

COVID-19 VISITING PROCEDURE V4: LOCKDOWN 3

6 JANUARY 2021 – Relatives' Update

This updated procedure covers the changes due to the current national lockdown.

The government is updating the law to reflect the new lockdown rules.

Introduction

The government has so far issued national lockdown guidance which includes care home and supported living visits. More detailed supported living guidance has also been updated but not care home specific.

It remains important for maintaining the wellbeing and quality of life of the people we support, that they are able to maintain contact with family and friends.

Of vital importance due to the current rate of Covid-19 infections and deaths is that we keep people safe, and support people to stay in touch in a safe way.

Visiting

Services with outbreaks:

- Services with an outbreak cannot enable visits, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. someone is dying).

Outdoor visits:

- Services can arrange outdoor visits.
- The usual health checks need to be carried out and PPE worn. Visitors do not need to have a rapid test.

Indoor visits:

- The national lockdown guidance states close-contact indoor visits are not allowed.
- Visits can take place with arrangements such as substantial screens, visiting pods, or behind windows. We do not currently have any screens or visiting pods.
- Outdoor visits should be arranged instead.
- People should also be supported to stay in touch by phone and video calls.

Exceptional circumstances

- At the time of updating this procedure, the government had updated supported living guidance but not care home specific guidance. Supported living guidance states that for some people, there are important reasons for having in-person visits, as not having these may be difficult to understand and lead to distress. It also states people should follow the lockdown guidance.
- We will therefore only consider exceptional circumstances for the care homes and supported living services, where some people we support would be unable to have an outdoor visit, unable to have contact in another way, for example meeting out of the home or having a video call, and the absence of not being able to see family indoors would be distressing.
- These circumstances will need to be exceptional and carefully risk assessed. Rapid (lateral flow) testing will be required, there could be no close contact and full PPE would be worn.
- It is essential that everyone understands that the lockdown guidance is law and indoor visits are not to take place except in these exceptional circumstances due to the very high level of infections, deaths, and the fact that the new variant is spread so easily.

Outdoor visits

- Outdoor visits can take place without rapid (lateral flow) testing.
- Social distancing of 2 metres should be maintained.
- The visiting space should be used by one person at a time, and cleaned between use if any surfaces are touched.
- PPE must be used, the same as staff.
- The outdoor space must be a proper outdoor space with good ventilation.
- The visitor should access the outdoor space without going through the building.
- The visitor should not go inside during the visit unless essential to use the bathroom, following which it must be disinfected thoroughly.
- The person should have no more than 2 visitors at a time.

Visits out of services

- Government lockdown rules state people may not stay away from home and that for visits out of care homes, people are not allowed to meet indoors to visit relatives in their family home.
- We appreciate this will be difficult for some people however during the current circumstances, alternative ways of staying in touch safely need to be considered.
- As for visiting the services, only exceptional circumstances will be considered.

Outbreaks

- In the event of an outbreak in the service, visiting in and out of the service should stop (except in exceptional circumstances such as end of life).
- These restrictions continue until the outbreak is confirmed as over. At that point visiting may resume with the usual infection prevention and control measures and any enhancements required due to any risks identified following the recent outbreak.

Infection control

- Services will maintain robust infection, prevention and control measures.
- Visitors must wear PPE, social distancing must be observed, they must observe good hand hygiene, even for outdoor visits.

Tiers

Tiers are no longer in operation as the whole country is in lockdown.

Rapid (lateral flow) tests

As per previous guidance, when indoor and home visits resume, so will rapid testing for visitors, and people we support when going to visit family.

Essential carers

The national lockdown rules allow people to provide care for disabled or vulnerable people. As the people we support are already receiving care in the service, additional routine care provided by family members should not continue for the next 6 weeks (at which point we will review the situation), unless this is absolutely essential for the person, i.e. without it they would be seriously distressed.

In these exceptional circumstances, robust risk assessments, weekly testing and rapid testing and infection control procedures will be implemented.

Planning visits

- All visits are to be care plan and risk assessed as usual, booked in advance, and agreed by the Manager or Deputy.
- Each person's risk assessment will cover the balance between visiting on the person's wellbeing and quality of life, and the risk of transmission of Covid-19.
- The usual visitors' health checks apply to all visitors.

- Visitors should be provided with hand sanitiser when they arrive for an outdoor visit and reminded to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and clean their hands after disposal of the tissues.
- Visitors should have no contact with other residents and minimal contact with care home staff, maintaining social distancing.

Consent

- Some people may not have the capacity to decide whether or not to agree to the visiting policy. The government has published [advice on caring for residents without relevant mental capacity, the MCA and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards \(DoLS\)](#) during the pandemic, setting out what relevant circumstances should be considered when making best interest decisions.

Clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable people

- Consideration needs to be given in planning visits around people who are clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, or others in the service they live in, who may be at increased risk.
- This will need to be considered in the planning of visits.

New guidance referred to in order to produce this guidance:

Guidance – National Lockdown: Stay at Home – Updated 6 January 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>

Guidance – Covid-19: guidance for supported living – Updated 6 January 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-living-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-supported-living>