

Guidance on visits by a nominated family member/friend using lateral flow device (LFD) testing

Scope and context

Following the announcement that visits to people in care homes, by a designated family member or friend where they have a negative rapid corona virus test (Lateral Flow Device LFD), will be possible in England from 8th March 2021. Dimensions have decided to apply the same principles to all of our shared supported living services and have developed the following guidance to facilitate this.

The guidance has been prepared using the principles from our [framework for making decisions about in-person contact](#) during the pandemic and is intended to complement it.

If the rules in England or Wales change, we will update our guidance accordingly.

Principles

This guidance starts from the clear position that we want to facilitate meetings between the people we support and their family members after what has been a very difficult year.

Visiting family is a central part of life and is important for maintaining health, wellbeing and quality of life for the people we support. 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.

To support meaningful visiting, the Department of Health and Social Care is rolling out new rapid tests to care homes to test visitors. For care homes LFD tests will be available to order via the department of health and social care portal.

To ensure that we are able to promote the same level of contact across all of our services as soon as practicable. Dimensions is investing in the purchase of LFD tests to enable families and people we support to also undertake indoor meetings with a family member or friend, following the same principles as those to be applied in care homes.

While testing visitors can reduce the risk associated with visiting, it does not completely remove the risk of infection. When used alongside robust Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), it can support homes to safely

maintain a balance between infection control and the vital benefits of visiting to the health and wellbeing of everyone that they live with.

Friends and relatives have a very important role and responsibility to help keep their loved ones safe. By carefully following the steps described in this document and requirements laid out by the home, you will be playing your part in helping to protect not just your loved one, but all the people with whom they share their home, from the risk of infection.

Care home guidance states that: “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.” We endorse this guidance and likewise will be supporting people and encouraging everyone to take up the vaccine as they are able to.

Our priority is to manage and minimise the risks of visits, but we recognise that we cannot eliminate all risks. Therefore, capacity and informed consent are key factors.

We are committed to applying the following four principles to the decisions we make about in-person contact during this pandemic:

- **Lawful** – we will follow the law and relevant regulatory frameworks.
- **Proportionate** – we will balance people’s rights and risks relating to in-person contact.
- **Responsive** – we will involve people in decisions and keep our decisions under review.
- **Transparent** – we will record and explain our decisions in an accessible way.

Visiting people we support

- Each person we support will be able to nominate one designated individual to undertake visits to their home. *We appreciate that this will be a difficult choice for some people who have large extended families and circles of support and we ask that you appreciate the limitations under which we are trying to facilitate indoor visits at this time.*
- Only the nominated individual will be able to undertake visits inside the house
- This individual must be the same person for the duration of the restrictions that are being set by the government for care homes.
- The individual may be changed if for example the visiting family member becomes unwell and can no longer visit but changes must be agreed 14 days in advance with the

manager, and must be supported by a best interest's decision for the individual they are visiting. The new visitor may be asked to undertake additional steps to reduce risk based on the needs of everyone living in the home, for example self-isolation and additional testing.

- We also ask that the family member self-isolate for at least two days before visiting (so that the result of the rapid lateral flow coronavirus test they will take on arrival is more reliable).
- 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 to assist us with the risk management.
- The visiting family member will be given a rapid lateral flow coronavirus test (LFD) when they arrive and they must use it outside or in a designated area. Each home will have a planned way of testing based on the space available. They will only be admitted if the result is negative.
- If families will be travelling a long way to visit their relative, the manager will work with them to facilitate testing before they travel where this is possible. This may involve sending test kits to the family to take before they leave or via a local rapid testing centre close to their home. Managers will need to agree this in advance with families.
- They will also have their temperature checked before entering the person's home. If their temperature is 37.8 degrees Celsius or above, they cannot enter, regardless of the test result.
- The visit will be able to be indoors and face to face
- The visitor will be required to wear full PPE, which they will be required to put on before entering the building, and to remove and follow appropriate disposal protocols upon leaving
- The visitor will be required to follow direction to go directly to and from the visiting area – they will not be permitted to move freely around the care home, or to interact with other residents
- The visitor will be required to follow social distancing, hand hygiene protocols and any other reasonable instruction of the care home in relation to Infection Control.
- Visitors and people we support are advised to keep physical contact to a minimum during visits. People 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. We ask that families talk to colleagues about how they can have hand holding contact with their relative and what levels of PPE and hand washing/sanitising will be needed during the visit to reduce the risks from this possible contact.

- We understand that more than one family member may travel to the visit and as such if one person is allowed into the home following an LFD test, and the other would like an outside visit at the same time, that this is discussed and planned with the service before visiting to enable timings and support to be arranged.
- We can also offer visits to other friends or family members with arrangements such as outdoor visiting using gazebos etc., or behind windows where the home have been able to do accommodate this.
- For services where multiple people live, visits may need to be limited to set time frames, and need to be planned in advance and booked with the manager/service so that only one person is visiting at a time. We ask that you plan times in advance and work with teams to keep to these so that there is sufficient time between any visits for infection control procedures to be followed.
- Our colleagues will be undertaking additional high levels of infection control cleaning following visits, so we ask that you work with us to keep everyone as safe as we can.

Guidance for supporting Outdoor Visits

Visits should happen in the open air (this might include under a cover such as an awning, gazebo.) For these visits:

- the visitor and person must remain at least two metres apart at all times and social distancing (between visitors and people we support, colleagues, and visitors from other households) must be maintained at all times – during the visit, and around the building and any grounds.

If family members have any queries about this guidance, they can call the helpline for families (open from 9.30am to 1.30pm, Monday to Friday) on 0300 303 9161 or email the team at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org.