

What is Anne's Law?

Anne's Law is Scottish legislation and guidance which strengthens the rights of people living in adult and older people's care homes to stay connected with the people who are important to them. It is part of the Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 and is supported by Regulations and a Code of Practice.

Together with the Health and Social Care Standards, it recognises that meaningful contact is a fundamental right and essential to health, wellbeing, dignity and personhood.

Why was there a need for Anne's Law?

Anne's Law followed campaigning by families of people in care homes who were separated from their loved ones for lengthy periods during the Covid-19 pandemic, often with significant impacts on wellbeing. Their experiences highlighted the vital importance of maintaining meaningful connections.

What does it mean in practice?

Care homes must support meaningful connection as a normal part of everyday life. People living in care homes should be able to:

- see and spend time with people who matter to them
- go out and maintain connections with their community
- identify those who are most important to them as Essential Care Supporters
- have their individual needs and circumstances taken into account if a suspension of visiting is being considered.

Visiting should only be suspended where this is essential to prevent a serious risk to life, health or wellbeing. Even in those exceptional circumstances, care homes are still required to facilitate visits in some circumstances.

What is an Essential Care Supporter?

An Essential Care Supporter is one or more people identified by the resident as playing an important role in their wellbeing and care. This is likely to be a close family member or friend. They are not simply a visitor – they may provide emotional support and companionship, help with communication, or support with day-to-day care. It is likely that it would cause harm to the person if they could not see them.

What happens during exceptional circumstances?

Even during exceptional circumstances such as infectious outbreaks, people's rights to meaningful connection must be upheld as far as possible. Any restrictions on visits must be proportionate, time-limited, and balance safety with wellbeing and human rights.

Essential visits can still be supported even if other visiting is suspended. This includes where:

- the resident may die;
- their condition may deteriorate significantly;
- the suspension will or is likely to cause serious harm to the resident's health or wellbeing, and that harm outweighs the serious risk.

Anne's Law presumes that suspending visits by an Essential Care Supporter is likely to cause serious harm, and these visits should therefore continue in all but very rare circumstances.

During this time, good communication is important. Care homes must notify residents, their representatives and Essential Care Supporters of any visiting suspension and the reasons for this. They must also notify the Care Inspectorate and local chief social work officer.

Residents and their loved ones have the right to ask care home providers to review any decision to suspend visits.

Why it matters

Meaningful connection is essential to emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. Lack of connection can lead to loneliness, distress and poorer outcomes. Supporting people to stay connected helps them feel valued, maintain identity, and get the best out of life.

Where can I find out more?

Guidance and resources about meaningful connection are available on the Care Inspectorate's dedicated webpage.

The [Anne's Law code of practice](#) explains how Anne's Law should work day-to-day.