

Safe visiting in East Riding Care homes

1. Background

- 1.1 The priority across the adult social care sector is to keep those who are the most vulnerable to the impacts of the COVID19 virus safe and as protected from contracting the infection as it is practical and reasonable to do.
- 1.2 Staff who are working in care homes have been following strict guidance in order to minimise the risk of a COVID19 outbreak and to effectively manage the outbreak in homes where this has not proved possible. These measures include strict personal hygiene, the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), regular cleaning regimes across the home, cohorting staff and residents in order to minimise the risk of those with symptoms or a positive test result coming into contact with those who do not. Staff have restricted who they come into contact with both at work and at home in order to minimise the risk of becoming infected and this will need to continue for many months to come.
- 1.3 The risk of contracting COVID19 and the likelihood that it will have serious consequences for those vulnerable to its effects is not going to go away and until there is a vaccine or a more effective way of dealing with the spread of the infection the stringent measures that have been in place throughout lockdown will need to be maintained.
- 1.4 Visiting a relative or loved one living in a care home has been illegal, other than at the end stage of someone's life, since the lockdown restrictions were put in place across the country in early 2020, however as the restrictions are gradually lifted and people begin to resume some aspects of ordinary life it is reasonable to expect that families and friends will wish to resume visits to their relatives living in a care setting.
- 1.5 Unfortunately this will bring with it some significant challenges in maintaining the integrity of the infection control measures that are currently in place across care homes and which must remain to keep residents as safe as we can and keep the risk of the virus being transmitted within the care home as low as we can make it.
- 1.6 Until the regulations change visitors are not permitted to enter the care home unless it is to see someone who is at the end of their life and only if it is safe for other residents for close family members to do so.

2. Risk Assessment

2.1 In order to commence and continue visiting through the coming months risk assessment and mitigation of those risks is essential. The following are the key areas to consider before commencing visits:

- Staff and residents contracting Covid from visitors.
- Visitors contracting Covid from staff and residents.
- Visitors contracting Covid from other visitors.
- Heightened risks to clinically vulnerable residents.
- Claims from staff, residents and/or visitors who contract Covid.

- Regulatory enforcement in relation to resident safety.
- Regulatory enforcement in relation to restricting visits.
- Scrutiny from commissioners, public health, and safeguarding.
- Embargos if there are new Covid cases or concerns about safety.
- Insurers not covering any losses caused by Covid either because providers have not followed guidance and best practice or because they have withdrawn cover relating to Covid entirely when renewing insurance policies (several providers have reported this).
- Data protection breaches in relation to handling information about Covid cases.
- Staff concerns about being exposed to, and/or residents being exposed to, greater risk.

2. Managing risks

2.1 Points to consider when managing or mitigating risks include:

- Compliance with the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020. That will mean from Monday that visits can be in the grounds of care homes but must be outdoors. Likewise, there should be no more than 6 people meeting together at a time, maintaining a minimum distance of 2 meters from those outside their own household.
- Engaging with your local health protection team.
- Discussing your plans with your insurance brokers and ensuring you have clarity as to the extent of your cover.
- Consulting with staff and considering any concerns raised.
- Drafting a policy and procedure regarding visits. This will include:
 - Preparing the environment, including cover for inclement weather.
 - How visit times will be staggered to ensure social distancing is maintained, and that there are sufficient staff available to facilitate meetings.
 - Duration of visits.
 - Cleaning the environment before and after each visit.
 - Deployment of staff.
 - Use of PPE by staff and visitors.
 - Obtaining resident consent (or LPA / Deputy / best interest decisions as appropriate for those lacking capacity).
 - Planning for each resident including risk assessments. Assessments should cover how the resident can safely access and meet visitors in the environment, and managing any particular challenges on ensuring that social distancing is maintained throughout the visits.
 - •Consideration of how shielded residents will be protected from the risks of visitors.
 - How information about staff, residents and visitors relating to Covid will be processed
 - Maintaining contact through other means to supplement visits in person.
 - Drafting a visitors' agreement in which visitors agree to comply with the visiting policy, including infection control and declaring any symptoms or exposure to anyone with symptoms in the preceding 14 days.

3. Visiting conditions that must be met

3.1 In East Riding of Yorkshire Council care homes in order to ensure visits can take place safely the following need to be in place and visits will be subject to cancellation (potentially at short notice) if the weather is inclement or one or more of the conditions is not met:

1. An outside space where people can remain at least 2 meters apart
2. The resident must be well enough to be taken outside and that this is not likely to have an adverse health impact
3. The number of visitors will be restricted depending on the size of the area where the meeting is to take place but will not normally exceed two people per visit.
4. Sufficient staff on available on shift to facilitate the visit
5. Visitors have signed the visitor agreement which will include agreeing to have no physical contact with staff or residents
6. Visits have been pre-booked
7. Where appropriate visitors wear the relevant PPE
8. Visitors will comply with all other specified infection control measures