**Visiting Policy during Covid–19 Pandemic**

Our teams across the company remain focused on protecting the safety and wellbeing of everyone living and working in our care homes. We are continuing to monitor any changes to Government-issued guidance and adapt our ways of working accordingly. Our pandemic management plan includes a wide range of enhanced hygiene procedures which have been developed on the back of information issued by the NHS, Public Health England, Health Protection and the Department of Health and Social Care.

**Purpose**

This policy aims to provide a set of principles and top tips to help people using care and support to have the opportunity to safely receive visitors during the COVID19 pandemic, while minimising the risk of its introduction to, or spread within, the care setting. In the face of new variants of the virus, we need to remain alert to ensure we protect those most at risk in our care homes while ensuring indoor visits can go ahead.

**Relative visits to our homes**

The introduction of garden visits in our homes over the last few months has continued to be extremely beneficial for both residents and their families. Our teams have had incredibly positive feedback although equally, we recognise that the protocols we have had to put in place will be frustrating for those who were used to a more informal approach to visiting. We appreciate the help and support from families working with us to ensure new visiting protocols are meticulously followed, as it enables us to protect those living and working in our homes. Our priority must remain the safety of residents, colleagues, and visitors in our homes and with this in mind, we will continue to keep this guidance under review.

**Omega Elifar will take into consideration:**

The benefits to a Residents wellbeing by having a particular visitor or visitors.

The extent of the harm that will be experienced by the resident from a lack of visitation or whether the individual is at the end of their life.

The individual resident, their views, their mental capacity, their needs, and wellbeing will be considered when decisions about visiting are made, recognising that the care home will need to consider the wellbeing of other residents as well.

The care home will support resident to nominate visitors of their choice. If a resident lacks the capacity to decide, the care home will discuss the situation with the resident’s family and friends. A person can only be nominated if this is in the person’s best interest.

The named visitors must remain the same person as far as possible to limit the number of different people coming into the care homes.

Whether residents or staff or visitors are in the extremely clinically vulnerable group (see latest government [guidance on shielding](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19))

if not regarded as a person requiring support to shield, whether the resident’s state of physical health is such that they may be more seriously affected if they develop.

**COVID – 19**

The provisions and needs outlined in the person’s care plan.

The level and type of care provided by external visitors and the ability of care home staff to replicate this care.

Appropriate level of staff to enable safer visiting practices.

Level of infection rates in the community / locality of the home and where the visitors are traveling from assuming there are no variants or concerns identified (other than the ‘Kent variant’).

Have the visitors received their COVID – 19 vaccination and the person they are visiting? Although it is not mandatory it is strongly advised that people receive their COVID – 19 vaccinations.

All visitors must have an LFD test before the planned visit can go ahead

Each care home is unique in its physical layout, surrounding environment and facilities, and residents vary in their needs. Managers are best placed to decide how their care home can best enable visiting in line with the current guidance.

The extent to which remote contact by telephone and/or video addresses any wellbeing issues above and is available and reduces any distress or other harm caused by the absence of visits. When developing visiting polices, OEL should consider how they will support remote contact (for example, Wi-Fi access for all residents)

In making these decisions, OEL will actively involve the resident, their relatives or friends, any advocates, commissioners, and appropriate members of the multi-disciplinary team and, where appropriate.

**Visits to our Homes:**

Visits are only possible in homes that are deemed ‘Outbreak Free’ – namely it has been 14 days since the onset of symptoms of the last case in the home. This period represents twice the incubation period of the virus.

Following the Government announcement on the 19 July 2021, (step 4 lockdown easing) we have reviewed our current visiting guidance restrictions on visiting and are being relaxed as part of the Governments roadmap out of lockdown.

Although some additional measures will continue to be in place for added reassurance and safety.

Virtual visits - will continue to support these through Skype, Facetime, WhatsApp, MS Teams and ZOOM as much as possible. Additionally, staff will continue to help residents to send letters, emails and cards including photographs.

**From this date, our care homes will be following these guidelines:**

Outbreak free - only homes that have been free from an outbreak (two or more cases) of COVID-19 for more than 14 days will be able to accept visitors.

Outdoor visiting – this will continue to be the preference including window visits and the use of outside buildings, COVID-19 secure areas.

Every care home resident can have ‘named visitors’ who will be able to enter the care home for regular visits. There is no limit on the number of ‘named visitors’ that a single resident can have and no nationally set limit on the number who can visit in a single day.

Physical contact - provided the named visitors have agreed to being tested, wear the appropriate personal protective equipment, such as face masks, gloves, and aprons – as supplied by us - and follows other infection control measures it will be possible to have physical contact with loved ones, such as holding hands, enhanced hand hygiene will be encouraged.

Contact with the home – we ask that the named visitors remain the main people who maintains contact with the home – your home manager will give this person the appropriate telephone number to call.

COVID-19 symptoms - should a visitor have been isolating with COVID-19 symptoms within the 10 days prior to the visit or show any COVID-19 symptoms, they should not travel to the care home as the visit will be unable to go ahead. These symptoms include a raised temperature, a new and persistent cough, a loss of taste or smell and a general feeling of being lethargic and unwell.

**Including more family members and friends:**

There will be opportunities for more members of the family and friends to come for a visit.

But these visits will need to happen in a different way, to reduce the number of different people coming into the care home and to reduce the risk of passing on the virus.

Visits can take place outdoors, including at a window.

These types of visits still need to be agreed with the care home, and you will probably need to book an appointment.

With all types of visiting, it is still important to observe good social distancing, and follow any advice or instructions the care home staff give you.

Book in advance - we are asking people to pre-book indoor, outdoor, or virtual visits so that we can support these to take place smoothly.

**Children visiting in a care home**

It is possible for someone aged under 18 to be one of the visitors, if the resident, family, and the care home all agree that is appropriate. It is very important that any children visiting can follow IPC measures carefully. This will include social distancing, PPE use (where appropriate) and advice on minimising physical contact. Babies and children under the age of 2 years should also be counted towards the maximum number allowed for the visit. Children aged 11 and over should wear the same PPE as adult visitors. Children under the age of 3 should not wear masks, for safety reasons. It is not currently recommended that children under the age of 11 participate in asymptomatic testing (LFD).

**Resident going out in a family or friends’ car**

The current restrictions state that a person must avoid car sharing with anyone from outside their household or your support bubble unless your journey is undertaken for an exempt reason. The care home constitutes a single household that includes all the other residents, and it is unlikely that a resident could be part of a support bubble.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

**Visits outside of care homes –** [**updated guidance released**](https://s4cloudae36f1aac.hana.ondemand.com:443/data-buffer/sap/public/cuan/link/100/6D1CEB36DBB30E95A18C827774DEAA88B4273501?_V_=2&_K11_=22BAC8743C0A0D2DE0A0A6A5173413D58DCDD014&_L54AD1F204_=c2NlbmFyaW89TUxDUEcmdGVuYW50PW15MzAxMjgxLnM0aGFuYS5vbmRlbWFuZC5jb20mdGFyZ2V0PWh0dHBzOi8vd3d3Lmdvdi51ay9nb3Zlcm5tZW50L3B1YmxpY2F0aW9ucy9hcnJhbmdlbWVudHMtZm9yLXZpc2l0aW5nLW91dC1vZi10aGUtY2FyZS1ob21lL3Zpc2l0cy1vdXQtb2YtY2FyZS1ob21lcy1zdXBwbGVtZW50YXJ5LWd1aWRhbmNlP3V0bV9zb3VyY2U9U0FQSHlicmlzJnV0bV9tZWRpdW09ZW1haWwmdXRtX2NhbXBhaWduPTIyNTAmdXRtX3Rlcm09QUhDLVByb3ZpZGVyJTIwQWxlcnQlMjA0JTIwTWF5JTIwRU1fX19MaW5rJnV0bV9jb250ZW50PUVO&_K13_=272&_K14_=84d5c5be4d72e7b866bb519e5bbea7ec89a173457ff6b73a459cad15ad878803)

This guidance outlines when visits outside of care homes will not require the resident to self-isolate for 10 days afterwards. It also states who residents should be accompanied by expectations of discussion with essential care givers and nominated visitors in advance, visits only to be outdoors, no visits to indoor places – except for polling stations (where additional measures should be in place) and should not involve public transport.

[Arrangements for visiting out of the care home - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrangements-for-visiting-out-of-the-care-home)

**Arrangements during visits infection control**

Designated visiting areas of the home will be thoroughly cleaned before and after each visit.

Visitors are reminded to wear a face covering throughout the entire visit and appropriate PPE. These will be provided by the home.

On arrival visitors will be asked a few health screening questions and have their temperature taken.

Hand washing facilities and sanitising gel will be provided.

Visitors will be taken to the testing areas to complete a test and await the result. A visitor who declines testing will be unable to continue with a close personal visit.

Any visitor who tests positive with a rapid lateral flow test should immediately leave the premises the care home will offer a confirmatory PCR test.

Visitors will be accompanied to and from the room by a member of staff avoiding communal areas as much as possible. People are asked to avoid touching surfaces as much as practical.

Visitors are asked not to use facilities such as toilets unless in an emergency, and not to access other areas of the home during their visit.

Please keep your visits to one hour so we can help as many residents as possible to enjoy contact with their family and friends.

**Looking ahead**

The Government’s aim is that by the summer, care home visiting will feel as relaxed and normal as possible – retaining only those infection prevention and control measures that are needed to protect the most vulnerable residents from the risk of infection.

As with all elements of the roadmap we will continue to be guided by the evidence, which we will review again before making any further changes to visiting policy.

These rapid lateral flow tests must be done onsite in line with current MHRA guidance, due to the type of test kit care homes receive. At this time visitors cannot self-test at home, however work is underway so that in the coming weeks, care homes will receive tests for visitors that are approved for self-test. At this point, visitors will have the option for tests to be conducted at home, or to use the result of a test taken in other settings. Care homes will receive further communications from NHS Test and Trace about this. However, until this time, visitors must continue to test onsite.

Updated Government visiting guidance including “essential caregivers” by family members who are required to support residents with any personal care needs is expected. Our managers will be contacting those family members who were previously providing this support to see how this can be safely reintroduced. An essential caregiver will be able to visit in addition to the named visitors. They will have access to the same PCR, Rapid lateral flow testing and PPE arrangements as for staff members.

To protect the people we are caring for, residents we will sanitise gifts before our residents receives them.

Staff will be available to supervise some visits if the person’s risk assessment identifies this as a support need to ensure social distancing is adhered to.

Full details of how your visit will be managed will be provided by the Registered home manager. For further information please refer to our [COVID-19 Responsible Visitor Code](https://omegaelifar.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVID-19-Responsible-Visitor-Code.docx)

**Other visitors to our homes**

As you may be aware, the restrictions to our homes have applied not just to relatives and friends, but to all non-essential visitors. This has included members of our internal governance, facilities management, while we felt this was an important step to take in terms of reducing the risk of infection, we are very aware that these visits are an important part of ensuring the health and safety of residents and monitoring the quality of our care.

Please rest assured that all visitors will be briefed on the strictest infection control procedures and will be subject to many of the same control measures outlined for friends and family.

**New admissions**

Our homes are now accepting new admissions. All new residents are being asked to take a test for the virus – ideally prior to admission, or at the beginning of their stay.

Residents will be cared for in isolation during the first fourteen days of their stay, after a comprehensive risk assessment specific to individuals’ circumstances, and will be supported to contact family, friends and may include daily video or phone calls and enhanced in-room dining service, family involvement in care planning and a personalised lifestyle and activities programme agreed upon arrival.

**Testing**

We are continuing to work with the Department of Health and Social Care and the NHS Test and Trace team in England to take advantage of capacity in their approved laboratories. This has enabled us to start a regular programme of weekly testing for staff teams and every 28 days for our Residents. Testing is one of the most important tools we must protect those living and working in our homes.

All visitors will be expected to complete a negative (LFD) test prior to visiting their loved one inside of the home please use the link below for more information.

Read all currant guidance [Care home LFD testing of visitors guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-testing-of-visitors-in-care-homes/care-home-lfd-testing-of-visitors-guidance).

**Day to Day Life**

We want to ensure that our residents experience a minimal amount of disruption to their day-to-day lives as we continue to implement our contingency plans. Entertainment and activities continue as before within the home and quality care, meals and hydration are all delivered as usual. Our staff are doing all they can to ensure that life in our homes remains as comfortable and sociable as possible and we are using technology such as video calling to support residents to maintain contact with their loved ones throughout this period. We are keeping in regular contact with relatives, so they have information about their relative’s health and well-being.

Where there are exceptional circumstances for a visit, these will be carefully considered and discussed to ensure that safeguarding steps can be taken to protect residents and staff.

**Additional Considerations and Actions**

Manges should develop a dynamic risk assessment to help them decide how to safely provide the visiting opportunities of the individual needs of their residents outlined in the current guidance in a way that considers the individual needs of residents, as well as the physical and other features unique to the care home.

**Thank you**

Finally, we would like to say a very public thank you to our colleagues who have worked tirelessly in the last few months to provide exceptional levels of care under challenging circumstances. We are exceptionally grateful for the commitment and dedication of our teams, particularly when many of them are mourning the loss of residents who had become very close friends.

We would also like to thank the families and local communities that have supported our homes over the last few months. Many of our homes have received cards, gifts and other messages of support which have been invaluable in motivating our teams to continue working through these challenging times. Your kindness and generosity have been greatly appreciated.

Review date 10/01/2021 Karen Marsden

Review date 08/03/2021 Karen Marsden

Review date 12/04/2021 Karen Marsden

Review date 13/05/2021 Karen Marsden

Review date 21/07/2021 Karen Marsden

Review date …………………………………………………………….. Signature ………………………………………………

COVID-19 Responsible Visitor Code

**Visitors must:**

* Book visits in advance for a specific day, time, and length of visit
* Check in with the Registered Manager at the Care Home on the day prior to their visit, to ensure the situation in the Home has not changed
* Be free of any COVID-19 symptoms on the day of their visit
* Not be unwell on the day of their visit
* Hand sanitisation
* Provide the necessary information required by the Care Home at the visits (e.g., honest response to screening requirements about COVID-19 risk factors to support track and trace guidance
* Comply with the infection prevention and control measures, including a temperature test, mandatory hand hygiene the use of PPE as required and social distancing requirements, remaining in the designated visiting area
* All visitors are required to complete a negative LFD test prior to visiting their loved one inside the care home read all currant guidance [Care home LFD testing of visitors guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-testing-of-visitors-in-care-homes/care-home-lfd-testing-of-visitors-guidance).
* supervision of some visits may be necessary if identified in peoples risk assessment to ensure social distancing and infection control measures are always adhered to.
* Ensure that any gifts brought to give to the individual they are visiting can be sanitized, in line with relevant infection prevention and controls (IPC) guidance.

Should a visitor not follow the Responsible Visitor Code, Omega Elifar Ltd reserves the right to refuse that individual’s access to visiting.

**Please note that should circumstances change or there is a resurgence of COVID-19, Omega Elifar Ltd will revise the Visitor guidelines in accordance with the advice from**

**Public Health England and the NHS.**

**Safety measures implemented for visitors across all our care homes**

**HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE HAND SANITISATION** **MANDATORY**

 **PPE ON ENTRY**

**SOCIAL DISTANCING  RESTRICTED ACCESS** **ENSURE GIFTS ARE SANITSED**

 **AVOID PUBLIC**  **ENSURE YOU ARE  TEMPERATURE**

 **TRANSPORT WERE FEELING WELL SCREENING POSSIBLE**