these expectations from the home, this may also include a guidance pack that will explain how

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visitors should put on and take off PPE, which they will be required to do themselves, under the supervision of trained care home staff.

Visitors should also be aware that the testing area may be set up either indoors or outdoors at the care home they are visiting, so they may wish to dress accordingly.

What does a Lateral Flow test involve?

The test is a self-administered swab test which comprises of a 10 second swab of your tonsils followed by a 10 second swab of your nose. The test takes around half an hour to deliver a result. If you are testing at the care home you will be asked to remain in a waiting area – this may be inside or outside the home.

If the result is negative your visit can commence, subject to approval from the care home. It is important to continue to follow COVID-secure guidance as no test is 100% accurate and there is a chance that you may be carrying the virus regardless of your test result.

If your test is inconclusive you will be re-tested. A decision will be made on whether the visit can go ahead based on the result.

What happens if my test is positive? (UPDATED)

If your test is positive, your visit cannot continue. You will be required to take a confirmatory test. The confirmatory test is called a PCR test and will be sent to a lab for analysis. You will need to register your test online.

If you had your LFD test at the care home, a member of staff should provide you with a PCR test to do immediately before you leave. You will then be asked to return home, avoiding public transport and wearing a face covering. You must self-isolate, as per government guidance, while awaiting your test result.

If you had your LFD test at home, you should order a PCR test through [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-a-free-pcr-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus-covid-19) or by calling 119.

Results will be sent to you via SMS and/or e-mail. Results will be communicated to you and should be within a day of the test.

Contact tracing will be triggered by a positive LFD result, but will be stopped automatically after receipt of a negative confirmatory PCR test, if the PCR was taken within two days.

If you have recently tested positive for COVID-19, you should not routinely be retested within 90 days unless you develop new symptoms or unless specific infection detection and response plans are in place for individuals or in the local area already. You should use the result of your positive PCR test to show that you are currently exempt from testing until the 90-day period is over. Once the 90-day period is over, you should then continue to be tested.

You should still continue to follow all other relevant infection prevention and control measures throughout these 90 days, including social distancing, maintaining good hand hygiene and wearing PPE.

I don't want to have a test, can I still visit?

All visitors are encouraged to take a test, where testing is offered by the home. Homes may not require visitors to be tested when the visit is being conducted outdoors.

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The overall decision will be made by the Care Home manager following a risk assessment based on the whole home and the individual you wish to visit.

Under what circumstances might I be told I cannot visit? (UPDATED)

It is vital that we all take steps to stop any potential spread of Coronavirus. If you are told that you are unable to visit a care home, it will be because a risk assessment has shown there is increased risk of the virus spreading.

An example of when you will not be able to visit is when an outbreak is declared at a care home, another example would be if you should be self-isolating.

Visiting can take place again when a home is free from an outbreak of COVID-19. It could also take place again once you have completed your self-isolation period. In the event of an outbreak in the home, Essential Care Givers may continue to visit unless there are specific reasons not to do so.

Whilst it is of course recognised that contact with families is extremely important to the wellbeing of those living in care homes, it is important that we all do everything we can to protect our elderly and vulnerable residents.

What should I do if I am allowed to visit?

You should strictly follow the visiting guidance for the home that you are visiting. You must book in advance to visit. If your care home is conducting testing you will need to consent to have a test. You should be aware that the test takes around 30 minutes and therefore your booking slot will allow for this and your allocated visit duration.

On or before arrival visitors may be asked;

- some health screening questions or to complete a visitor declaration form
- to sign in to Test and Trace via the app or logbook
- to wash/decontaminate their hands thoroughly or use the hand sanitising gel/liquid provided
- to have your temperature taken
- to 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 the home.

In addition;

- You must be prepared to wear a face covering for the duration of the visit, or your home may advise on appropriate PPE, and will be able to provide this.
- Social distancing measures will remain in place. You will be able to come in for a regular indoor visit, sitting in the same room as your loved one, with no screen or anything between you. The government strongly advise against physical contact in order to keep everyone safe. You may wish to hold hands – but please remember that any contact increases the chance you could pass on the virus. Close contact like hugging should not happen.
- In exceptional circumstance e.g. End of life care, social distancing measures would be determined by a risk assessment.
- You will not be able to use facilities such as toilets (unless for emergencies), however refreshments may be provided.

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

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you need to use public transport or a taxi, you must wear a face covering/face mask when travelling.

Why might my visiting arrangements be different to others?

The government's guidance says that visiting should be allowed to happen wherever it can be done safely. Every home and every resident is different. There will be some situations where a slightly different approach is needed because of the needs of the resident.

Care home managers and staff will know best how things should run in their care home. For example, there might have to be limits on how many visitors can come in, or how often, because of the amount of space or layout of the rooms. Sometimes there will be good reasons (like an outbreak) why the home cannot offer the visiting you would like.

The Government guidance clearly says that the care home should not put blanket bans in place. The government expect all care homes to do what they can to follow guidance. They should explain to everyone what they are doing and why.

If you think the care home is not doing this please raise the matter with the home. If you are not satisfied that the issue is resolved, you can contact the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC is responsible for inspecting the safety and quality of care provided in care homes, and they will consider if they need to investigate. Contact CQC National Customer Services Centre by:

- emailing enquiries@cqc.org.uk
- calling 03000 61 61 61
- using this [online form to give feedback](#) on your care

Can I visit if I have symptoms?

No, you should not leave your home if you have any symptoms of coronavirus. You must self-isolate for 10 days.

Can I visit if I have been contacted by Test and Trace and told to self-isolate?

No, you must follow the advice provided by Test and Trace and isolate for 10 days.

I have just had a negative coronavirus test, can I visit? (UPDATED)

If you have had a test administered at the care home or as part of your [regular asymptomatic testing](#) routine which returned a negative result, the visit may go ahead subject to approval by the care home.

If you have had a test because you had symptoms of coronavirus which has returned a negative results, you should only visit if you are well and symptom free, and have not been told to self-isolate.

This relates to all viruses such as if you have diarrhoea and/or sickness, please stay at home until 48 hours after any symptoms.

Although you may have had a negative test for coronavirus, you may have symptoms of influenza or another infection, and of course we do not want to introduce any other infection into homes.

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[I have had an antibody test. Can I visit?](#)

Regardless of the result of an antibody test, you must continue to comply with government guidelines.

Antibody tests are used to detect antibodies to the COVID-19 virus to see if you have previously had the virus. Our understanding of the body's immune response to the virus is limited, and we do not currently know how long an antibody response lasts, whether you can be re-infected, nor whether having antibodies means you cannot transmit the virus to others. The test does not tell you if you currently have the virus.

[Can I visit if my loved one in a care home when they have symptoms of coronavirus/ or where other residents have symptoms of coronavirus?](#)

You should speak to the registered manager of the care home who will be able to advise you in relation to both of these questions.

[What are the ways in which I can visit my relative?](#)

There are a number of ways visits can take place. These may be available in a phased approach to ensure residents are kept safe.

Examples include:

All visitors:

- virtual visits such as by phone, Skype, Zoom or post, please be assured that care homes will be doing everything they can to support this where possible.
- 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 with a substantial screen in place between resident and visitor (only with extra precautions and careful risk assessment): 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.

Two named visitors, essential care giver, or in exceptional circumstances e.g. end of life:

- designated areas within a care setting (only with extra precautions and careful risk assessment, with visitor testing): 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.

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I recently visited a care home and have since developed symptoms for COVID-19, what do I do?

You need to self-isolate at home. You should access a test at [gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test). If you test positive for COVID-19 you should make Test and Trace aware of your recent contacts and follow [government advice](#).

What else can I do to keep residents at the care home safe?

Take steps to limit your exposure to COVID-19 to protect yourself, the person you are visiting, staff and residents in the home.

- wash your hands regularly
- maintain social distancing wherever possible during visiting and at other times
- wear a face covering
- have a flu vaccine
- take up your coronavirus vaccine when it is offered to you.

Frequently Asked Questions- Visits out of the Care Home

Can a care home resident come out of the home for a visit?

It may be suitable for some residents to leave the care home to visit friends and family. Decisions will be made by the Care Home on a person-centred basis, taking into account personal needs and circumstances. The care home should balance this against a consideration of the risks to others in the home, in the event that the resident becomes infected on their visit, and the ability of the home to isolate the resident on their return.

While on the visit out of the home, all involved must follow the [national restrictions](#) that apply at the time.

How can I plan for a visit out of the care home?

You should work with the care home to develop a plan. Things to be considered within this plan should include:

- A. the nature of the planned visit, the intended activities and where the resident will be spending time. All must comply with the national restrictions in place.
- B. The safest options. Some types of visits are inherently safer, such as visiting outdoor or well-ventilated spaces. Some are inherently riskier – such as indoor public spaces where other people will be present – and should be avoided. The number of different locations visited should be minimised.
- C. the support needs that the resident may have during the visit, and whether the resident will need to be accompanied by a staff member, carer, family member or friend.
- D. how the resident will be supported to follow good infection control practice including social distancing, hand hygiene and face coverings – and whether the resident's needs are likely to impact their ability to do so
- E. transport for the visit, which should minimise exposing the resident to those outside the household they are visiting, for instance by [travelling in a family car or private taxi](#).

Many residents will not have had the chance to leave the home or residence for a significant amount of time and as such should be supported to feel safe and confident where this does happen.

What steps can be taken to help mitigate risks?

- Before, during and after the visit, the number of people the resident has contact with should be kept to minimum.
- Visitors should minimise their potential exposure to COVID-19 by limiting the number of people they meet for 2 weeks prior to the visit out.
- Everyone involved in the visit out should be tested for COVID-19 immediately before the visit and return a negative result e.g. tested on arrival at the care home collect the resident for the visit. If a test results is positive the visit cannot go ahead. The individual with the positive test should immediately self-isolate and complete a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test which should be provided to them by the care home. If the confirmatory PCR comes back positive, they and their household must self-isolate on notification and contacts may also, if notified, need to [self-isolate in line with current government guidance](#).
- All household members must also be free of any COVID-19 symptoms, and if they have previously tested positive, have completed the necessary isolation period.
- The resident should be tested immediately before their visit out of the care home with a lateral flow device (LFD), and if the result is positive, the visit should not go ahead. The resident should be immediately isolated in the care setting, complete a confirmatory PCR test, and contact with the local health protection team should be made urgently.
- During the visit out of the care home; all parties should maintain social distancing, wash their hands regularly, ensure good ventilation and consider wearing a face covering.

What are the rules on self-isolation after a visit out of the care home? (NEW)

When the resident returns to the care home following the visit out, national guidance states additional measures will need to be taken in order to protect other residents and care home staff from the risk of COVID transmission. Specifically, the resident should self-isolate for 14 days. Following this isolation period, assuming the resident shows no symptoms, the resident may return to the general community in the care home.

[Supplementary guidance](#) states residents should be enabled to leave their care home to spend time outdoors, without subsequent isolation for 14 days, in the following circumstances:

- residents may be accompanied by:
 - a member of care home staff
 - one or both of their nominated visitors
 - their essential care provider (where applicable).
- care homes should discuss arrangements with residents' nominated visitors, or essential care provider, in advance.
- visits should take place solely outdoors, except for the use of toilet facilities.
- there should be no visits to indoor spaces (public or private).
- the exception to this is that residents will be able to access polling stations.

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- visits should not involve the use of public transport.

This guidance should be considered alongside infection rates (within the home and local community) and available evidence of variants of concern (VOCs).