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**CARE**

Providing care services

Dear All,

**Re: - COVID-19 Update – Visiting our Care Homes Safely**

I hope you all remain safe and well.

As we reach perhaps the biggest milestone yet in the easing of Covid restrictions, you will no doubt all be aware that there have been further announcements over the past week or so regarding the arrangements for visits to and from care homes. This all takes effect from today (17<sup>th</sup> May) with the official Government guidance having been published over the weekend.

The Government's stated aim now is that by the summer (not sure when exactly), care home visiting will feel as relaxed and normal as possible, with only those infection prevention and control measures that are essential to protect residents being retained. However, you will no doubt also be aware that there is currently a serious risk to full easing of restrictions from the so-called "Indian" variant of Covid, and in the face of that and any further new variants of concern, it is essential that we all remain alert to the risks now and explicitly follow the current guidance. This is to ensure we protect those most at risk in our care homes so that indoor visits can still go ahead, and to ensure that a return to normal visiting can happen as soon as possible.

**Visits to our Care Homes**

With regard to visiting our care homes now therefore, essentially, all visiting options remain as they were except that it is now possible for every resident to nominate up to 5 named visitors who will be able to enter the home for regular visits.

I have attached a summary of the guidance and this along with the full version can be found on the Government website using the following link: –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus>

As ever, the guidance is extensive, but the main "headlines" are: -

- Every care home resident can nominate up to 5 named visitors who will be able to enter the home for regular visits. They can visit together or separately as preferred.
- No more than 2 such visitors can visit at any one time or on any given day.

- All visitors must be tested using rapid lateral flow tests before every visit and the visit can only take place if they return a “negative” result. Visitors must also wear the appropriate PPE issued by the home and follow all other infection control measures as advised by the home during visits.
- Residents can meet with both of their 2 named visitors at the same time (for example, during the same visit as long as the care home is able to accommodate this) or can meet with them separately if that is what they prefer.
- Visitors must also ensure they observe strict social distancing from other residents, visitors and staff at all times.
- It is possible for someone aged under 18 to be one of the 5 named 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 also be counted towards the maximum number allowed for the visit.
- Visitors and residents are advised to keep physical contact to a minimum. They may hold hands, but should bear in mind that any physical contact increases the risk of transmission and for this reason there should not be close physical contact such as hugging.

As before, can I also ask everyone to please take note of the following points made in the guidance and to continue to respect the guidance, and the homes’ staff, at all times before, during and after your visit:-

- *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.*
- *Care home managers may have to refuse to allow someone to continue to visit if they refuse to follow advice or instructions (such as wearing PPE properly).*
- *Care homes will only be able to welcome a certain number of visitors every day. This is simply because visitors need to socially distance and so staff can help them take their tests.*
- *You will need to make an appointment to visit and the care home might not be able to offer an appointment to everyone as often as they would like.*

For further clarity, close-contact indoor visits are offered **in addition** to visits booked inside our screened visiting rooms and to garden/outdoor visits. When you call to book any form of visit therefore, please can I ask that you are clear about what type of visit you are booking. This will avoid any unnecessary confusion or disappointment when you arrive at the home, particularly as the arrangements on arrival are different for each type of visiting.

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## Visits out of our Care Homes

With regard to residents making visits out of our care homes, essentially, the guidance remains that unless the visit takes place solely outdoors, residents will be required to self-isolate for 14 days on their return to the home.

There are a limited number of exceptions to this and I have further attached a summary of the guidance, which along with the full guidance, can be found on the Government website using the following link: -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrangements-for-visiting-out-of-the-care-home>

As before, I am so sorry for all the rules but I hope you can understand why it is all necessary, and apologies again for the lengthy update and for the short notice. I appreciate there is a lot of information here so if you have any immediate questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, or indeed the home.

We will continue to keep things under regular review and look forward to a return to normal visiting, and near-normal life, perhaps as soon as 21<sup>st</sup> June, /or in accordance with further updated Government guidance.

Best wishes,



Mark Vickery

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