

Hertfordshire County Council
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Dear Family/Friend

Protecting your loved ones: Why visitors need to take extra care to protect residents of care homes, nursing homes and supported living facilities

Although as a country we are slowly lifting restrictions on the general population that were in place to stop the spread of COVID-19, we still need to take extra care to protect people who live in residential and nursing homes, supported living environments, and those who work with them.

We're writing to ask you to help us protect them by taking a few very simple steps.

Why should we do this?

- People in residential homes are at much greater risk of becoming very seriously ill and dying from COVID-19 if they get it
- Stopping COVID-19 from getting into care homes will save lives
- It is much easier to stop the virus getting into a home than it is to stop it spreading when it does get in

How does it spread?

COVID-19 spreads largely by droplets of infected breath getting into the nose or mouth of non-infected people or getting onto surfaces which people then touch and carry the virus into their mouth or nose when they touch their face. This happens even if you don't have symptoms. We want to stop this.

You may feel you're not infected. But it's possible that you or another visitor could be infected without knowing it, or indeed have your hands contaminated by the virus on arrival to visit, and treating every visitor the same is a sure way to reduce the chances the virus has to pass onto residents.

What should we do?

We're asking you to take some very simple steps:

1. If you have or anyone in your home has symptoms like a dry cough, sore throat, fever or have noticed a loss of or change in your sense of smell or taste, then **PLEASE DO NOT VISIT** until you have been told it is safe to do so. If in doubt, ask the home for advice.

2. If you or anyone in your home has been told to self-isolate, or you think you have had recent contact (**in the last 14 days**) with anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19, **PLEASE DO NOT VISIT** until you have been told it is safe to do so. If in doubt, ask the home for advice
3. When you visit, please wash your hands or use hand sanitiser carefully on arrival
4. When you visit, we encourage you, if at all possible, to either walk or use your own transport. Avoiding public transport further reduces your chances of coming into contact with people who are infected. If you need assistance with transport, please ask the home for advice. If you do need to use public transport or a taxi, then we advise that you wear a face covering when travelling, touch as few surfaces as possible and wash or sanitise your hands thoroughly when you arrive at the home and BEFORE touching any surfaces inside the home.
5. Please follow any instructions given to you by the home. These are designed to protect your loved one. These may include wearing a face mask or a face covering and staying two metres away. Two metre distance remains much safer than one metre.

Outdoor visits

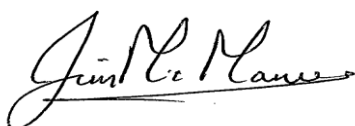
Outdoor visits (eg. in gardens) and staying 2 metres (6 feet) away from the people you visit reduce the risk of passing the virus on because it makes it very difficult for the virus particles to spread to your loved one. Indoor visits where you can't keep that distance are riskier for your loved one. This is why some homes may still stop indoor visits. 2metres is safer than 1m to reduce spread of infections.

Virtual Meetings

Ask the home if you can use virtual means of visiting, such as using FaceTime or Skype. Taking these measures may mean that this may inconvenience you. It may mean you can't visit as often as you would like, or that you can't express physical affection such as a hug, a kiss or holding hands in the way you want to. Similarly, the distance measures or wearing masks may feel artificial or a barrier. We don't want to come between you and your loved ones, but we do want to make sure that we do everything we can to protect them from infection. But these measures are every bit as important in saving the lives of people in the home you're visiting as ensuring they get good quality care.

Together we can stop this virus. Together we can protect our loves ones.

Yours sincerely



Jim McManus
Director of Public Health