

Dear Sir /Madam

National Care Group COVID-19 Response

I am writing to you to outline our position in respect of visiting arrangements following new Government advice in respect of *care homes* in England launched on 8 March 2021.

We continue with the belief that throughout the pandemic we fully recognise the important part relatives and friends play in the lives of the individuals we support but that our primary objective is to keep everyone safe and well. This continues to be at the forefront of decisions we make, and I believe this can be evidenced at every level within our organisation.

Delivering the right support at this difficult time

As of 8 March 2021, this Governmental guidance replaces previous guidance on care home visiting. It applies to care homes for working age and for older adults. The guidance does not specifically apply to supported living situations but the principles it applies are relevant and will therefore form the basis of our approach in all service settings.

These principles are as follows:

- All NCG Individuals we support will be able to nominate a single named visitor who will be able to enter the care home for regular visits. These visitors must be tested using rapid lateral flow tests before every visit, must wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow all other infection control measures (which the care home will guide them on) during visits. Visitors and residents are advised to keep physical contact to a minimum. Visitors and residents may wish to hold hands, but should bear in mind that any contact increases the risk of transmission. With this in mind we would ask that at this stage there should not be close physical contact such as hugging.
- The named visitor should be consistent and we will retain the right to seek clarification on those identified as the visitor if we feel that the spirit of the guidance is not being respected.
- NCG will continue to offer visits to other friends or family members with arrangements such as outdoor visiting or behind windows
- It is not mandatory that the visitor or the resident should have been vaccinated. However, it is strongly recommended that all visitors and residents take up the opportunity to be vaccinated when they are invited to do so through the national programme.
- Where COVID – 19 cases are suspected or confirmed, visiting arrangements must be reviewed and amended to restrict to only essential visits.

As a result of the guidance issued and the expectation that providers will facilitate visits in line with the principles above, I can advise that if you wish to proceed with a visit you should talk to your usual contact within the service (either in a care home or in supported living) to discuss the situation locally and to establish how to proceed. All services will have local procedures in place, and these will be explained to you. We will do everything that we can to facilitate a visit as long as the above principles can be met and where we would recommend a different or revised approach this can be discussed with you.

We are here to provide support

Vision: To be the best and most trusted care and support provider in the UK

Values: Passion | Empowerment | Respect | Collaboration

If following your discussion with your normal service contact, you are not happy with the proposed way forward please do contact the National Care Group Regional Operations Manager in your area for advice. Their details will be provided to you upon request by your normal service contact.

I empathise that not being able to see relatives as you would normally, can be distressing. The guidance from the Government enables us to continue to work collaboratively with yourselves and your relatives to find the safest way for you to meet.

The individuals we support and our staff continue to act in a manner that has been incredibly effective in minimising the rates of infection in the majority of areas. We continue our efforts at this time to balance the needs of maintaining family relationships against the risk of infection rates increasing to a point where our major aim of keeping everyone safe and well becomes unmanageable.

Thank you once again for your continued support at this difficult time.

James Allen
Chief Executive