

17 May 2021

Dear Relatives, Carers and Friends

**Re. COVID-19 update – visiting our care homes safely**

Over the last few months, we have continued to work incredibly hard to reduce the impact of COVID–19 within our services. We know that the restrictions in contact with relative has not been easy and would like to thank you all for your co-operation and support.

Although as a country we are slowly lifting restrictions on the general population that were in place to stop the spread of COVID–19, we still need to take extra care to protect our residents.

Following the Government announcement on 10 May 2021, we have reviewed our current visiting guidance, From Monday 17 May care home resident’s will be able to have more nominated named visitor’s and more opportunities to make visits out with no need to isolate when they return.

* Care home residents will be able to have 5 named visitors.
* Self -isolation no longer required following visits to medical appointments.
* Visits will only pause for a minimum of 14 days rather than 28 following an Outbreak.
* A maximum of 2 visitors will be allowed at any one time or on any given day.

The decision on whether to allow visits, and in what circumstances, is an operational decision and therefore ultimately for the Registered Manager to make dependant on individual circumstances and assessment of risk.

**What happens next?**

• 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.

• Five visitor rule - residents will be encouraged to choose who they would like to visit with the added reassurance of testing, will be able to have close personal contact visits (Hand holding).

Visits are being limited to the same people to keep residents and staff safe in line with Government guidance.

• Physical contact - provided the nominated visitors have agreed to being tested, are wearing 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.

• Other visitors - where circumstances allow, if a resident wishes to have other non-contact visitors, it may be possible for one visitor at a time where there is a COVID-19 secure area.

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

• 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.

• 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.

**Arrangements during visits**

• Visitors are reminded to wear a face covering throughout the entire visit. 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.

• 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.

As we move forward, we will review our visiting policy regularly and will update you as soon as we feel able to introduce further changes.

If you have any immediate questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you again - your support and understanding are greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

**Registered Manager**