

15th October 2021

You can read a summary of this letter in bullet points on page 3.

Dear family member,

I wonder if, like me, you're wondering where this year has gone? How can we already be into mid-October, with the weather positively autumnal and the nights drawing in? At least things feel much more hopeful this autumn than they did last year. This time last year Covid-19 cases were rising rapidly, whether we'd have a vaccine solution was unclear and we still had two more national lockdowns ahead of us. To me it feels very different now, thanks in large part to the vaccine roll-out.

On the topic of vaccines, in my last letter to you I wrote briefly about the preparations we were making to implement the government's decision to make vaccination mandatory for staff in Registered Care Homes in England from 11th November 2021. **I am now writing this specific letter to you because your loved one lives in a Registered Care Home.** My aim is to update you on what's going to happen from November 11th.

From 11th November, it will become illegal for anyone who is not fully vaccinated against Covid-19 to work in or visit a Registered Care Home in England unless they are exempt. It is important to be clear first of all that **visiting family members and friends of people who live in a Registered Care Home are exempt.** You will not have to prove your vaccination status when you visit your loved one. However, you will have to have had a negative lateral flow test result, have your temperature checked as you enter and wear PPE as is currently the case. You will also need to sign a visitors' book when you arrive.

Other people who are exempt from the need to prove they are fully vaccinated include the small number of people who are medically unable to be vaccinated, those aged under 18 and workers who are providing emergency assistance or maintenance. There are a small number of further exceptions, but for everyone else the rule is clear – without evidence that they are fully vaccinated, they aren't allowed in. This includes any Dimensions colleagues who are not based at the Registered Care Home they are visiting.

PTO

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And of course every member of staff based at the Registered Care Home will, from 11th November, have to be fully vaccinated and to have evidenced that. The small number of support colleagues who have chosen not to be vaccinated will either have been redeployed elsewhere or will have left Dimensions.

I hope that the new regulations will reassure you that your loved one is as safe as possible, and of course our other infection control measures such as the use of PPE and temperature checks on entry are continuing. We are determined not to let any complacency creep in so that you can be sure the safety and wellbeing of your loved one remains our number one priority.

I would also like to share with you the news that Liz Wilson, one of our original family consultants whom many of you will know, has retired. Liz joined us in January 2012 and her departure has made me reflect on the journey we've been on since then. The way in which we involve family members of people we support and embrace your perspective feels much stronger now than when we appointed Liz, and I hope you agree. Families are now rightly regarded as a key part of what Dimensions is about and this will always be the case. However, while I believe things have improved a lot, I also know, as do my colleagues, that we are far from perfect. Frankly speaking, there will always be room for improvement.

Liz may have left, but our family consultant for Discovery, Jessica Heslop, is ready and able to give you any advice or information you need and she is ably assisted by our other family consultants and our great team of associate family consultants. Remember you can contact them if you have any general questions about how we support your loved one and keep them safe on our helpline for families. It's open from 9.30am to 1.30pm, Monday to Friday, and the number is 0300 303 9161. You can also contact our family consultants by email at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org. I'd also like to mention again the monthly Zoom meetings for families – contact the helpline to book a place.

Thank you again for your understanding and support. We may be in an easier phase of the pandemic now, with our cherished freedoms back, but the virus hasn't gone away and challenges certainly remain. We won't take our eyes off the ball, though, and we remain firmly committed to keeping your loved one safe and supporting them to flourish.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Scown
Chief Executive
Dimensions Group (including Discovery)

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Key points from the letter

- From 11th November 2021 it will become illegal for non-vaccinated people to work in or visit a Registered Care Home.
- **Visiting family members and friends of people who live in a Registered Care Home are exempt from this and don't need to be fully vaccinated.**
- All support staff in Registered Care Homes will be fully vaccinated or medically exempt.
- Our other infection control measures will remain in place.
- Liz Wilson, one of our original family consultants, has retired.
- Discovery family consultant Jessica Heslop is ready and able to give you any advice or information you need.
- For more information, you can contact our helpline for families on 0300 303 9161 or by email at family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org.
- You can also book a place on our monthly Zoom meetings for families by phoning 0300 303 9161 or emailing family.helpline@dimensions-uk.org

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