

Guidance on visits by family members/friends using lateral flow tests (LFT) testing in Registered Care Homes

Scope and context

In line with England's Roadmap guidance (which is different in Wales) we are updating our guidance in relation to visits to people living in care homes, following an update to the visits guidance from 17th May 2021. This guidance increases the number of people who can visit someone in a care home from 2 to up to 5 named visitors, with up to 2 people visiting at a time.

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 change, we will update our guidance accordingly.

Principles

Visiting family and friends 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.

Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) kits are now available to everyone in England via test centres, participating pharmacies and [online through the government's website](#).

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 for all settings 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

- Only the 5 nominated individuals will be able to undertake visits inside the house, with up to 2 visitors from the 5 visiting at any one time. This does not include any visiting children.
- These individuals must be the same people for the duration of the restrictions that are being set by the government for care homes.
- The individuals may be changed if for example the visiting family member becomes unable to visit for a period of time e.g. due to ill health or work commitments 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 were possible visitors and family members 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) and that they consider if any of the following apply before visiting:
 - 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.
- **Visitors** to care homes will be asked to provide evidence of a negative LFT test in the preceding 24 hours. Or they will be given a rapid lateral flow coronavirus test (LFT) when they arrive and they must use it outside or in a designated area. Some people will be exempt because they have had a positive test result for coronavirus in the previous 90 days. In this case the manager should be provided with evidence of this before the visit. Each care home will have a planned way of testing based on the space available. Visitors will only be admitted if the test result is negative. If families/friends 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 for visitors to access community testing kits and provide proof of a negative result taken in the last 24 hours.
- We can also offer outdoors 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, in line with national guidance on outside visits.
- For services where multiple people live, visits will need to be limited to set time frames, and need to be planned in advance and booked with the manager/service so that only two people are 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.

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.