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Dear Families, Friends and Essential Carers

I am writing to you today to update you with our revised visitors policy and principles.

We are delighted to say that the government has bought in this guidance to support care homes to enable safe visiting.

The full guidance can be found here:

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

Our revised visiting policy and principles reflect this update and we are available to talk through individual arrangements now by contacting the relevant home manager to discuss in more detail.

We want to assure you that we are continuing to employ all guidance into a person-centered approach and always welcome your input and ideas.

I have outlined the governments key principles below and you can also find information on our website at www.applehouse.co.uk

- Visiting must be supported wherever and whenever it is possible and safe to do so – and a wide range of professionals have a role in supporting this, including care home managers, Department of Public Health (DPH) and Directors of Adult Social Services (DASS).
- Providers should facilitate visiting as described in this guidance wherever it is possible to do so in a risk-managed way and in line with the principles set out below.
- Providers should develop a dynamic risk assessment to help them decide how to provide the visiting opportunities outlined in this guidance, in a way that takes account of the individual needs of their residents, and the physical and other features unique to the care home.
- The local DPH and DASS have an important role in supporting care homes to ensure visiting happens safely. They should support the visiting arrangements set out in this guidance, unless

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there is good evidence to take a more restrictive approach in an individual care home for a particular period.

- While frameworks and advice developed by the DPH and covering the local population may be helpful, these should recognise different circumstances in individual homes and variations in infection rates in different areas within the local authority. It is important that any frameworks and advice enable care homes to exercise discretion based on their own circumstances.
- Blanket bans covering whole local authority areas are not appropriate.
- When developing their visiting policies, providers should undertake individual risk assessments where necessary, to assess the rights and needs of individual residents, as well as any specific vulnerabilities which are outlined in the resident's care plan, and to consider the role that visiting can play in this.
- This is particularly important when planning the 'essential care giver.'
- Each resident can nominate one person for regular visits – as agreed with the care home.
- These visitors should be tested using supplied rapid lateral flow tests at every visit.
- Testing is one way of reducing the risk of visiting a care home, but it does not mean there is no longer any risk. The visitor must also wear appropriate PPE and follow all other infection control measures.
- Visitors 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 because of the risk of infection.
- For some residents a visit with a greater degree of personal care may be central to maintaining their immediate health and wellbeing.

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- In such cases, in addition to the single named visitor and with the agreement of the care home, the visitor will be enabled and supported to provide this care and they will be able to visit more often. They will have access to the same PCR and rapid lateral flow testing and PPE arrangements as a member of care home staff.
- Each resident will be different, and the exact arrangements will need to be agreed between the care home, resident and their family (with professional support if helpful). This should follow an individualised assessment of the resident's needs.
- We also want to provide opportunities for each resident to see more than just the single named visitor or essential care giver. It is important that these visits are facilitated in a way that reduces the risks to visitors, residents and staff.
- Care homes should therefore continue to enable visits in COVID-secure ways, such as those set out below (including behind substantial screens, in designated visiting pods, behind windows or outdoors).
- We recognise that providers themselves are best placed to decide how such visits happen in practice, considering the needs and wellbeing of individual residents, and the given layout and facilities of the care home.
- Visits in exceptional circumstances such as end of life should always be supported and enabled. Families and residents should be supported to plan end of life visiting carefully, with the assumption that visiting will be enabled to happen not just towards the very end of life, and that discussions with the family take place in good time.
- Visits of this nature should be tested using supplied rapid lateral flow tests. For information on how to test, please see the [care home rapid lateral flow testing of visitors guidance](#). Essential care givers should continue to follow the advice provided above in [section 2.2](#)
- It is essential that visits take place in the context of robust practices for infection prevention and control throughout the care home.
- This is an essential part of ensuring that visits – in all of the situations described above – can happen as safely as possible.

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- All visitors have a very important role to play in keeping people safe by taking steps to reduce the risks of infection wherever possible. It is important that visitors observe social distancing, PPE and hand hygiene practice while in and around the care home – including during the visit itself, although some close contact may be possible where testing and PPE is in place to mitigate risk.
- It is important for providers to help visitors understand these risks, and their role in managing them to keep loved ones safe.
- It is important that all visitors follow any advice and instructions that the care home provides – in order to reduce risks to themselves and their loved ones as much as possible.

Kind regards

Romaine

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Director of Operations

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