

Visiting in care homes

Frequently Asked Questions



Last year we couldn't visit our loved one for long periods of time, could this happen again?

All our plans are subject to local Variants of Concern prevalence and local Public Health guidance. We see the number of COVID-19 rising across counties currently, so what we do and how we do it, will be further determined by local information.

Throughout the pandemic we have always followed the guidelines that the government published to reduce transmission and mitigate the risk of outbreaks in care homes. Every outbreak, no matter where in the country, will no doubt reduce or stop visits into care homes.

We promise to keep you updated throughout this constantly changing landscape.

The government says anyone can visit care homes now – can our family all pop up to see Mum at the same time – there's 7 of us?

Currently, the UK is seeing cases of COVID-19 rise on a daily basis. With this in mind, we want to do all that we can to keep the people who live and work in our care homes as safe as possible by mitigating the risk of outbreaks.

To do this we need your help, as we adhere to the following guidelines Excelcare has in place:

- Two visitors from the same household can visit at the same time - subject to the visiting arrangements specific to each care home or any local guidance issued by Directors of Public Health. Children under 11 from this household can also visit at the same time, providing that they remain in the visiting area alongside their supervising adult at all times.
- We will continue to support all care home residents to nominate an **essential care giver**, who will be able to visit the person, even if they are quarantining. This role is not included within the numbers quoted above.
- A booking system, to help the care home manage and support visits to the care home. As an example, in a care home of 90 residents, who have large families of around 5 people, the booking system will help to ensure that the home does not have 450 people visiting per day.

It is important to remember that for every single contact – we are exposing the person in the home to ten other people's exposure to COVID-19 on average.

When can I visit my loved one?

Please contact the individual care home to arrange your visit in advance and to discuss available dates and times.

Pre-arranged visits enable us to deploy team members who will ensure they sterilise the area after your visit – whether this is in a designated space, or a bedroom.

If my relative is vaccinated – why can't we all visit at the same time?

There have been several cases of people who have previously contracted COVID-19 being re-infected – even after receiving a full vaccination. COVID-19 has had a negative effect on the people who live in our homes, where recovery has been slow. The vulnerability of these people is our main concern.

We do need to continue to keep people as safe as we can, despite being vaccinated. While vaccination may prevent severe symptoms, we must not think this means there will be no symptoms in the older and more frail population.

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What is our preferred method with regard to LFD testing?

- **At home** - uploading result to our internal form and Test & Trace portal (*please ask a member of the home's administration team, who will share this link with you if you do not already have it*).
- **At the care home** - in exceptional circumstances. There will be a 30-minute wait outside the home for the result as per the timescale in the government guidance.

Will you need to take my temperature?

Yes, a team member will welcome you to the care home, take your temperature and also provide you with appropriate level of PPE for your visit.

Do I still need to wear PPE?

Yes, PPE supports the reduction in transmission of COVID-19 and we ask that you wear a mask at all times within the home. Where you wish to hold someone's hand, although not ideal, the use of clean gloves (given to you on arrival) is the safest way to do this at present.

I am fully vaccinated, when visiting do I still have to wear PPE?

At this time, PPE must still be used; the vaccination status of the visitor or the resident will not affect the need for this.

Do I need to wear an apron?

This will depend on the activity you do with your loved one, the care home team will support you to don the correct PPE for your visit.

Do I still need to use hand sanitiser or wash my hands?

Yes, you will still need to sanitise your hands when entering and exiting the care home.

So, if my relative has the vaccine, can I come in and hug them?

At the moment, while we learn more about the protection that COVID-19 vaccines provide under real-life conditions, it is important for everyone to continue using **all the tools** available to us. Everyone loves a hug, so it's important to remember to avoid face-to-face contact should your loved one hug you.

Can I make a cup of tea while I am inside the home, like I did before the pandemic?

Currently this isn't possible as visits are taking place in designated spaces, and movement around the care home has been limited for visitors. This is to support the care home in following strict Infection Prevention and Control measures.

Can I use the toilet inside the home?

There will be a dedicated toilet available to visitors, please ask a team member if you would like to use the facilities.

Are visits in a person's room encouraged?

Where a visit cannot take place in the designated area due to a person's frailty, it is still important to us that these visits happen. Under these circumstances, a visit can be arranged in the person's room, which we will support and encourage. Please note that more than 2 visitors in a person's room at any one time is difficult to manage – due to air circulation increasing the risk of infection.

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Are visiting pods still in use?

Yes, our pods are open for visits every day and can be booked in advance with a member of the care home team.

Do I need to wear a mask if I'm visiting in the pod area - I'm already behind a screen?

Yes.

Are garden visits still encouraged?

Yes, please do make use of our lovely gardens especially in sunny weather! Remember your hats & sunscreen!

Do I need to wear a mask in the garden?

If seated for your visit and at a distance of at least 2 meters, you will not need to wear a mask during a garden visit. We do ask that you wear a mask when walking around.

Is there a time-limit to visits?

To ensure every resident has the opportunity to have visitors (*remembering the 90 bed home*) we do need to put some limit to the visiting time – this enables us to plan visits ahead and also to ensure the team are available to support the visit.

This is dependent on the individual care home and the day of the visit, but generally 30 minutes is the maximum visiting time. This depends on where the visit is taking place, the number of visitors on any one day and the resident's own needs & ability to sit through a visit.

My loved one isn't actively dying at the moment, but is likely in their last few months/year of life – can I visit him/her in his/her room?

Each person's journey is different, and we work hard at ensuring we engage relatives to be part of people's lives – we will always ensure you spend time with a loved one who is coming to the end of their journey – speak with the team in the home to discuss this further.

How confident are you that what you are doing will keep my loved one safe?

We have always stated that we will keep people as safe as possible, but we need your help too.

Throughout the pandemic, all our team members put in an incredible effort as they continue to put the people who live and work in the care homes first by:

- Implementing the changing guidelines set out by the UK government
- Managing and mitigating the risk of transmission as much as possible
- Following thorough risk assessments, guidance and policies
- Undertaking additional training in Infection Prevention and Control
- Using appropriate PPE at all times, even in exceptionally hot weather
- Enhancing cleaning protocols in all homes
- Continuing to show up day-in and day-out despite their own personal fears and concerns

How can I contact my relative at this time?

Our care homes utilise tablets and/or dedicated mobile phones daily, making it easier for friends and relatives to continue socialising with their loved ones by phone, video calls and online messaging. We have produced accessible guidance on the use of tablets and technology to keep the people living in our care homes connected with their loved ones.

Remember, your loved ones also enjoying receiving letters, cards and drawings from their family and local communities.

How are you supporting residents' wellbeing?

Wellbeing is our priority. To support this, we enable people to socialise and enjoy physical, mental, spiritual and cultural activities.

Throughout the pandemic, activities organised by our Lifestyle Coordinators have continued to take place, however, visits from local community groups and entertainers have been limited. All activities are based on careful risk assessments and adhere to social distancing guidelines.

Our care homes currently have a revised weekly activity plan in place. This includes ways of keeping everyone active, including a number of virtual activities and entertainment sessions, whilst ensuring that the group activities are smaller, adhering to physical distancing advice and cleanliness routines.

Our team members who specialise in lifestyle and wellbeing ensure that everybody feels included, providing additional one-to-one support to people who are supported mainly in their rooms.

