

21st December 2020

Dear family member,

In my last letter to you dated 9th December I was happy to be able to set out how we planned to facilitate visits over the Christmas period. By making use of rapid 'lateral flow' coronavirus tests, we hoped that as many people we support as possible would either be able to visit family members or have family members visit them over the five day window during which restrictions were to be eased.

However, it is with a very heavy heart that I must let you know that our guidance on visits over Christmas has had to change due to the surge in coronavirus cases and the new rules issued by the government in both England and Wales.

All of London and most of the south-east of England has now been placed in 'Tier 4' which means that all mixing of households over Christmas has been banned. Other than in exceptional cases, I'm afraid this will mean that no visits will be possible at all in 'Tier 4' areas – unless a single family member is able to arrange an outside meeting in a public space.

In the rest of England, three households can still mix indoors but only on Christmas Day and no overnight stays are allowed. The situation in Wales is similar, although only two households are able to mix indoors plus one other single-person household.

It may, therefore, be possible to arrange for your loved one to visit you on Christmas Day other than for those who live in 'Tier 4'. However, in most cases it won't be possible for any family member to visit a loved one in one of our services, unless it is a single-person service and you have formed a support bubble with your loved one.

I know this will cause a lot of pain, sadness and frustration. It really isn't where we should be now, nine months into this pandemic. But I do still firmly believe that things will get better in 2021. The roll-out of the vaccine is continuing at pace and we hope that as many people as possible will take up the vaccine. I would also like to reassure you that we will have adequate numbers of colleagues on duty to support your loved one over Christmas and make it special for them, and we will do all we can to facilitate virtual ways for you to keep in touch with them – such as by Zoom calls, etc.

PTO

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Discovery Support Ltd is a charitable registered society number 12345.
Building 1430, Arlington Business Park, Theale, Reading RG7 4SA.

If you have any questions about Christmas, or have any other questions about how we are supporting your loved one, please liaise with your Locality Manager or contact our 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. The helpline will close from 1.30pm on Wednesday 23rd December and re-open on Tuesday 5th January.

Despite it all, I would like to wish you a peaceful Christmas.

Best wishes,

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Scown', written in a cursive style.

Steve Scown
Chief Executive
Dimensions Group (including Discovery)

PS – I know that some family members prefer bullet points to letters, so attached to this is a simple rundown of the key points.

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Key points from the letter

- The government has changed the rules about meeting up with family and friends over Christmas.
- Lots more people are infected with the virus and a new type of coronavirus is easier to pass on to others.

These are the new rules:

- If you or your relative live in Tier 4 you will not be able to see each other indoors over Christmas.
- It might be possible to arrange a short outdoors meeting in a public place with just one person.
- You must wear a mask and not hug or touch each other if you do this
- You cannot visit your relative in their Dimensions home on Christmas Day.
- In exceptional circumstance your relative may be able to go to your home on Christmas day.

- We are sorry we have to change the rules at short notice
- Our staff have cancelled their own holiday plans and will make sure your relative has a good day.
- We will make sure you can seek to your relative on the phone or in a video call.
- We hope everyone will get the vaccination as soon as it is available to them.

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