

8th June 2020

Dear family member,

I am writing to you now with an update following the recent further easing of social distancing restrictions in England. As I have said before, making sure you are fully informed about how we are keeping your loved one safe during these unprecedented times is a top priority for us – and for me personally.

I know very well how hard it has been for many families not to have been able to meet up with their loved ones during the lock-down, and many of you will have been delighted to be able to meet your loved one in a public open space since the restrictions were eased a few weeks ago. However, the fact that meetings could only be with one person and had to take place in public must also have been frustrating and confusing. I was relieved, therefore, at the news that from now on people can meet up with more than one person from a different household and, if necessary, in a private garden (while staying two metres apart).

I'm sure many of you are keen to make use of the new rules and see your loved one together, either in the park or at their home, and I would like to thank you for your patience while we have agreed new guidelines to manage these visits safely. As you know, ensuring the safety of all the people we support and our colleagues is our number one concern, and so we have been careful to set guidelines which do allow you to visit your loved one but in such a way that we keep risks to a minimum. I hope you will understand this and will accept that we have to set some limits over and above what the government has allowed in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone.

Attached to this letter is a short briefing paper listing some key points from the guidelines. I know they are quite complicated, so our team of Family Consultants will shortly be compiling a set of questions and answers to explain them more clearly, and we'll make sure these are published on our website. You can also contact our helpline for families (open from 10am to 2pm, Monday to Friday) on 0300 303 9161 or by email at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org.

Now, I should say that we are a person-centred organisation and so it pains me that we have to set so many rules to manage something as basic and vital as visiting your loved one. I sincerely hope that we'll get over this pandemic soon and visits can go back to normal.

PTO

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Remaining two metres apart from your loved one is not easy for you or for them, and it runs counter to our human instinct to want to be close to the people we love. I know how hard it is, but it is only by observing the rules that we'll all get through this crisis together as quickly as possible. Remember that you can always visit your loved one 'virtually' using technology, and we can supply the necessary kit for that.

Finally, I'd like to reassure you again that we are in a good place at Discovery and right across the Dimensions group right now, with more than adequate supplies of PPE and very few people we support or colleagues showing any coronavirus symptoms. No one is in hospital. We are seeing some great day to day engagement and Active Support being provided by our support teams. These are certainly difficult times characterised by anxiety and uncertainty, but we are doing all we can to ensure the ongoing health and wellbeing of your loved one.

Regards,



Steve Scown
Chief Executive
Dimensions Group (including Discovery)

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

Summary of guidelines for visiting your loved one

- Please arrange a convenient time with the locality manager in advance to make sure they can accommodate your visit – making sure, for example, that there are enough staff on hand, no other family members are visiting shared houses and no-one in your loved one's home has any symptoms of Covid-19.
- If your loved one doesn't have capacity to make decisions about visits and you hold court appointed deputyship (CoP) for them, or lasting power of attorney (LPA), it will be you that makes the decision for them and we know that your decision will be made in a way that keeps any risks to your loved one to a minimum.
- Meeting in a public open space carries fewer risks, so please only meet your loved one in their garden if it is really not possible for you to meet in a public open space.
- If you are visiting your loved one in their garden, please only come with a maximum of three other people (including children). In shared houses we will only be able to accommodate one visit per week (for each person that lives there) – this is so that everyone gets the chance to see family and friends and so that our colleagues can ensure everyone's safety. Also, visits are limited to a maximum of one hour.
- When you arrive for the visit, a colleague will need to take your temperature using a digital thermometer. If you have a raised temperature, I'm afraid we'll have to cancel the meeting because it's a key symptom of Covid-19 and we want to limit risks as much as possible.
- Please use hand sanitiser when you arrive.
- If you would like to bring a gift for your loved one, we ask that you place it in a plastic bag 72 hours before visiting and then remove it from the bag without touching it to ensure any risk of infection is eliminated. If you are not able to do this and there is no other way of sanitising your gift, it may have to be placed in a bag for 72 hours, which could cause distress to your loved one.
- Please make sure that you stay at least two metres away from your loved one and their support colleagues at all times. If this might not be possible, then you and your loved one will have to wear PPE, which we will provide. It is important that PPE is put on and taken off in the right way. Please view [this video](#) about how to do this.
- We won't be making drinks or snacks available at the moment, again to minimise risks of infection. Please do feel free to bring along your own drink in a flask or bottle and snacks.
- We do encourage you not to use the toilet while visiting but, if you do have to, please make use of the anti-bacterial wipes that will be available to clean any surfaces you have touched and follow good hand hygiene.
- Our support teams can bring a visit to an end at any point if any other people in the service are distressed or if there is any other pressing safety concern.
- It may be that your loved one would like to visit you in your garden rather than their own, and in this case we would ask that you talk with the locality manager to consider all of the above.