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Registered care home providers (adults)  
Adult care home staff

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Chief Social Work Officers  
Directors of Public Health,  
Executive Directors of Nursing  
ARHAI Scotland, Public Health Scotland, Care  
Inspectorate, Scottish Care, CCPS, COSLA

15 December 2021

Dear Colleagues

### **First Minister's Parliamentary COVID-19 statement - Updated advice on adult care home visiting**

We wanted to provide you with updated guidance on visits in and out of adult care homes. This follows the First Minister's Parliamentary COVID-19 statement yesterday relating to further population based guidance and measures to take effect from midnight on Friday (17 December) to stem the flow of transmission of the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2.

As you will appreciate this is a fast moving situation as updated estimates of Omicron's transmissibility in Scotland and vaccine response emerges. This has necessitated a further letter from us around additional protective measures for adult care homes to support visiting in and out of the home.

The guidance announced by the First Minister on 14 December 2021, for the general public was as follows:

*When socialising at home or in indoor public places individuals should limit the number of households represented in your group to a maximum of three households at any time, with everyone encouraged to take a lateral flow test before meeting.*

### **Additional protective measures for adult care homes**

The additional protective measures for adult care homes outlined below aim to balance the current Covid-19 risk and the need to keep people safe in line with clinical advice provided about the risks of Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 at this time, and what actions may help reduce the risk of infection or spread of infection. However they are based on the principle that, where it is safe to do so, people living in **care homes should continue be supported to see and spend time with those important to them as outlined in Open with Care visiting guidance**. Care home staff have worked hard to increase opportunities for people

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to more safely connect with others, recognising that this is essential to the wellbeing of both residents and their families / friends.

The additional measures also recognise the importance of ensuring all existing Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures are in place; all visitors should undertake a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test before attending; vaccinations and boosters are to be encouraged; and no-one with symptoms or identified as a close contact meet with residents in and out with the care home.

The additional measures are as follows:

### **Indoor visiting**

- Adult care homes should continue to support indoor visits. However in line with the recommendation for the general public to limit the number of households meeting indoors to three, we recommend that there should be no more than two households meeting with a resident at one time inside the care home.
- As before there should be no restrictions placed on frequency of visiting. This will be guided by care home arrangements, which take into account the ability of the home to manage the number of people attending at any one time to ensure safe visiting practices can be maintained.
- The duration of visits should not be limited if safe visiting practices can be maintained.
- Anyone who visits an adult care home – family/ friends (including children) and visiting professionals should undertake an LFD test before every visit (previously this was twice weekly for regular visitors). Exception in exceptional circumstances eg end of life / distress but all IPC measures to be followed.
- All visitors to care homes should wear a Fluid Resistant Surgical mask (FRSM) as per Open with Care guidance.
- For adult care homes with a COVID-19 outbreak, care homes can support residents to choose a named visitor who may visit the resident in their private room if the local Health Protection Team has agreed this can happen. See guidance: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): named visitor during outbreaks - letter and guidance for care home sector - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2020/12/20201216_coronavirus_named_visitor_during_outbreaks_letter_and_guidance_for_care_home_sector.pdf)

### **Visits out of the care home**

Adult Care homes who do not have a COVID-19 outbreak, should continue to support residents to undertake visits out, but the following is advised:

- residents are recommended to undertake an LFD test before leaving the care home and after returning from visits out (test every other day for up to 14 days), unless this would cause harm or distress. If the resident returns with symptoms, they must isolate as detailed in the Public Health Scotland care home guidance and get a PCR test.
- ask anyone meeting residents out with the care home to undertake regular LFD testing, and receive a negative LFD test on the day of the visit.
- encourage everyone – residents and those they are visiting - to have had their COVID-19 vaccinations including booster if eligible.
- residents are recommended to avoid mixing with a large number of people indoors.

- encourage everyone to follow good hand hygiene handwashing, face coverings and physical distancing wherever possible.

### **Activities within the care home / communal areas**

Adult care homes who do not have an outbreak should continue to support residents to participate in activities within the care home – these are an essential part of care home life and are vital to wellbeing. However, the following steps are recommended:

- as before large groups of visitors such as choirs and carol singers are currently not recommended inside the care home (existing advice).
- staff should continue to wear fluid resistant surgical masks (FRSM) and maintain 1m + physical distance from residents, each other and visitors (existing advice) unless providing personal care or for any other reason
- increase ventilation where possible, continue to maintain temperature comfort and follow the IPC measures as detailed [guidance contained in the Winter Respiratory IPC Addendum](#) .

It is worth noting that care homes will have put in place arrangements to support visiting and festive activities over the Christmas period. It is important that such arrangements continue as long as the protective measures outlined above can be maintained. Family/ friends are recommended to make arrangements with care homes in advance of visiting so the number of people attending at any one time can be managed safely taking into account the size and layout of the care home.

The measures outlined above are in addition to those set out in our letter of 9 December 2021 which strongly recommended daily LFD tests for all care home staff.

### **Advice for staff on activities and encounters**

With positive cases of the Omicron variant continuing to rise in Scotland, staff are asked to be especially careful at this time of year.

For your own protection, as well as that of your friends and family, colleagues and those you support, you will want to think about limiting social encounters in line with guidance for the general public. Attending social events, such a large gatherings, could increase your own risk of being infected or of bringing infection to the home. The risk of either catching the virus or passing it on to others remains very high given the high transmissibility of the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2. If you do meet people socially or attend social events, as outlined by the First Minister, please follow the recommended limit on the number of households represented in your group to a maximum of three and test before you go.

Wherever possible, vehicle sharing should be avoided with anyone outside of household or support bubbles. Where this can't be avoided the advice in the [winter respiratory addendum](#) should be followed. As required by the law, in line with the general public, unless exempt, staff must also wear face coverings if they are travelling on public transport.

We also continue to encourage staff and residents to get their booster vaccination as soon as possible as it will extend the protection gained from the first two doses and help reduce the risk of you needing to go to hospital due to coronavirus this winter.

The changing nature of the pandemic can mean that the law can quickly change. It is important that individual care home providers continue to check and comply with all legal

obligations on them to be sure the care home is a safe place to visit and with any health and safety or other obligations in respect of it being a safe workplace. This guidance does not supersede or provide any advice on those matters. Independent advice should be sought on compliance with any of these matters if needed.

Finally, this is an evolving picture and it is likely that we will need to provide you with updated advice. In an effort to support adult care homes to be kept up to date on guidance and protective measures in relation to winter transmission and Omicron we have [condensed the guidance issued in letters since 9 December 2021 into one webpage](#). This webpage will be reviewed and updated as required. Additionally we are in the process of updating our, and NHS inform, webpages to reflect recent advice issued on:

- [Adult Care Home LFD staff testing](#)
- [social care and community based testing overview](#)
- [Self-isolation for social care staff](#)
- [NHS inform guidance on exemption for self-isolation](#)

Please check the web links as these pages will be updated regularly

In the meantime, we would like once again to thank you and your staff for the exceptional work you are doing in responding to the pandemic.



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