

Visiting Policy During Covid-19 Pandemic

Our priority has always been your safety and wellbeing. Altering our open-house working has been one of the most difficult decisions we have had to make and we understand the impact that this has on you and the people you care for. We do not know how long the Coronavirus will affect all our lives but wanted to update and share with you what we are doing to keep you safe and well. Essential family carers and loved ones are integral to the support we provide and if there is any question you have then please contact us at any time.

Reducing the Risk from COVID-19

- We want to assure you that we are following the correct procedures to make sure we protect residents, visitors and our staff. We are keeping up to date with all the guidance and are making sure that our staff know how to use the correct equipment.
- Any staff with symptoms or staff who have been in contact with anyone with COVID-19 are not coming to work and are following the Government guidance on self-isolation.
- We are monitoring all the people we support for symptoms or behaviour that is considered different to their usual presentation. We understand that not everyone will have the same symptoms of a persistent/new cough and temperature or loss of smell and taste and our staff understand the need to look for other symptoms and act immediately.

Responsibilities of Apple House Ltd

- We are responsible for ensuring that we support people within our care to meet with family and friends if they wish and that staff have the ability to support this. This support includes having written policies and procedures so that all staff understand what they need to do.
- We will identify other ways to connect with friends and family when face-to-face visits are not possible. We will use technology such as video conference or telephone calls to compensate for limited visits.
- We will ensure that we are open and transparent, and we will keep family members informed about their own relative's COVID-19 status (suspected or confirmed) where their relative has provided consent or a best interest decision has been made.
- Where the resident has an appointed power of attorney, relevant person's representative or another formal role, they will be informed of any changes in health including COVID-19
- We will continue to provide timely and regular updates to the people we support and their nominated individuals on the impact of COVID-19 at our homes and on visiting.

Visits can happen and we are working with you to make these possible in a number of ways including:

- **Window visits:** This will need safe ground floor window access for both residents and their visitors, and the relevant social distancing and PPE measures will need to be observed.
- **Garden visits:** Relevant PPE measures and social distancing will apply. Independent access to the garden will be needed to avoid visitors moving through the care setting to the garden.
- **Drive through visits:** These are facilitated visits in the car parks of homes. Again, any relevant PPE measures and social distancing will apply.
- **Picnics and meetings** in local parks/forest, beach or family member's garden. Adhering to social distancing, the use of PPE and the latest government guidance relating to numbers of people in one gathering and households who can mix.
- **Designated areas within a care setting where settings allow for this:** depending on the service it may be possible to enable visits to one of the cabins within the grounds reserved for this purpose. These cabins facilitate good ventilation, social distancing, ease of access by the people we support, and limits visitor journeys through the residential areas.
- **Family home visits:** Where a robust risk assessment and best interest decisions have been reached, visits away from the care home to family members can take place taking into account up to date government guidance.
- **Face to face visits:** New guidance has been issued by the government. This guidance applies from 8 March 2021 and replaces previous guidance on care home visiting. It applies to care homes for working age and for older adults. We have incorporated this latest guidance into our revised Visitors Policy. The full guidance can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

Visiting is a central part of care home life. It is crucially important for maintaining the health, wellbeing and quality of life of residents. Visiting is also vital for family and friends to maintain contact and life-long relationships with their loved ones and contribute to their support and care.

This guidance sets out the government's advice to support safe visiting:

- Every care home resident will be able to nominate a single named visitor who will be able to enter the care home for regular visits. These visitors should be tested using rapid lateral flow tests before every visit, must wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow all other infection control measures (which the care home will guide them on) during visits. Visitors and residents are advised to keep physical contact to a minimum. Visitors and residents may wish to hold hands but should bear in mind that any contact increases the risk of transmission. There should not be close physical contact such as hugging.
- Residents with the highest care needs will also be able to nominate an essential care giver.
- Care homes can continue to offer visits to other friends or family members with arrangements such as outdoor visiting, substantial screens, visiting pods, or behind windows.

Care home visiting should be supported wherever it is possible to do so safely – supported by this guidance and within an environment set up to manage risks. Visitors and family members also have an important role to play – helping to keep their loved ones safe by carefully following the policies described in this guidance, and the practical arrangements that care homes put in place. Local system leaders such as the directors of public health (DPH) and directors of adult social services (DASS) have a key role in this partnership to support visiting.

Welcoming anyone into care homes from the community inevitably brings risk of COVID-19 transmission. However, these risks can be managed and mitigated, and they should be balanced against the importance of visiting and the benefits it brings to care home residents and their families.

In the face of new variants of the virus, we still need to be cautious to ensure we protect those most at risk in care homes while ensuring indoor visits can go ahead. While the vaccine is bringing much needed hope and protection, until more is known about its impact on transmission, residents and visitors should continue to adhere to all the infection control measures that are in place now.

It is not a condition of visiting that the visitor or the resident should have been vaccinated. However, it is strongly recommended that all visitors and residents take up the opportunity to be vaccinated when they are invited to do so through the national programme.

In the event of an outbreak in a care home, the home should immediately stop visiting (except in exceptional circumstances such as end of life – and for essential care givers) to protect vulnerable residents, staff and visitors.

Visits will need to be pre booked. Visitors will need to observe strict social distancing from other residents, visitors and staff at all times.

Visitors should be reminded and provided facilities to wash their hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser on entering and leaving the home, and to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and clean their hands after disposal of the tissues.

Visitors should have no contact with other residents and minimal contact with care home staff (less than 15 minutes/2 metres). Where needed, conversations with staff can be arranged over the phone following an in-person visit.

All visitors should be screened for symptoms of acute respiratory infection before entering. No one who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 10 days, is currently experiencing, or first experienced, coronavirus symptoms in the last 10 days should be allowed to enter the premises, nor anyone who is a household contact of a case or who has been advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, or who is in a relevant quarantine period following return from travel.

Any potential visitor who tests positive with a rapid lateral flow test should immediately leave the premises and return home, avoiding public transport if possible, to self-isolate. They should be offered a confirmatory PCR test by the care home and if this is positive, their household contacts should also [self-isolate in line with current guidance](#).

The evolving nature of this covid-19 pandemic means that government guidance can be changed at short notice. For the latest government guidance please refer to the gov.uk website.