

# Care home safe visiting guidance







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## Introduction

At MHA we recognise how difficult the past seven months have been for you and your family with the restrictions introduced in relation to visiting. It felt like some form of normality was beginning to return both to our care homes and the wider community. However, with the recent increase in COVID-19 cases, a number of restrictions will have to be reintroduced or strengthened in relation to visiting.

We strongly believe in the essential role families and friends have in maintaining the health and wellbeing of residents, so we appreciate that for many of you this is not the message you want to be reading. We want to assure you these safety measures are not in place to keep you separated from your loved one, but with the purpose of protecting the residents who live in our homes, the staff who support them, as well as visitors.

All of our care homes have a booking system to ensure we can comply with safety guidelines. Any visits need to be booked in advance, please do not arrive at the home unannounced.

On the day of the visit we are asking all visitors to confirm that they have been free of any symptoms of COVID-19 for at least 14 days and that you have not been in contact with anyone who has received a positive COVID-19 test 14 days prior to the visit.

### Important to note

Visits will also only be able to occur if the care home has been free of COVID-19 for 28 days. It is important to note that we will suspend visits if we are advised to do so by the local public health or local authority. In this case, certain visits such as those people receiving end of life care, will still occur if possible.

Thank you for working with us and for your ongoing patience and understanding.

**Dan Ryan, Director of Operations**  
**David Moore, Dementia Lead**



# Outdoor visits

For those residents who are physically, emotionally or cognitively able to, we are asking that outdoor visits occur. This can be in the garden, a window visit or a drive-through visit. Whatever the type of outdoor visits, please follow the below guidance:

- No more than two visitors from the same household come for an outdoor visit. Visitors can alternate on a weekly basis. Please speak to the care home manager if this needs to differ because of specific circumstances.
- Please come by car or walk rather than by public transport wherever possible.
- The visit is limited to 30 minutes, except in certain circumstances which would need to be agreed with the home manager.
- The visit begins and finishes at the agreed time. This is to ensure as many residents as possible can get visits and also factors in the cleaning time needed after each visit.
- You must wear a face mask or face covering.
- You must observe social distancing rules at all times.
- At the start and end of the visit that you wash and dry your hands. If this is not possible hand sanitiser will be given.
- You must access the garden without entering the care home. For example you may be asked to enter through the garden gate.
- Garden furniture will be positioned to enable a physical distance of 2 metres, this must not be moved.
- Please avoid any physical contact with your relative or friend. We recognise that this might not be possible for residents living with dementia and ask that you refer to MHA guidance – [‘Visiting a resident living with dementia in a MHA care home’](#).

**Some of the care homes will have a designated member of staff to help with visiting. They will escort the resident to and from the garden. The staff member may stay nearby so that they can offer support if needed. If the staff member advises you in relation to infection control measures please do listen to them. They are working incredibly hard to ensure the safety of all.**



## Visiting room (indoor visits)

A number of our homes now have a dedicated room for visits. With indoor visits the risks of introducing COVID-19 into the care home increase significantly. Because of this we have put in place extra safety measures including a full clean of the room prior to and after each visit. At present, because of the extra time these precautions take, we are not able to offer indoor visits at every home and to every resident. As well as the precautions mentioned for outdoor visits we are asking you to take extra measures.

Please follow the below guidance:

- Only one designated person is to visit. We are asking that this is the same person at every visit unless alternatives are agreed with the home manager.
- You must enter and leave the home via the nearest entrance to the visiting room. This may mean that you have to enter and leave the home via a fire exit, but you will be shown where to go.
- You will need to take the shortest route possible to get to the visiting room to avoid any communal areas of the home.
- You must wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This term covers items such as face masks, face visors, gloves and aprons. You will be required to wear the PPE even when you are in the visiting room.
- Please bring your own flask and cup, or bottled drink as there will be no access to kitchenettes or other shared areas.
- You must observe social distancing rules at all times.
- Unfortunately, children under the age of 15 are unable to visit unless pre-arranged and approved by the home manager.



# Bedroom visits - Essential Family Carers

We acknowledge that some residents will not be able to access or benefit from using technology, outdoor visits or the visiting room. It is often these residents who need extra support from a family member or a friend to prevent significant distress and maintain their physical and/or emotional needs. We have therefore introduced the Essential Family Carer (EFC) scheme where visits can occur if a resident has been assessed as needing this support. Sadly we can't offer this scheme to all residents or at all care homes.

**If you are an EFC you will be asked to undertake the safety measures mentioned previously as well as a number of other measure including:**

- Sharing evidence with the care home that you have been tested for COVID-19 either through a privately brought test kit, drive in testing or postal testing ([via this link](#)). You need to have a weekly test and to access the home, you need to have had a negative result. Where we have capacity we will try to help with testing for EFC's.
- You must book the visit in advance by ringing the home.
- When you arrive - call the home and wait for a member of staff to come outside to meet you. The staff member will take you to an area within the home where you will have the opportunity to leave your belongings, wash and dry your hands and be given your PPE (a fluid-repellent face mask and apron).
- You must maintain a physical distance from the staff member as you follow them to and from your friend or relative's room.
- Please do not touch any items during the walk to the room, unless necessary (e.g. if you need to use the handrail to walk). The staff member will open doors for you, press lift buttons etc.
- Continuing to wear your PPE throughout the visit including your face mask. We can discuss alternatives if your relative becomes distressed by you wearing a mask.
- For the first couple of visits they will be limited to 30 minutes between 10am – 4pm, Monday to Friday. After the first few visits frequency, dates and times will be discussed with you.

If you would like to know more about MHA's Essential Family Carer scheme please read – '[More than just a visitor – a guide to Essential Family Carers](#)'.

**Please note residents who are able to access other areas of the home are able to have an EFC if it is assessed as a need and safe to do so.**



# End of life visits

We understand how essential end of life visits are and wherever possible we will be making exceptions on compassionate grounds if visiting a relative or friend in the very last days of life. In these circumstances, two visitors are permitted per day as agreed with the home manager. Visits will be arranged over the phone in advance.

We must make clear that as we will be allowing these visits wherever possible, (even if the home is in a period of lock down) you will be doing so at your own risk. All the necessary precautions will be taken as outlined above and will include:

- Observing social distancing requirements at all times.
- Booking the visit in advance.
- Calling the home when you arrive and wait for a member of staff to come outside to meet you. The staff member will take you to an area within the home where you will have the opportunity to leave your belongings, wash and dry your hands and be given your PPE (a fluid-repellent face mask and apron).
- You must enter and leave the home via the nearest entrance to the visiting suite. This may mean that you have to enter and leave the home via a fire exit, you will be shown where to go.
- You must wear PPE as advised by staff (this would be the same as for any staff member who has contact with the resident).
- Your visit will be limited to one hour, depending on the situation in the home.

**If you have any questions in relation to this guidance, please do not hesitate to contact the care home manager.**



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