

## COVID-19 Visiting Policy

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that visiting to our care homes is facilitated in line with government guidance and public health England guidelines and the risk of transmission of covid-19 is reduced as far as reasonably practicable.

This policy will be kept under constant review as government guidance and local and national lockdowns occur, when it may be necessary to restrict the type of visits that can be facilitated.

### Scope

Whilst it is crucial that we do all we can to protect our vulnerable residents from the virus, it is also necessary to facilitate safe visiting as we recognise how vitally important contact with loved ones can be for all concerned.

### Responsibilities

The Matron, in conjunction with the Infection Control Lead, has responsibility for ensuring that measures are in place to minimise the risk of transmission of the virus.

A Visiting Co-ordinator role has been created to assist with all aspects of visiting.

### Virtual visits

Telephone calls and virtual visits using skype, zoom, etc, are the preferred option wherever these are appropriate, including use of the large mobile screen for skype visits. To connect with the tablets the email address for skype is [unitname@hillcrofthome.co.uk](mailto:unitname@hillcrofthome.co.uk). To connect with the large screens the email address is [virtualhomename@hillcrofthome.co.uk](mailto:virtualhomename@hillcrofthome.co.uk)

### Outdoor, Window & screen visits

Outdoor visits will be facilitated by appointment, weather permitting. An outdoor visiting area has been established, separate to the communal outdoor space for all residents' use, which can be accessed without entering the home.

Window visits are by appointment, at the designated window areas that have been assessed for safe access for both visitor and resident. The window must remain closed at all times to ensure there is no droplet transmission, and a two-way audio device or mobile phone may be used to enable the resident and visitor to communicate effectively.

A designated indoor visiting area has been established at each home, with Perspex screens installed to reduce the risk of viral transmission. Intercom systems are used to aid communication and avoid the need to raise voices and further risk transmission.

Indoor visiting areas are accessed externally by visitors so that there is no need to pass through the home. In homes where this could not be accommodated within the main home, an external visitor pod has been created.

All visits will be by appointment only, booked through Reception, for up to 2 persons from the same household (or support bubble). As only one visit may be facilitated at any one time, visits will be limited to 30 minutes to allow the maximum number of visits to take place. As there will be no access to the main home, toilet facilities or refreshments will not be available.

Prior to a visit, visitors will be required to complete a visitor assessment checklist to ensure that they:

- are well and COVID-19 symptom free
- have not had contact with any confirmed/suspected COVID-19 cases in the last 10 days
- agree to maintain social distancing and wear a face mask, that we will provide, for the duration of the visit

Visitors will be met by the Visiting Co-ordinator who will complete pre visit assessment including temperature, symptom and COVID-19 contact check, and issue PPE. Visitors must sanitise their hands prior to donning PPE.

The visiting co-ordinator will be available to support residents during the visit where necessary to maintain safety.

Following the visit, the area will be thoroughly cleaned using C2 and a cleaning checklist will be completed by the visiting co-ordinator.

### Indoor contact visits

Indoor contact visits are subject to a negative test result being achieved immediately prior to the visit, however, a negative LFT result does not in itself fully eliminate the risk of transmission, and these will only be used in conjunction with other infection control methods i.e., hand hygiene, PPE and social distancing.

Current government guidance permits residents to nominate constant visitors for contact visits, subject to individual risk assessment.

Visits will be by appointment only.

Visitors will be met by the Visiting Co-ordinator and who complete pre visit assessment including temperature, symptom and COVID-19 contact check, and issue PPE (gloves, apron and a fluid resistant mask). Visitors must sanitise their hands prior to donning PPE.

### On site Testing

Visitors will be shown to the testing area where the Visiting Co-ordinator will explain the testing process obtain consent and issue the swab.

Visitors will self- swab their throat and nose and hand the swab to the co-ordinator who will process the test.

Visitors must wait in the designated area for 30 minutes to get the result. During this time basic infection control instruction will be given by the Visiting Co-ordinator if necessary.

The visitors' details and test results must be submitted to the government portal using a mobile device. A tablet will be available and the visiting co-ordinator will be able to assist to register the details if necessary.

If the test is inconclusive, the visit will not be able to go ahead. Another test will need to be undertaken but, due to allocated time slots, it may not be possible to do this straight away and another appointment must be booked. A screen or window visit could go ahead at this time, subject to availability.

If the result is positive, visitors will be required to undertake a confirmatory PCR test using the national booking system online. Visitors must go home immediately and self- isolate, along with the rest of their household, for 10 days following the positive result.

If the result is negative, visitors will be escorted directly to the allocated visiting area (either the resident's room or a designated space away from other residents and staff). The Visiting Co-ordinator will open all internal doors to reduce contact with surfaces.

### Self-testing at home

Whilst testing on site at the care home is preferable for assurance purposes, some visitors may be confident, and find it more convenient, to test at home before the visit. Visitors wishing to test at home must do so using the packs of 7 test kits issued by the home.

Before issuing kits, the visiting co-ordinator will supervise at least one test on site and provide support to ensure visitors are confident conducting the tests at home and that they are being completed and reported satisfactorily.

A record of issue and competence checklist, and will be completed for test kits provided for use at home.

Home tests must be done on the day of the visit and the result reported using the care homes Unique Organisation Number (UON), before beginning the visit. Once the visitor has reported the test, they will receive confirmation of their result by text message and email to show proof of result. Visitors must show proof of a negative test result before every visit i.e.

- the email or text from NHS Test and Trace and
- the date-stamped photo of the test cartridge itself

If visitors are not able to produce a negative test, they will be asked to reschedule or be prepared to take the test on site.

### During the Visit

Appropriate PPE must be worn for the duration of the visit. Visitors should 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. Close contact e.g., hugging is not recommended for named visitors, but the risks of this are mitigated by both parties being fully vaccinated.

Refreshments are unable to be provided as this would necessitate the removal of face masks and additional contact with staff and equipment.

Visitors must not leave the visiting area during the visit. The Visiting Co-ordinator will check in periodically or will be available to provide support during the visit if necessary, to maintain safety.

In order to maximise the number of visits that can be facilitated, visits will be limited to 30 mins.

At the end of the visit, the Visiting Co-ordinator will escort the visitor from the visiting area assisting them to appropriately take off and dispose of PPE.

All touch surfaces in the testing/waiting/visiting areas will be cleaned using C2 between visitors. If a visitor tests positive, and the visit is aborted, a deep clean of the testing area must take place before the next visitor can enter. A cleaning checklist will be completed by the visiting co-ordinator.

### Children

Any children visiting must be able to follow IPC measures carefully, including social distancing, PPE use (where appropriate), and advice on minimising physical contact.

Children aged 11 and over should wear the same PPE as adult visitors. Children under the age of 3 should not wear masks for safety reasons.

Visits including babies and very young children (under 2) may take place with the agreement of the Matron.

### Exceptional Circumstances

If a resident is approaching the very end of life relatives will be contacted by Matron to make arrangements for an appropriate visit in the resident's room.

Visitors must complete the visitor's checklist and be met at the nearest entrance of the home to the resident's room (this may be a fire exit).

Visitors must sanitise their hands on entry, they will be issued with PPE and escorted to the room by a member of staff who will open all internal doors to reduce contact with surfaces. Visitors should not leave the resident's room until the end of the visit, and they should use the call bell to alert a member of staff if necessary.

Visitors will be assisted to doff and dispose of PPE appropriately, and will again be escorted to the nearest exit.

Following the visit all touch surfaces in the resident's room (including the call bell) will be cleaned with C2.

### Essential Care Givers

Residents may need some element of care and support that could only ever be provided by someone with a unique personal relationship with the resident, perhaps formed over many years. This is the type of care or support that could not be provided easily, or not in quite the same way, by even the most highly skilled and committed professional care home staff

Residents can choose to nominate an essential care giver, who can visit more often, subject to a full risk assessment. If the resident lacks capacity, a best interest process will be followed.

As contact with staff and other residents should be minimised, these visits are unable to be facilitated in communal areas.

Essential care givers must follow the same testing arrangements, and the same PPE and infection control arrangements, as care home staff and it is strongly recommended that essential care givers receive 2 doses of vaccine before conducting visits.

### Visits Out

Visits out of the home will be facilitated by prior arrangement, subject to an individual risk assessment taking into account:

- the vaccination status of residents, visitors and staff
- testing of those accompanying the resident or who they intend to meet on their visit out
- levels of infection in the community
- variants of concern in the community
- where the resident is going and what activities they will take part in while on the visit
- the mode of transport that residents intend to use

If, following assessment, the visit is deemed high-risk, 14 days self-isolation will be required on return. In most instances the detrimental effects of self-isolation would outweigh the benefits of the visit.

Where there is high, or rapidly rising, levels of infection, and/or where there is evidence of variants of concern or variants under investigation in the local area, additional restrictions on visiting may be advised by the local authority.

On the day of the visit, visitors taking residents out will be required to complete the Visitors Assessment Checklist and provide a negative test. Guidance on how to minimise risks during visits out will be issued and should be followed to protect the residents, visitors and staff.

### Gifts

Any gifts that are brought in must be able to be sanitised or quarantined for 72 hours before they can be given to the resident.

### Outbreaks

It may be necessary to temporarily suspend in-person visiting if there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in the home.

If there are two or more confirmed cases within a 14 day period, the home will be considered to be in outbreak. During active outbreaks visiting will not be permitted (except in exceptional circumstances). Visiting will resume at the end of outbreak (14 days from latest positive case). Outbreaks may be extended to 28 days if a variant of concern is involved.

### Lockdowns

The type of visit that can be facilitated is subject current tier or lockdown status.

### Records

A record of all visitors to the home must be retained temporarily for Track & Trace purposes.

Completed cleaning checklists are submitted to Services Department

The Exceptional Circumstances/Contact Visiting/Visits Out Risk Assessment and Visitors Assessment Checklist are held on the resident's record on CMS