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Registered care home providers (adults)
Chief Executives NHS Boards and Local Authorities
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24 February 2021

Dear Colleague

Open with Care – Supporting Meaningful Contact in Adult Care Homes – publication of visiting guidance

Thank you for your continued efforts in dealing with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We are writing to you to share details of updated visiting guidance ‘Open with Care: Supporting Meaningful Contact in Adult Care Homes’ which was published today at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-care-homes-visiting-guidance/>

We recognise that significant steps to safeguard care homes have been taken, which now support a return to indoor visiting, against a backdrop of recent decreases in community prevalence and COVID-19 outbreaks in care homes. Thanks to your efforts, good progress has been made in our vaccination and enhanced testing programmes. These programmes sit alongside multiple other protections, including infection prevention and control measures, which, if maintained and rigorously sustained, can now enable safe, indoor visiting from early March (or earlier, if care homes are ready). Everyone living in adult care homes, no matter their age, health, or otherwise, should now be supported to have meaningful contact with their families and loved ones.

The Scottish Government has therefore worked with a range of partners, including provider representative groups and Directors of Public Health, to develop guidance which aims to maximise meaningful contact between residents and their loved ones as the pandemic continues. The guidance takes account of feedback from care home providers and other stakeholders as well as emerging evidence from across the world which has shown that prolonged cessation of visiting has had significant negative impact on the well-being of both care home residents and their families. It outlines the contributions of all to make this change a success.

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As many of you will testify, visits by family members or next of kin are core to the well-being of residents, and contribute significantly to residents' care by providing social interaction, engagement and activities. In view of this, the WHO ad hoc COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guidance Development Group has unanimously agreed that visiting should be supported as long as a range of IPC measures are in place to prevent the risk that visitors may contribute to COVID-19 transmission in care homes.¹

We recommend an incremental approach to maximising the quality and duration of contact with loved ones, starting with up to two visits per week per resident (from up to two designated visitors, one at a time). You can take advice from local oversight arrangements when considering relaxations to indoor and outdoor contact with loved ones, to ensure that conditions locally and in the care home are suitable and safe.

We appreciate that you will want to implement the return to indoor visiting as soon as possible and recommend that you start to make the necessary arrangements as soon as possible to put this guidance into place from early March, or earlier, if you are ready. Arrangements will include updating your visiting policy and risk assessments, as well as planning to reinstate visitor testing using the Lateral Flow Device tests supplied to your care home. Note that, in relation to updating your risk assessment, you need only alert your local health protection team if this identifies issues of concern.

There will be some care homes that need to put in additional work to satisfy themselves they meet all the safety measures - in these cases direct support will be provided by national and local partners.

Open with Care' – supporting meaningful contact in care homes –workshops

A series of workshops has been organised for providers and partners to support delivery of 'Open with Care', dates and links below. These events will also allow you to raise any questions or concerns. Anyone interested should sign up on the day (note - places are on a first come, first served basis) and we would also encourage oversight partners to attend.

24th Feb 1-2pm – [Click here to join the meeting](#)

26th Feb 10-11am – [Click here to join the meeting](#)

1st March 3-4pm – [Click here to join the meeting](#)

4th March 4-5pm – [Click here to join the meeting](#)

8th March 4-5pm – [Click here to join the meeting](#)

12th March 10-11am - [Click here to join the meeting](#)

15th March 4-5pm – [Click here to join the meeting](#)

19th March 1-2pm – [Click here to join the meeting](#)

(Continued)

¹ [WHO-2019-nCoV-IPC long term care-2021.1-eng.pdf](#)

Open with Care – Frequently Asked Questions

We have today also published a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document for Open with Care. This is for everyone involved in resuming meaningful contact in care homes, whether a resident, family member, a visiting professional, care home provider or other partner.

The FAQ includes questions people might want to understand the answers to in a bit more detail than the guidance provides and is available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-care-homes-visiting-guidance/>

Safety Huddle Tool Update

To enable support, monitoring and oversight to resuming meaningful contact with residents, the Safety Huddle Tool is being updated. From 25th February, new questions around visiting will be in place. These will now ask about whether, and to what degree, you are supporting indoor visiting, with an escalation to local oversight if appropriate as is currently the case for essential visiting. We appreciate that, as above, you will have a short period of preparing to resume contact with residents.

The existing questions around essential and outdoor visiting also remain.

Essential visits

We would like to take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of applying essential visiting guidelines flexibly and compassionately with individual needs considered on their own merits. Essential visits should be protected and supported at all times, including when there is an outbreak in the care home. These visits are where it is imperative that a friend or relative is supported to see their loved one and are not subject to the same time limits as routine indoor visits. It might include circumstances where a loved one may be deteriorating, where it is clear that a person's health and wellbeing is changing for the worse, where visiting may help with communication difficulties, to ease significant personal stress or other pressing circumstances. They should also be used to prevent people's health and wellbeing declining, as well as to support it to be restored, or for valuable time in circumstances approaching end of life.

Information for residents and their family and friends

NHS Inform have today also published information and guidance for residents, family and friends outlining the new Open with Care guidance and the safeguards in place for visiting as safely as possible. Please let residents and people visiting know about this new guidance, which is available at: www.nhsinform.scot/openwithcare.

(Continued)

We hope all of this information and the updated guidance is helpful and that you are assured of our continued support. Your local oversight teams remain an important contact for any support and advice around planning for a return to indoor visiting.

Thank you once again for your continued efforts and please also pass on our sincere thanks to your staff.



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