

## **Guidance on visits away from a Supported Living Service**

### **Introduction**

From 17th May the restrictions in relation to COVID19, have changed to allow people to socialise indoors with other people from different households. The new guidance states that people can: “socialise indoors in a group of up to 6 people or 2 households, including for overnight stays,” and “Up to 30 people can meet outside”.

In supported living settings the same rules will apply for people we support who wish to visit family and friends in their homes.

To support Dimension’s guidance for supported living settings, the definition of a household in this instance is: *where people live together in a property with shared facilities e.g. kitchen and living areas and a shared front door.* We have also prepared some FAQs which can be found at the end of this guidance to give some scenarios of numbers and make up of visitors.

Visits in outdoor spaces and in community settings e.g. meeting in a pub will follow the national guidance and numbers as identified above. E.g. 6 people from any number of households. . If they met in a pub garden the number can increase to up to 30 people.

### **Indoor and overnight visits**

Our preferred approach to visits is that, where possible and regardless of the care setting, these should be completed outside, as this is known to decrease transmission risks.

Dimensions believe that the duration of a visit and whether this would include an overnight stay should be identified within a risk assessment for the visit with consideration given to travel distances and the impact on the person we support, including any behaviour risks that may arise from an overnight stay not being part of the visit or if it is the only option due to distance – for example, where maintenance of a routine is a key part of a behaviour support plan.

### **Advice for Families prior to any visits taking place**

Any family and friends must ensure that the following are adhered to prior to a visit taking place:-

- They do not have any COVID-19 symptoms
- They have not tested positive for Corona virus in the last 14 days

- They are not currently self-isolating
- They do not share a household with anyone who has been told to self-isolate (close contact of a COVID-19 case) in the previous 10 days, or anyone who has returned from high risk countries in the same time period.
- They have not been in contact with someone with COVID-19 symptoms in last 10 days
- They have not been contacted by or advised by any Test and Trace system to self-isolate in the last 10 days
- They have not travelled or returned from a trip outside of the UK in the last 14 days

If someone having contact with family might put another person they live with at risk, we will need to work with all parties to find a safe solution and may ask external services, e.g. social services care management to assist us with the risk management.

## **Risk assessment**

The risk assessment should consider any underlying health risks in the home particularly in relation to Covid-19 vulnerability, even with restrictions lifting. It must also take account of any future local or national changes. The vaccine status of the people being supported, their team and the household they are visiting will also be a contributing factor in assessing the risk/benefit of a visit.

The risk assessment should also identify the vulnerability of the household being visited and their contact and transmission risks.

Risk will be higher in a household with many people of different ages, e.g. school children and working age adults are more likely to have contact with more people than a household of one or two older people who may have been shielding themselves.

The risk assessment should identify what other control measures can be implemented to reduce risk, including limiting contact with anyone else – e.g. not using public transport or a taxi, self-isolating prior to Lateral Flow Testing (LFT/LFD) to increase accuracy of the test, and agreeing that the visit will only be in one location – and will consider how many people are likely to have contact with the person during that time. The Government guidelines are that up to 6 people from different households or 2 households with no limit on numbers can meet indoors, but the higher the number of people and households the higher the increase in potential risk. Where possible where there is a higher risk to a person we support, the lower the number of households or people, will help reduce the risk.

Infection control and PPE will also reduce risk; the risk assessment should identify what PPE and cleaning measures can also be implemented to reduce risk both in the household to be visited and on return to their home. This may include the provision of additional PPE to families for the duration of the visit.

This risk assessment should also consider the wider needs of people sharing the person's home, along with the control measures that can be used to reduce risks. These could include the use of both LFT and PCR coronavirus tests prior to and following visits.

The manager, in collaboration with the family/friends of the person we support, will need to work together to identify all of the control measures that are needed to facilitate the visit and reduce risk to its lowest levels.

### **Self-isolation on return**

The government's guidance states that people returning from visits to another household including overnight stays, do **not** need to self-isolate for 14 days unless they are showing symptoms of Covid-19, test positive or have been identified as being in contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19. This should be considered as part of the risk assessment as the ability of a person to self isolate if they return with a positive result or symptoms should be considered as a further control measure if they live with other people.

### **FAQ**

**Q:** Can a person we support go home to visit a family or friend and stay overnight?

**A:** Yes, as per the Government guidance a person we support can stay overnight or visit for a few hours any family or friend, as long as the rule of 6 people or 2 households is maintained.

**Q:** Why do we need to undertake a risk assessment?

**A:** The person we support may still be at increased risk from Covid 19, or they may live with someone with increased risks from Covid 19, therefore we will need to ensure that adequate control measures are in place for the visit to protect others if they live in shared accommodation.

**Q:** Do family and friends need to wear PPE during the visit?

**A:** It is not a requirement as they are not classed as 'at work' (our colleagues wear PPE as this is required under health and safety legislation as they are at work and the health and safety at work act applies) but it is strongly recommended where social distancing cannot be maintained that PPE is worn within 2 metres and when

supporting with personal care to minimise risk. The risks in relation to personal care increase because of proximity and the risk from airborne transmission. But also from the potential increase of exposure to bodily fluids where transmission is also possible.

**Q:** Do family and friends need to take a Lateral Flow Test before the person we support can visit their home?

**A:** This is strongly recommended and tests are freely available for the general community, they can be accessed from local community test centres or this link [Covid LFD tests](#) or collected from a local Pharmacist.

**Q:** What are the things that I need to consider as part of the risk assessment?

**A:** The things to consider as part of the risk assessment for the person we support are:

- Have the people involved or potentially at risk (e.g. other people they live with) had both vaccinations?
- How will they travel to the person's home?
- Is anyone Clinically Extremely Vulnerable?
- Is anyone showing any symptoms of Covid19 and do they understand the need to monitor for this prior to meeting up and to cancel if they do?
- Are people undertaking LFD testing regularly or prepared to test prior to the visit?
- Who will be visiting in the home whilst the person we support is there?
- Are there increased risks from the people visiting? (i.e. occupation, school age children, active in the community, frontline roles, increased transmission risk?)
- Can the person we support test on return to their home following the visit?
- Is PPE being worn/required?
- Are community places being visited as part of the visit home? (cafes, shops, entertainment venues, hotels etc)
- Can the person self isolate if they develop symptoms or test positive after the visit?

**Q:** Can people hug or hold hands?

**A:** People we support and their families and friends may want to hug when they meet. They should follow the [government guidance](#) about how to reduce risk when hugging. People may also wish to hold hands, but everyone should bear in mind that any contact increases the risk of transmission of Covid and while we have seen great progress with vaccination, the risks and unknown risks from new variants means that we are still maintaining high levels of infection control.

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