



PARTNERS IN CARE

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MEANINGFUL VISITS

March 2021



Partners in Care – resources to support meaningful visits

4th March 2021

Introduction

The country has been living with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic since early 2020. Locking down care homes in March was an emergency response to the global pandemic caused by a virus about which little was known.

A year on, we better understand the risks of transmission and have put in place a range of robust measures that will keep us safer – this is as important for care homes as it is for the rest of our society. And care homes, including residents, staff, relatives and friends all have a part to play in enabling safer visiting.

This set of resources is designed to provide practical support to care homes and their relatives and loved ones to adopt the default position that care homes are open for visiting. Care homes must be supported to enable and welcome visits by families and friends, now and in the future. It is clear that we must find a way to resolve the challenge of visiting in care homes for the longer term; we are facing a world where we will have to live with COVID-19 for the foreseeable months and indeed years. This means reaching an agreed partnership position, with practical measures, rights and responsibilities that enables visiting long term rather than the current cycle of crisis short term approaches.

People in care homes and their loved ones in the community have fundamental human rights, both as individuals and as a community, and long-term restrictions on visiting denies those rights. Therefore, we need to find ways to enable safe visiting.

We know that the isolation caused by restrictions on visits from loved ones is intrinsically harmful¹ and we have heard repeatedly the extreme anguish that this is causing. We also know that care homes have to strike a difficult balance between managing the risk of harm from COVID-19 with the risk of harm from lack of visiting and connectedness with loved ones – this is even more important if we take the longer-term view that we are looking at living with COVID-19 for at least 2 more years.

The National Care Forum has worked with care providers and residents and relatives organisations to develop these Partners in Care resources to support meaningful visits. It includes:

- ✓ A Visiting Charter - sets out a shared set of rights and responsibilities
- ✓ A Visiting Pledge - covers key commitments that all parties can sign up to
- ✓ Useful practical resources to support the charter and the pledge

Please also see the latest [DHSC Guidance on Care Home Visiting](#).



¹ Gordon A et al: Commentary: COVID in care homes—challenges and dilemmas in healthcare delivery, <https://academic.oup.com/ageing/article/49/5/701/5836695>;

Visiting Charter

Purpose of the charter

This charter aims to provide some very **practical ways to help** people using care and support to have the opportunity to safely receive visitors and maintain relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to help those visitors to care settings to visit safely, while minimising the risk of introducing COVID-19, or spreading it within, the care setting.

It sets out **clear rights and responsibilities** for care home teams, the people using their services, their visitors and the local health & care system in which they operate. It also offers some practical solutions based on existing practice and learning and is designed to support the rights and responsibilities of all involved.

It builds on the work of many months of coalitions of a wide range of organisations calling jointly for meaningful visiting – see [here](#) and [here](#).

It covers both regular visitors and essential caregiver visitors; where people have essential care givers, then they should **be treated as an extension of the staff team where possible**. Care home providers who have managed to continue successful visiting throughout the pandemic told us that they often consider essential visitors as an extension of the staff team and offer them all the measures they have in place for staff (IPC, PPE, testing, encouraging vaccine take up).

Underpinning concepts of this charter:

Visiting should be enabled and it should be the default position. We recognise that care homes will be operating in a dynamic situation for months ahead, but visiting should be seen as an essential, integral part of care, not an optional extra.

Ongoing support from central government in enabling visiting: There is a clear role for central government here in supporting care providers with the practical enabling measures needed such as a supply of PPE for visitors, ensuring testing capacity for visitors and working to support the insurance challenges being faced by care providers in relation to visiting.

Enabling visiting for the longer term in a constantly changing picture, managing the dynamic ongoing challenges: It is clear that care home teams and relatives and loved ones have faced a constantly changing set of challenges in enabling visiting, be that rapidly changing guidance relating to PPE, IPC and testing, rapidly changing levels of community transmission, the emergence of new variants of the virus, the delivery of the vaccine or the ongoing the definition of an outbreak. Dynamic barriers need responsive and dynamic solutions to avoid obstacles getting in the way of visiting.

Partnership, trust and respect: we must all work together to enable visiting now, and in the longer term, with a clear set of rights and responsibilities for care homes, their residents, their relatives and loved ones and the local health & care system in which they operate.

Role of the local system in actively enabling and supporting visiting: this charter expects that local health and care systems, including local authorities, Directors of Public Health and other key health partners will actively enable and support visiting in care settings in their local areas.



Rights and responsibilities within the charter

This covers key themes, which were identified in discussions about best practice between care home providers and residents and relatives representative groups

Key theme 1: Timely, regular, open communications

	Residents/ People using the service	Relatives and Friends	Care Homes
Rights: what to expect	Clear information about the situation in the care home, measures in place to manage risk and the arrangements for visiting	Timely and regular updates and information about what is happening in the home, in relation to visiting and local COVID-19 prevalence and transmission risk.	Timely and regular updates & information from the local system on levels of community transmission Clear, honest communication from potential visitors about risks regarding their exposure to the virus in the community
Responsibilities: what to honour	Make known their wishes about their preferred arrangements for visiting with potential visitors	Provide clear, honest communication to the care home about any potential exposure to the virus in the community	Provide timely and regular updates and information via agreed channels (Zoom calls, emails, phone calls) about what is happening in the home, in relation to visiting and local COVID-19 prevalence and transmission risk

Key theme 2: The screening, testing, PPE and IPC regime

	Residents/ People using their service	Relatives and Friends	Care Homes
Rights: what to expect	The care home will clearly and regularly explain the care home's screening and testing regime for potential visitors. The care home will ensure that people who use service are aware of the IPC policies that relatives should be following.	The care home will clearly and regularly explain the care home's screening and testing regime for potential visitors (both in advance of the visit & at the start of the visit) The care home will ensure that visitors have access to training on IPC and PPE	All visitors will comply fully with the care home's screening and testing regime. All visitors will engage positively with Infection Prevention and Control and PPE training and agree to observe the care home's Infection Prevention and Control policies.

	<p>The care home will work to ensure that residents are familiar with the PPE policy for visitors.</p>	<p>resources. (This could include a video training approach and e-learning – see Practical resources section)</p>	<p>All visitors will agree to wear PPE supplied by care home at all times according to the local IPC policy. They will not remove PPE at any point unless soiled or for another legitimate reason. It should then be replaced</p>
<p>Responsibilities: what to honour</p>	<p>Supporting the importance of the screening and testing regime for visitors</p> <p>Supporting their visitors to abide by local IPC measures</p> <p>Supporting their visitors to abide by the PPE policy for visitors</p>	<p>Full compliance with and respect for the care home’s screening and testing regime for visitors</p> <p>To engage with all IPC and PPE training requirements and agree to adhere to local IPC policies during visiting.</p> <p>Visitors will agree to wear PPE supplied by care home at all times according to the local IPC policy. They will not remove PPE at any point unless soiled or for another legitimate reason. It should then be replaced.</p>	<p>Effectively managing the screening and testing regime for visitors</p> <p>The care home will clearly and regularly explain the care home’s screening and testing regime for potential visitors (both in advance of the visit & at the start of the visit)</p> <p>The care home will ensure that visitors have access to appropriate IPC and PPE resources. (This could include a video training approach and e-learning – see Practical resources section)</p> <p>Care homes to provide PPE to visitors, by accessing sufficient PPE from the government portal.</p> <p>Care home should show visitors how to put on and take off (don and doff) PPE and use safely</p>

Key theme 3: Accepting that it is a dynamic situation and working together to keep people safe

	Residents/People using their service	Relatives and Friends	Care Homes
Rights: what to expect	<p>Having their wishes observed in terms of their choice of visiting arrangements</p> <p>A clear visiting plan, created with and by the person that fits their circumstances and wishes.</p>	<p>A clear visiting plan, created with and by the person that fits their circumstances.</p>	<p>Clear and flexible approaches to visiting during outbreaks</p> <p>Visitors will work with the home to create a clear, agreed person-centred visiting arrangement.</p>
Responsibilities: what to honour	<p>Supporting their visitors to use the visiting plan, created with and by the person that fits their circumstances.</p>	<p>Will work with care homes to develop dynamic visiting plans, shaped by and with their loved ones. The plans will take account of the impact and risks to others living and working in the care home.</p> <p>Will work with the care home to observe the wishes of their loved ones.</p>	<p>The care home will create dynamic risk assessments for visits and adapt the visiting policy as required for each resident</p>

Partners in Care - Visiting Pledge

Partners in Care - Visiting Pledge

This pledge recognises the essential role played by visitors and essential care givers in a person's wellbeing and the importance of partnership between relatives, friends and care providers.

Care homes and relatives and friends have an equal responsibility to do their part towards a safe visit for everyone to maintain a safe environment for all.

The pledge below can be modified and used in a way that makes sense for your care settings. It sets out a shared set of commitments for visitors and care providers, working together to support safe visiting.

We, the care home/setting, pledge to do our part to keep visitors (relatives, friends and essential care givers), residents and staff safe by:

- ✓ Recognising essential care givers as care partners
- ✓ Recognising the importance of visiting in a person's care and wellbeing
- ✓ Communicating clearly and regularly about visiting arrangements
- ✓ Training visitors in IPC and use of PPE
- ✓ Providing PPE and testing

I, the visitor, pledge to do my part to keep the person I support, the other residents and the staff safe by:

- ✓ Communicating clearly and regularly about visiting arrangements
- ✓ Undertaking training in IPC and use of PPE
- ✓ Following the rules on IPC and use of PPE in place in the care home/ setting
- ✓ Being tested prior to visiting
- ✓ Following instructions from staff and asking for clarification/ support when I need it

Practical resources

Links to Resources to help

Understanding PPE

- Public Health England (PHE) has produced this video showing how to 'don and doff' (put on and take off) PPE for use in health and social care settings:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GncQ_ed-9w&feature=youtu.be
- PHE has also produced a video specifically for the use of PPE in care homes:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozY50PPmsvE>
- PHE has also produced a handy poster with a simple guide to PPE use:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/932687/PHE_quick_guide_to_donning_doffing_PPE_standard_health_and_social_care_settings.pdf

An easy to understand guidance on key elements of Infection Prevention & Control

- The Social Care Institute for Excellence has produced a general guide on Infection Prevention & Control – it includes a couple of handy videos too: <https://www.scie.org.uk/care-providers/coronavirus-covid-19/infection-control/quick-guide>
- The PHE video for donning and doffing PPE also has handwashing in it:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GncQ_ed-9w&feature=youtu.be

Understanding symptoms of COVID and what to do if you have them

- NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

Short videos on PCR and LFD testing

- PHE has issued videos and instructions for how to take swab samples for COVID-19 testing:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-taking-swab-samples>