



- COVID-19 Guidance -


**Visiting your loved one
in an Excelcare home
during the pandemic**





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1 - Introduction

An important part of wellbeing for residents living in our care homes is being able to socialise and see their loved ones. We recognise that and continue to apply a responsive approach to opening up visiting, following the latest government guidelines.

At the present time most of our care homes are facilitating pre-booked visits. There will be individual variations in how visits are conducted based on the dynamic risk assessment and needs of each Home. This is because each care home is unique in its physical layout, surrounding environment and facilities, and residents vary in their needs, health, and current wellbeing.

We continue to be mindful that COVID-19 has not gone away and therefore it is important that we adopt a lifestyle in our care homes that reduces the risk of virus transmission. Appropriate PPE must be used throughout any visit, and around the care home grounds; social distancing (between visitors and residents, team members, and visitors from other households) must always be maintained.

By closely following Government guidance regarding care home visits there are now some options available, although visitor numbers and duration of visits are both necessarily limited.

Excelcare continue to offer visits in visiting suites/pods. Some homes are also able to offer window visits and garden visits when the weather allows.

The guidance, issued in April 2021, advises that care homes can commence limited indoor visits through Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing of named visitors. Those visitors will be tested and need to return a negative result prior to the pre-arranged visit.

As long as the care home has been confirmed free from any outbreak, as specified in their local policies, and both you and your relative or friend are well enough to undertake a visit, then this can be arranged directly with the Home Manager or Administrator.

2 - Visiting our care homes

The health and safety of residents, visitors and team members is our absolute priority and we will always continue to follow robust infection control measures which are in line with Government and Public Health England advice.

Care home visiting whether indoors, outdoors or within a visiting suite will only take place where a home has been risk assessed to undertake safe visits as per their local policies

All visitors will need to follow the guidelines below regardless of the location of their visit within the care home:

- You read and sign our visitors' agreement and complete a health assessment (available on our website or at the care home or can be emailed to you)
- Visitors will be provided with a face mask, apron and gloves. Children over 11 will wear the same PPE as the adults, and children under the age of 3 will not wear masks for safety reasons.
- You will need to wash or sanitise your hands when you arrive and leave the home
- Current social distancing guidelines must always be followed between visitors and other residents, team members, and visitors from other households.
- Any contact increases the risk of transmission, so visitors should keep physical contact to a minimum. There should not be close physical contact such as hugging; however, visitors will be allowed to hold hands with their loved one.
- Visiting areas must be well ventilated, and our team will clean the area before and after each visit.
- All visitors must refrain from eating and drinking while inside the care home.
- Visitors are required to book in advance. The duration of indoor visits will be limited to 30 minutes only.
- Do not visit if you are currently self-isolating, have tested positive or experienced symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.



3 - Named Visitors

Every person living in our care homes is encouraged to nominate up to five named visitors who will be able to come into the home for indoor visits. Once agreed, any named visitors will then be detailed in the resident's care plan and individual visiting risk assessment.

- Named visitors should remain as the same named individuals where possible.
- A maximum of two named visitors are able to visit at a time.
- People under the age of 18 can be counted as a second named visitor.
- One baby or small child under the age of 2 can also visit in our designated visiting room and will not be counted as one of the 5 named visitors.
- Children must always be supervised and may not leave the designated visiting area unless accompanied by an adult.
- All visitors must undertake an LFD test and undergo a health screening before each visit can take place, with the exception of children under the age of 11.
- LFD testing does not guarantee that an individual does not have COVID-19, so visits must still take place in a safe way, such as ensuring visitors are wearing the provided PPE correctly and by following the strict infection control measures in place.
- As an extra measure of safety, residents will also be completing a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test on the morning of the visit, and the test result must be negative for the indoor visit to proceed.
- Where a resident has the capacity to make decisions, they will decide who their named visitors are to be. Where a resident does not have capacity, the care home will discuss the situation with key individuals to seek an informed decision in their best interest.





4 - Essential Care Givers

Some residents may require a visit with a greater degree of personal care, if this is central to maintaining their immediate health and wellbeing.

In such cases, an Essential Care Giver will be agreed and, with the agreement of the care home, will be enabled and supported to provide this care. They will be able to visit more often. They will have access to the same testing and PPE arrangements as a member of the care home team.

Essential Care Givers will need to be included as one of the five named visitors.

Each resident is different, and the exact arrangements will need to be agreed between the care home, the resident and their family (with professional support if helpful).

5 - Indoor visits for named visitors in a designated visiting area

Indoor visits will take place in a designated area, unless a resident is normally cared for in their bedroom (please refer to 'Bedroom Visiting' below).

Some of our care homes may have limited visiting frequency, for example to one visit every one or two weeks. This is to enable each resident a chance to see their five named visitors. Please contact your relative's care home directly for more information.

The 2 named visitors will be able to visit together, where visits are taking place in a designated visiting area, or they may choose to visit separately through taking turns on a pro-rata basis, e.g. one nominated visitor one week and then the other the following week, at a frequency decided by the care home.

Please do be mindful that visits will be subject to availability at time of booking your sessions, as we do need to ensure all residents are enabled to see their loved ones and the visits are time-consuming in terms of the preparation before and after each visit, in order to ensure we comply fully with infection controls procedures.

People under the age of 18 can be counted as a second named visitor, while babies and very young children under the age of two will not be counted as additional visitors. To minimise the risk of infection, children must be supervised at all times and may not leave the designated visiting area unless accompanied by an adult. Children over the age 11 must wear a face mask provided by the care home. Where the responsible adult wishes a child between the ages of 3-11 to wear a mask, they should provide their own mask.

6 - Bedroom visits for named visitors

Where a resident is cared for within their own room throughout the whole day, the booked named visiting session can take place in the residents bedroom.

Where named visitors are from the same household, they will be able to visit their relative together but where the 2-named visitors are not from the same household we request that the visits take place on separate occasions.

These visits will be offered to the 2-named visitors of the same household at a weekly or bi-weekly frequency. Where named visitors are visiting from separate households then the frequency may be staggered to allow alternating visits to take place. Details of the arrangements at your loved one's care home will be confirmed to you by the Home Manager.

To further reduce the risk of infection, children and people under the age of 18 will not be permitted to visit in residents' bedrooms.





7 - Pod Visiting

In addition to the indoor visits, our safe visiting spaces will continue to be available, where possible. These spaces will enable other family members and friends, outside of those named, to visit their loved one.

These visits must be booked in advance and bookings will be for a duration of 30-minutes.

Care homes can welcome two visitors at a time and up to two children under the age of 16 to garden visits, so long as they are from the same household.

If visitors belong to different households, visits will be permitted, but only at separate visiting times. Note that this is subject to local guidelines issued by Public Health England.

Visitor(s) and residents must always remain at least 2 metres apart.

8 - Garden visits

With the warmer weather now upon us, and in line with government guidance, a number of our care homes can also facilitate garden visits.

Garden visits will follow the same guidelines as detailed for pod visits in section 7.

We ask that visitors continue to book pod visits with us as above, and on warmer days, we will work in partnership so that the visit can take place in the garden area if preferred. We are sure that the sunshine will bring added smiles to you and your loved one.





9 - How to arrange a visit

To book a visit you will need to email the care home. If you do not have access to email, then please call the home to discuss a session with the Home Manager.

Please do not visit unannounced.

The care home will then contact you to:

- Confirm to you that the care home can welcome safe visiting.
- Confirm that you have been free of any COVID-19 for at least 15 days.
- Ask if you would like the questionnaire and agreement emailed to you in advance
- Discuss any safety measures needed.
- Agree a time and date to visit your relative or friend and confirm who will be visiting.



10 - Things to consider when visiting



If you are displaying any of the following symptoms, please do not visit:

- raised temperature
- new and persistent cough
- loss of taste or smell
- general feeling of being lethargic or unwell
- If you have been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 15 days please do not attend a visit.

We also do advise that if you have health conditions which make you extremely vulnerable to coronavirus and have been advised to shield, that you should contact your GP for advice before visiting the care home.

The vaccination status of visitors or residents will not make a difference to visits taking place, or to the continued use of PPE. Despite the uptake of the vaccination, PPE will need to be worn.

Before your visit

- Consider bringing a bottle of water with you for your own personal use during the visit, as the home will be unable to offer the normal refreshments.
- Wear your own mask upon arrival, and swap this for a surgical mask which the care home will supply to you.
- Consider the effect that wearing PPE may have on two-way communication. To help with communication while wearing PPE, please consider the following:
 - Try not to wear anything else that conceals your face further - remove sunglasses, hats or scarves
 - Keep eye contact and smile with your eyes
 - Wear your hair in a style that your relative or friend is familiar with
 - Wearing clothing that your relative or friend might recognise
 - Speak louder and clearer than usual, while being mindful of your tone of voice and the message it conveys
 - Writing information down for your relative or friend to read, if they can
 - Using gestures or signs to communicate
 - Enjoying the visit, reminiscing, and laughing together

Arriving at the care home

- You must arrive no sooner than 15 minutes before the scheduled time allowing time for checks, consent, the test, the result, hand sanitising and putting on the required PPE.
- You will need to sanitise your hands on arrival with alcohol hand sanitising gel.
- Visitors will be accompanied to the designated visiting area/room and be expected to stay there for the duration of a 30-minute visit.



10 - Things to consider when visiting

During your visit

- You need to wear PPE and remain at a safe physical distance from other people.
- Social distancing according to Government guidelines on the day will be used throughout the visit.
- It's natural to want to have a hug. Unfortunately, at this time Government guidance is that this is not allowed, but if you are a nominated visitor, you may wish to hold hands.
- To maintain the safety and wellbeing of some extremely vulnerable residents at times, additional measures may be warranted.
- Use of coffee/tea facilities and toilets will not be available.
- Visitors must only use those indoor facilities indicated during their visits, e.g. they should only use the designated visitors toilet near the reception area.
- Visitors cannot remove the PPE supplied by the care home for the duration of the visits

When leaving the care home

- Ensure to dispose of PPE when leaving the care home in the clinical bin provided.
- Sanitise your hands with alcohol hand sanitising gel.

If you are visiting after a longer period of time;

- Don't be worried about being emotional when visiting, be yourself and your relative will feel comfortable in no time.
- When you first visit your relative or friend again, it may look and feel very different to before the pandemic but try to remain relaxed and remember that our team are on-hand to support you.
- Your reunion may well be emotional after a long gap, and if the person has memory problems, you may need to gently remind them who you are. Talking about earlier times you've enjoyed together may be a way of keeping the conversation more cheerful.
- People living with dementia remember how you make them feel – they may not remember your visit, but they will always feel the happy emotions you leave them with.
- Don't be surprised if a person's dementia has progressed since you last saw them or if they seem low. They may improve with ongoing support, and their feelings for you remain, even if they seem hidden.

11 - What happens during your visit

PRE-VISIT CRITERIA Visits from named visitors

Care home is COVID-19 outbreak free, has a designated visiting space available, and a Care Home Risk Assessment has been completed.

Home Manager will have made arrangements with regard to nominated visitors.

Visitors Agreement completed.

Visits will be pre-booked directly with the home for one or two nominated visitors. The visit takes place in a designated safe visiting space.

Visitors must arrive no sooner than 15 minutes before the scheduled time allowing time for a temperature check, completion of the health questionnaire, sharing the test result/personal information, hand sanitising and putting on the required PPE.

Should the visitor's test result be positive, they must not come to the care home and should cancel their visit and follow Government guidance for households with possible or confirmed Coronavirus infection. They should also complete a confirmatory PCR test.

If the result is inconclusive, the test must be repeated. If the second result is again inconclusive, the visit will be cancelled, and the visitor will be advised to complete a PCR test as above.

Negative test - Temperature below 37.5 – No persistent cough – No loss of taste or smell – No lethargy or feeling unwell – **Visit continued**

Hands will be sanitised with alcohol gel

PPE will be provided and should be worn for duration of visit.

Team member will escort visitor to visiting area

PRE-VISIT CRITERIA All other visits

Care home is COVID-19 outbreak free, has a designated visiting space available, and a Care Home Risk Assessment has been completed

Home Manager will make contact and inform families that visits will commence

Visitors Agreement completed

Visits will be pre-booked directly with the home and limited to two named visitor from the same household, or one visitor at a time, from two separate households. Children may visit. The visit takes place in a designated safe visiting space.

Health screening questionnaire will be completed on arrival to home and temperature also taken

Temperature 37.5 or above – New persistent cough – Loss of taste or smell – Lethargic or feeling unwell – **Entry to home declined**

Temperature below 37.5 – No persistent cough – No loss of taste or smell – No lethargy or feeling unwell – **Visit continued**

Hands will be sanitised with alcohol gel

Where possible visitor to bring their own face mask. Face mask will be provided where needed and should be worn for duration of visit.

Team member will escort visitor to visiting area

Prior to the commencement of every booked indoor visit, a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test will need to be undertaken by the named visitors and a negative test result obtained. The team will then accompany them to the designated visiting area. On the morning of the visit, the resident will also need to have a confirmed negative LFD test result for the visit to proceed.

The test is straightforward, and should be carried out by you in your own home before every visit. You will need to be prepared to:

- complete a self-administered throat and nasal swab (the LFD test)
- consent to testing and sharing your result with the home prior to your visit
- register your own test kit result online, or agree to share personal information if we support you with registration
- wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during testing and during your visit
- follow all other infection prevention and control protocols and safety requirements identified by the care home, throughout the visit
- complete a confirmatory PCR test if the LFD test is positive
- carry out an LFD test at the care home prior to entry if you are unable to produce a negative result on the day. This will involve at least a 30-minute wait for the test results. Please allow for this time ahead of your pre-booked visit.

Key steps you should be prepared for during the test

Take your test

- All named visitors are expected to carry out an LFD test in their own home before they visit, and to share their result with the home.
- You will then need to take your own throat and nose swab, which should only take about 30 seconds to do (please see separate guide).
- Once you have taken the test, you will have to wait for your result which will take approximately 30 minutes.
- Following the completion of LFD tests, you will need to fill in your home's designated online form, which you can find via QR code or emailed link. This will need to be completed prior to your arrival at the home.
- If you cannot complete a test at home, you will have to carry out a test at the care home prior to your entry. This will involve at least a 30-minute wait for the test results.

You will then be asked to register for your test

- This is how NHS Test & Trace can link you to your test sample and collect contact details to send you your result.
- This is an online form and if it's difficult for you to complete it yourself, a team member can help you.

On the day of your visit

- You must agree to socially distance on your way to the care home.
- You must arrive 15 minutes before your visit to allow time for the necessary checks and PPE.
- You will be provided with gloves, a fluid resistant mask and apron, and advised how to put it on and take it off, by a member of the team.
- A team member will ask to take your temperature.



What happens after your LFD test?

You will need to fill in the home's visitor testing form prior to your visit. This can be found via a personalised link or QR code that should be sent to you by the home.

- If your test result is **negative**, your visit will be able to go ahead, as long as you comply with all measures to minimise risk (see dos and don'ts below). The LFD test **does not guarantee** that you do not have COVID-19, so we still need to make sure visits take place in a safe way, such as ensuring you always wear your PPE correctly. If you have any questions about this, please ask.
- If your test result is **positive** your visit **will not** go ahead. You will need to complete a PCR test at home, which, once completed, must be sent to the laboratory either by a courier or by a Royal Mail priority post box. You must follow Government guidance for households with possible or confirmed Coronavirus infection.
- If your test result is **inconclusive/void/invalid**, then you will be asked to re-test using a spare LFD kit to receive a conclusive result. If the retest still comes back as inconclusive/void/invalid, the visit will not go ahead.



It's important to recognise that a negative test will provide us with some assurance as to whether you are carrying the COVID-19 virus. However, it is not a guarantee. To keep your loved one and our care home safe, we ask that you please follow the guidelines below:

- Stay home if you are feeling unwell, including if you have a fever, a cough, a change in your taste and smell or cold/flu like symptoms.
- Follow national guidance outside of your visit, including limiting your contact with other people and wearing a mask in public if possible.
- Observe social distancing with anyone outside of your household or bubble and wash your hands regularly.
- Please keep your belongings to a minimum to reduce the risk of virus transmission within the home.

During your visit

Inside the care home, we ask that you continue to wear your facemask and any other PPE that you were asked to wear by a member of the team. See separate pictorial guide on how to correctly wear a facemask. Please work with us and continue with our visiting policy throughout the visit.

As a negative test only provides us with **some** assurance as to whether you are carrying the COVID-19 virus, there is a risk that some positive cases will not be detected.

Therefore, please keep to holding hands only.

Behaviours that are not allowed during your visit:

- Removing or incorrectly wearing any PPE against guidance from team members.
- Entering any part of the home that is not designated for your visit.
- Eating or drinking during the visit.



1

A team member will support you with your test. Prior to commencing the test, please blow your nose with a tissue, then sanitise your hands with alcohol rub.

2

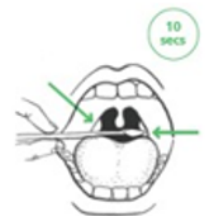
Once the team member hands you the Lateral Flow Device Test (LFD) swab, open the swab package and gently take out the swab, holding it at the far end from the tip. **Do not touch the tip of the swab.** Dispose the package in the allocated bin.

3

Find the tonsils at the back of your throat, on either side (or where they would have been if they are removed) this is where you will swab your sample, you may find it helpful to bring a pocket mirror to help you with this process.

4

Holding the swab in your hand, open your mouth wide and rub in the fabric tip of the swab over both tonsils (or where they would have been) at the back of your throat for 10 seconds.
Carefully remove the swab stick from the back of your throat.



5

Put the same end of the same swab gently into one nostril until you feel a slight resistance (about 2.5cm or 1 inch up your nose). Rotate the swab for 10-15 seconds and slowly remove it.



6

You only need to sample one nostril. If you have a piercing, use the other nostril.

7

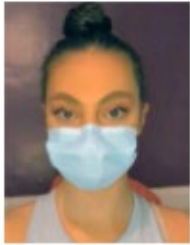
After collecting the sample, hold the swab up right in your hand, do not put it down. and wait until a team member is able to receive it from you.

8

Your test results could take up to 30 minutes to be confirmed. Whilst waiting for your results, you will need to maintain social distancing. If possible, please wait in your car.

- If your result is negative, you will be supported to proceed with your booked indoor visit.
- If your result is positive, you will need to immediately leave the premises to go home and self-isolate, avoiding public transport wherever possible. You must follow government guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and immediately self-isolate and complete a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test which will be provided by the care home. This can be sent to the laboratory either through a courier or through a Royal Mail priority post box. If the confirmatory PCR comes back positive, your household must also self-isolate and contacts may also need to self-isolate in line with current government guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

DO



Do wear your mask so it comes all the way up, close to the bridge of your nose, and all the way down under your chin.

Do press the metal band so that it conforms to the bridge of your nose.

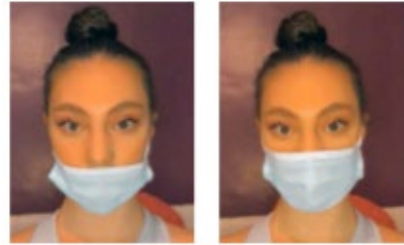
Do tighten the loops or ties so it's snug around your face, without gaps.

Remember:

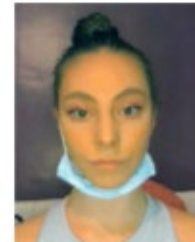
- If you touch your mask to adjust it, make it more comfortable or accidentally then you must wash and sanitise your hands immediately.
- Always wash or sanitise your hands before and after touching or removing your mask.
- If you have to remove your mask always replace with a fresh mask and dispose of it in the designated bin provided

Children over the age 11 must wear a face mask provided by the care home. Where the responsible adult wishes a child between the ages of 3-11 to wear a mask,

DO NOT



Do not wear the mask below your nose or just on the tip of your nose.



Do not push your mask under your chin to rest on your neck.



Do not wear your mask loosely, not pinched at the nose or with gaps on the sides.

You will be required to wear a mask provided by the care home during your visit; please do not use your own.



12 - What if there is an outbreak?

“An outbreak is defined as two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 or clinically suspected cases of COVID-19 among individuals associated with a specific setting with onset dates within 15 days.”

- Guidance issued from Public Health England

Please note that in the event of an outbreak, we will immediately stop all visiting, this is in line with Government guidance to protect our residents, relatives, and team members. These restrictions will continue until the outbreak is confirmed over, which will be at least 28 days after the last laboratory confirmed case whether this be in a resident or team member.

Should there be an ‘outbreak’ of COVID-19 in the care home, pod visits or window visits may possibly be allowed to continue once the appropriate risk assessments have been carried out. The home will speak with their local Health Protection Team where there is an outbreak, and evidence a number of high-level risk measures, in the hope of receiving their agreement to allow pod visiting or window waves to continue, but there is no guarantee that the home will receive agreement to this.





13 - Visits out of the care home

The government have released new guidance on visits out of care homes. We ask that any relative wishing to take a loved one out of the home to contact the Home Manager, as we would need to put in place a robust individual risk assessment in order to keep everyone as safe as possible.

We would like to make our observations clear that with the current variant in circulation, the risk of infection to your loved one and others is still very high. While in this last year, we have worked hard in partnership with all families to keep everyone as safe as possible, we really do need to be cautious with visits out of the care home. However, ultimately this decision lies with residents and their loved ones and will be subject to risk measures.

Please be aware that any residents returning to a care home must then isolate for 14-days. As such, we recognise that taking advantage of the increasing opportunities to receive visits within the care home is likely to be the better option for many residents and their loved ones.

You can learn more about visits outside of care homes by following this link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrangements-for-visiting-out-of-the-care-home/visits-out-of-care-homes

14 - Stay up to date

- Go to our website for further guidance on our COVID-19 measures. Here you will also find a copy of the visiting agreement and the health screening questionnaire
- Go to the care home's Facebook page for regular updates on measures in place including details of whether the home is open to visiting sessions
- Email our COVID-19 helpdesk on covid19helpline@excelcareholdings.com to have the guidance and agreement emailed to you
- Email the care home to ask if they are taking bookings for visiting sessions or to book a session. If you do not have access to email, then please call the home and speak with the Home Manager or Administrator.
- Our homes will continue to support you to keep in touch with your loved ones through telephone, video calling and regular social media updates.



www.excelcareholdings.com