

# Visiting your relative or friend who is living in a care setting

**Date August 2020 Version 0.2**

Care settings such as care homes and nursing homes are starting to support residents to see their families and friends in person again following the publication of the governments national guidance. However, all of our residents remain at a higher risk from COVID-19 (Coronavirus) because of their age and / or other medical conditions. Therefore, during this transition period as lockdown eases, visits will need to be managed to make sure that:

- The risk of infection is minimised
- The safety of our residents, their visitors, and our staff is prioritised
- That residents who are shielding are given additional protection.

Every person's experience is unique, but we hope this document might help to address some of your concerns. If you want more advice, please contact the Home Manager who will be very happy to speak to you.

## **Types of visits**

There are several different ways in which visits can take place safely, depending on the care setting:

- Virtual visits (eg via a tablet and an app such as WhatsApp)
- Window visits (where the resident is inside and the visitor outside)
- Garden visits
- Drive through visits (eg in a care home's car park)
- Designated areas within a care setting where the layout allows for this
- In-room visits, in line with national guidance in relation to essential / end of life visits

The range of visits made available will be for discussion and agreement between the care provider, their residents, their staff and their visitors. It may be possible for residents and visitors to have visits in a variety of these forms, as circumstances allow.

## **Who can visit?**

The care setting staff will talk to each resident to agree who they would like to be visited by. This will be their 'designated visitor'. Visiting will be arranged with the designated visitor via the Home Manager.

Visits will initially be restricted to one designated person and for limited periods of time, no more than 30 minutes, at pre-arranged appointments. This is so care settings are able to limit the number of people in the home and to allow them time to clean the visiting area between visits.

Unfortunately, children under the age of 16 are not currently allowed to visit, and we cannot allow pets (guide dogs excepted).

### **What do I need to do to arrange a visit?**

The home manager will contact you to arrange a visit. Due to the need to manage the number of people and risk of infection in the care setting, unannounced visits will not be allowed under any circumstances.

### **How quickly can I see my family member?**

We acknowledge and appreciate how supportive families have been during this difficult time and we recognise that you will want to see your relative as soon as possible. Please be patient with our staff while they are facilitating these meetings – the safety of our care community is our priority.

### **What should I do to prepare for the visit?**

The care setting will explain the Visitors' Code to you and may send this to you in advance, or give it to you when you arrive. This will explain the things you need to do, e.g. hand washing requirements and wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). You will be asked to sign that you have understood and agree to the Code, including the need to wear PPE at all times. The care setting will inform you ahead of the visit if you need to bring a face covering and the type required or whether the care home will provide this.

You must telephone the care setting the day before your visit, to make sure the situation in the service has not changed.

All visitors and all people in visitors' households must be free of any COVID-19 symptoms on the day of their visit and must not be unwell on the day of their visits. It is critically important for the health and wellbeing of your loved one that you do not visit if you have been feeling unwell in any way.

You can help control the risk of coronavirus infection on the home and travel safely by walking and cycling, if you can. Where this is not possible, use your own transport. If some assistance is required to get to the care setting, the care setting may be able to provide you with telephone numbers of websites of organisations that can offer advice on safe travel.

On arrival at the care setting, you will need to provide contact details in case this is needed by the NHS Test and Trace service, and respond to screening questions.

You must comply with infection prevention and control measures as requested by the staff at the care setting, including a temperature test, mandatory hand hygiene, the use of PPE as required, social distancing requirements and remaining in the designated visiting area.

If you would like to bring a gift for the person you are visiting, please make sure it can be easily sanitized.

**What should I expect during the visit?**

When you visit your relative again the home may look and feel different from before, and your visit may take place in a different location such as the garden or via a window, as outlined above.

Staff will be available during the visit to advise on infection control measures and provide support if needed.

One of the hardest aspects of the COVID-19 situation is the need for physical distancing between those of different households, including family members. Not everyone will understand the need to maintain a physical distance and may want to greet you with some sort of physical contact. This response is understandable after not seeing each other for a long time, but it is very important that social distancing is maintained to protect your loved one, you as the visitor, our staff and the wider community.

Because of this we will need to consider different options to reflect each individual resident, their understanding, needs and rights. A gentle reminder from yourself or a staff member may be all that is required. We realise that this is also difficult for you, however we would ask you not to initiate physical contact.

Please be aware that if staff do witness a visitor initiating physical contact, they may have to suspend or stop that person from visiting again, a risk assessment would have to be undertaken and there may be a possibility that the resident would need to isolate in line with current government guidance.

Visitors will not be able to use care home facilities such as toilets.

You may have further questions or concerns about visiting; in the first instance you should talk with the care setting directly who will be able to offer support and advice.

The Government guidance on care home visits is available here:

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

For more information about City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council's response to the Covid pandemic, please visit our websites:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-and-information>

<https://www.york.gov.uk/coronavirus>