

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2021

Dear Sir /Madam

### **National Care Group COVID-19 Response**

I am writing to you to outline our position in respect of visiting arrangements for individuals we support within supported living settings following the government's announced roadmap which details the easing of restrictions.

It is great to see the 4-step roadmap which we have all been advised to follow in order to offer a route back to more normal life. National Care Group 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 and adhering to the government guidance will hopefully enable us to continue to keep everyone safe and well.

In addition to the detail within the 4-step roadmap, the government has updated the guidance which relates specifically to supported living care services with which we also need to adhere.

### **Delivering the right support at this difficult time**

As from 29<sup>th</sup> March outdoor gatherings (including in private gardens) of either 6 people (the Rule of 6) or 2 households will be allowed. This will enable outdoor only visits to take place either within a public space or within the garden of the service, if applicable.

A maximum of 5 visitors from different households can therefore visit one individual supported in an outdoor setting at the same time. In order to ensure we remain compliant we would therefore ask you to pre-arrange this visit with the local manager to avoid any clash of timings with other visitors. If your visit has not been pre-arranged and on arrival the legal numbers allowed have been reached you will still be able to meet however this will need to be away from the service.

Whilst visiting you will be asked to minimise contact with any other individual at the service or staff member however, if avoidance is not possible then face-to-face contact should be for less than 15 minutes and at least 2 metres apart. Where needed, conversations with staff can be arranged over the phone following an in-person visit.

In addition to the above, the government guidelines for supported living care services recommend that a testing regime is put in place to test visitors prior to them entering the service to reduce the risk of introduction of infection through asymptotically infected people. This testing should be undertaken using a Lateral Flow Device Test (LFD Test) which in a non-invasive procedure providing a Covid result within approximately 15 minutes.

This testing can only be completed by a trained member of staff and visitors are unable to take the test kits home to self-test. In order to ensure that there are trained staff available to perform this test it is even more important that your visit is pre-arranged and that you allow an additional 30 minutes to enable this test to be performed prior to the visit taking place.

If on completion of this test a positive result is returned your visit will not be able to go ahead and you will be advised to leave the premises to go home and self-isolate, avoiding public transport wherever possible. Further to this you must follow government [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#). You will need to then complete a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction test (PCR) which will be provided to you by the service.

We will be putting plans in place to undertake LFD Testing on site however, where we are unable to conduct all testing on site visitors may be asked to attend a community asymptomatic rapid LFD testing site on the day of their visit and present their result from this test on arrival at the service.

It is not mandatory that visitors should have been vaccinated however, it is strongly recommended that all visitors take up the opportunity to be vaccinated when that are invited to do so through the national programme.

Where COVID-19 cases are suspected or confirmed within the service visiting arrangement will be reviewed and may need to be restricted to essential visits only.

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 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 appreciate these new guidelines may be frustrating and will need for your visit to be planned in advance however maintaining the safety of all involved is of paramount importance to us..

### **We are here to provide support**

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 these additional measures may be frustrating however 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.

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

James Allen  
Chief Executive