



## Covid-19 update 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear All,

I hope, as always, that this finds you well.

How things have changed since the previous update. The response of the NHS in getting the vaccine rolled-out to so many people in such a short space of time has been truly remarkable. I am pleased to confirm that nearly all Residents who have consented to have the vaccine have had their first dose, and there are planned dates for any remaining first doses and for the second doses. We have had an excellent uptake of the vaccine in our staff group, and our vaccination rate is higher than 80%, and keeps going up. I hope this provides reassurance, as I know there have been much lower figures for the sector quoted in the national media.

As you will be aware, the government announced a change in their guidance to care home visiting from the 8<sup>th</sup> March. The new guidance was published last Thursday afternoon. The single biggest change to the guidance is that where local risk assessment allows, one named visitor, subject to a negative Covid test, will be able to visit without the need for a protective screen and, wearing the correct PPE, will be able to hold hands with their relative. However, the guidance also clearly states that visitors are advised to keep physical contact to a minimum and that any contact increases the risk of transmission. The guidance also very clearly states there should be no close physical contact such as hugging. You can read the guidance in more detail [here](#).

We have tried to remain open to one named visitor since June last year, and we have supported outdoor and screened visits as much as possible. Therefore, the most significant change in this guidance for us is that visits can happen without the need for a screen and that people will be able to hold hands. We are still required to operate our booking system and keep visits to a 30 minute window, as unfortunately we are not in a position to return to open house visiting yet. This is so that we can manage the testing of visitors within the [clinical guidance](#) on testing visitors in care homes. We will be using the lateral flow testing system to test visitors. Whilst this is not the most accurate test, it has demonstrated some effectiveness in helping care homes manage the Covid risk. **Please note that if you test positive on one of the LFT tests, we will offer you the more accurate PCR test to confirm the result, but you will need to go home and self-isolate.**

The new guidance makes allowances for more than one named visitor to visit the home (but no more than 2 visitors at any one time). These visits must be in the form of window visits or outdoor visiting. It is vital that social distancing is maintained for these visits. As the better weather arrives these will be much easier for us to make happen. From the 29<sup>th</sup> March we aim to enable outdoor visits again. These visits will also need to be booked in advance and will be still be limited to 30 minutes so that we can control and record the number of people on site at any given time. Until our Residents are fully vaccinated we would still like to keep visitors to a minimum to help us keep the risk as low as possible. We will let you know as soon as we are ready to start open to visits from other family members.

As we move through the summer we will hopefully be able to open up more and more. Clearly there are no guarantees, and any of our arrangements are subject to change depending on the situation in the home at any given time. In the meantime, we continue to adopt an approach to visiting that is based on local risk-assessments as well as government guidance. If you have any questions about our current visiting arrangements, please discuss these with Home.

With best wishes to you all

Richard

Richard Adams

CEO

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