

Director of Public Health

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Registered Managers
All Care Homes

Hertfordshire
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Public Health
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Date: 3rd August 2020

Dear Colleagues

Arrangements for Family and for Non-Essential Care Home Visits during continued viral spread

Following on from the national guidance I am writing to outline the approach Hertfordshire will be taking regarding family and non-essential visitors in care homes. Hertfordshire County Council are required to set a clear approach to all Care Homes on when visiting should and shouldn't happen. This letter only covers family and non-essential visitors coming into the home.

I am very happy for you to share this letter with family, visitors and residents if you need to, though I have drafted another letter.

The restrictions put in place by Government have been challenging for many residents and families over the past few months. But if we can make family visits possible safely, we should seek to do so unless there are circumstances where the virus is circulating in such a way that it makes visiting unsafe. **Every person visiting a home should be regarded as a risk of transmitting COVID-19** so that clear precautions can be taken to mitigate risk and enable visits safely.

Unfortunately at the time of writing we are in a situation where the virus is still circulating in the community. This means that we need to continue the significant efforts you have made to disrupt and prevent the virus transmitting widely in care homes. At the same time, visits are important for all those in care settings. I want to support you to be able to allow visitors as safely as possible, when appropriate to do so, and reduce the risk of infection within the home. The checklist and guideline for visitors attached should help us achieve this.

Key Measures- what does open to non-essential visitors mean?

- It is important that visitors to care homes should always continue to stay alert and maintain social distancing (2 metres).
- Wherever possible all visits should take place in communal gardens or an outside space and social distancing (2 metres) should be maintained.
 - Care homes should also consider window visits and drive through visits.
- To limit the spread of infection visitors should be encouraged to keep personal interactions to the minimum, face to face contact (hug, handshake) should be

discouraged. Care homes should ensure that they have appropriate levels of staffing to manage visits.

- visitors to wear face masks/face coverings;
- require visitors to wash their hands/use hand sanitizer when entering and leaving the care home/ outside space;
- Look at introducing a time limit on the length of the visit;
- Use bookable time slots so that visits can be managed appropriately;
- Use the garden/outdoor space if at all possible so that visitors do not have to enter the building
- Be clear that appointments may need to be cancelled at short notice due to weather or if there was a suspicion of transmission of COVID19 within the care home.

Opening Homes - Checklist

Our priority before opening Care homes to visitors is to ensure all mitigations and processes are in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19. To enable this to happen, all care homes and care settings are required to complete the Residential Care Services Visiting Arrangements Checklist.

The completed checklist must be sent to: assistance@hcpa.info No later than 15th August 2020. The checklist outlines all the key elements that a Care Home must have completed before opening the home to visits. You may be required by the County Council to close to non-essential visitors if you have not completed the risk assessment or your risk assessment is not satisfactory.

When you should close to non-essential visitors?

Since the virus is still circulating widely, and as a nation we are progressively easing those restrictions which can be eased, we will see increases in virus transmission and outbreaks in some areas.

This means there may be circumstances where homes must close to non-essential visitors. The circumstances under which this must happen are:

1. Where there is a symptomatic resident the home must close immediately, and a test must be completed.
 - The home can reopen once they have had no new cases for 28 days. Or if the symptomatic staff or resident is negative
2. Where there is a reported positive test result at a care setting, the care home should close to family and friends and other non-essential visitors with immediate effect. These actions are being taken to support the residents in your care and to ensure the safety of staff.
 - The home can reopen once they have had no new cases for 28 days. Or if the symptomatic staff or resident is negative
3. Where there is local intelligence that the prevalence of Covid19 has increased in the community,
 - this will be communicated via email to relevant care homes through the care home outbreak cell. You will be required to confirm receipt and additional phone calls may be made. Further communication will also be shared when it is possible for homes to reopen to external visitors;
4. Where local restrictions or measures including enforcement and prohibition or closure (eg of public space) orders are made using powers under the

Coronavirus Regulations 2020 or Public Health Act 1984 by either the Director of Public Health or the District or Borough Council.

5. Where Local, Regional or National measures are introduced by Central Government
 - o Again for 4 and 5 above this will be communicated via email to relevant care homes through the care home outbreak cell. Further communication will also be shared when it is possible for homes to reopen to external visitors.

Please be assured enforcement measures such as local closures (which many people call “lockdown”) are a last resort, and we will, in the event that there is any widespread need to close, give you as much notice as we are able to.

Please update your contact details

In order to help us operate these arrangements I would ask you to provide assistance@hcpa.info with an email address (that is checked on a regular basis). We will use this address to notify you of any local restriction situations.

Help and assistance

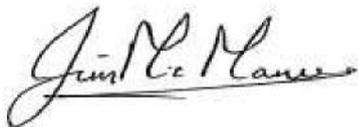
If you have any further questions, then please call the HCPA provider hub on 01707 708 108 or email assistance@hcpa.info

Residents leaving care homes

Currently there is no national guidance for residents who go out of the Care Home. Therefore, risk assessments will need to be undertaken for relatives to take residents out of the home and ensure a clear process is in place on return. Advice and assistance can be had on these from the addresses above and when guidance has been produced by government we will make sure this is disseminated. We will work on a risk assessment checklist for these.

May I finally thank you once again for the heroic and vital work you have done throughout this pandemic to care for some of our most vulnerable people.

Yours sincerely



Jim McManus
Director of Public Health

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk