

Purpose and Scope

The Home of Comfort recognises the importance of visits to residents, their friends and families, and to the Home. However the outbreak of Covid-19 has had a disproportionate impact on residential care settings around the world, and for a period of 12 weeks visits only took place in emergency situations.

This policy sets out the Home's current policy and practice for managing visiting, and is based on guidance issued by the Department of Health and Social care and from our local CCG Care Home Support Team.

This policy applies to all residents and to all visitors.

Aims

This policy seeks to balance the rights of each individual resident and their friends and family members with the rights of the others within the care setting (residents and staff) and the duties and responsibilities of the Home.

There is evidence that the period of zero visiting in place at most care settings, including Home of Comfort, during the UK 'Lockdown', has been emotionally challenging for residents.

It is also clear that people living and working in residential settings have been more vulnerable than the general population to both contract Covid19, and to suffer more serious effects from the infection.

The policy has been written using a dynamic risk based approach and taking into account the welfare and safety of all residents and staff, and what the Home is practically able to manage.

New Residents

At the present time, all new residents admitted to a residential care setting are required to isolate for 14 days from the day of admission. This is in case they have been exposed to the coronavirus on the day prior to their admission, in which case they may in theory contract Covid19 at any time during the following 14 days. Unfortunately, testing cannot be used to shorten this period.

The Home recognises that this period of isolation is difficult for residents, particularly at a time when everything is new and they are getting to know our staff. We will do everything that we can to help new residents maintain contact with people who are important to them during this time, and to facilitate a face to face visit as soon as possible once the isolation period has finished.

Statement of Policy Relating to Regular Visits

Visitors are also asked to read the Visitor Code of Conduct below.

- Whilst there remains Covid19 infection circulating in the general population of the UK, and specifically in the Portsmouth and Hampshire region, restrictions on face to face visits will remain in place at Home of Comfort.
- Residents will be encouraged and supported to maintain contact with as many friends and family members as possible by letter and telephone. This will include
 - a. Provision of a specific telephone number for residents, and support from staff to receive calls
 - b. Support from staff to read and display cards and letters, and to send responses.

- c. Support to use electronic devices, including the use of planned video calls using equipment provided by the Home and platforms including Whatsapp, Zoom and Skype.
- Residents will be asked to nominate a member of their family or a friend who they wish to be their primary visitor. This is in-line with government guidance that each resident should have a 'single consistent visitor'.
 - The Home recognises that being able to have visits from only one person will be difficult for some residents and for their families. At the present time, based on the current data on infection rates in the Portsmouth and SE Hampshire area, the Home considers it reasonable that residents may nominate a second person who they would like to receive regular visits from, so long as that second person lives locally.
 - Residents may receive only one visitor at a time. We greatly regret that for the time being visitors may not bring children with them.
 - Visits may only take place by pre-booked appointment to be made with the Nurse in Charge. Appointment times will include the start and finish time of the visit, which will be limited in length.
 - The Home will aim to offer each resident one visit per week, but are not able to guarantee this will always be possible. Unfortunately it will not be possible to offer a second appointment slot simply because a resident has two nominated visitors.
 - Each visit booking must include the name of the person who will be coming to visit.
 - Visits will take place in the front and back garden of the Home. Visitors will be informed prior to the visit where their visit will occur.
 - In poor weather conditions, visits may take place in the conservatory of the Home, but due to limitations on space and on cleaning capacity, and the need to provide space for all residents, it is likely that some visits may be cancelled if the weather on the day is not good enough for them to take place outside.
 - Visitors should arrive in good time for the visit as they will be asked to complete a short form before the visit starts.
 - Pets may be brought to an outside visit but should not come into the Home or have direct contact with a resident.
 - Visits should take place with appropriate social distancing, without physical contact, and visitors should wear a face covering.
 - A resident has the right to refuse to see any visitor, and this right will be upheld by the Nurse in Charge, who will if necessary explain the situation to the visitor.
 - The Home understands that visitors may become upset, particularly if their friend or relative is not well, and all staff will do their best to provide support and comfort to visitors as well as to our residents.
 - Any visitor who is violent, abusive, or disruptive will be asked to leave. In exceptional circumstances, the Home's Matron or Administration Manager may decide that an individual may no longer be permitted to make appointments for visits.
 - The Home welcomes ideas, suggestions and comments from visitors that might help us to improve the care that we offer. We recognise that while visiting is so restricted it is difficult for friends and relatives to provide their input, and encourage anyone with concerns or comments to contact Matron by email or telephone in the first instance.

Visitor Code

All visitors are asked to comply with the following:

- Make an appointment for a specific day and time, confirming who will be attending.
- Not to bring anybody with them.
- Travel on foot, by bicycle, or by car if possible, using public transport only as a last resort.
- Contact the Home on the morning of the visit to check that the situation has not changed and to ensure the person they are coming to see is well enough for the visit to go ahead.
- Not to come to the Home if they have any symptoms which may be due to Covid-19 on the day.
- When they arrive at the Home, to have their temperature taken and to complete a short form recording the visit and their contact details, and declaring that they have no symptoms.
- Comply with infection control measures including the use of PPE as requested by the Home. Some residents will find it more difficult to hear a relative who is wearing a face covering.

Visitors can help by

- a. Maintaining eye contact with the resident
 - b. Not wearing a hat or anything else which might further conceal their face
 - c. Wearing their hair and dressing in a way that may help the resident to recognise them
- To maintain a 2m distance from the resident they have come to see during the visit
 - Ensure that any items they bring with them for the resident are 'low risk' and are packed into a plastic bag. Items may be kept in the bag for a period before they are unpacked to reduce the risk of infection.
- Visitors are encouraged to discuss any items they are unsure about with the Home's nursing staff in advance.
- Be understanding if the visit has to be cancelled due to bad weather or because the resident is not well enough to come out of her or his room.

Individualised Assessments

This policy aims to set out a clear policy in order to avoid confusion and set appropriate expectations, and in most cases the Home will seek to apply it consistently and fairly to all residents.

However, the Home also recognises that consideration must also be given to the individual circumstances of each resident, which will include their personal circumstances such as

- the people who are most important to them, an assessment of the risk of those individuals contracting the virus, and how much contact the resident was used to having with them,
- the ability of the resident to participate in telephone and video calls,
- the resident's physical health, and how this is changing over time,
- the cognitive state of the resident and the impact that lack of contact might have on their health and wellbeing.

These two important but conflicting principles will need to be balanced, and we realise that difficult judgements will need to be made.

When circumstances arise which may make it appropriate to permit a visit outside of the above criteria, the Home will need to assess the risks and benefits of the visit, and will keep records of

these risk assessments. For example, if a resident has a close friend or family member who lives at a distance and is making a trip to Portsmouth, the Home will consider sympathetically a request for that individual to make a one off visit to the resident.

Ultimately, the Matron will be responsible for the final decision, and she may consult with members of the Trustee board, or with the Portsmouth Care Home Support Team.

Friends and families are asked to be understanding of the Home's need to protect not just them, and the resident they wish to see, but also the other residents and the staff at the Home.

Anyone who would like to request a visit of this kind is asked to contact the Home as soon as possible to discuss the situation as time may be needed to check the latest published guidance or to seek advice.

End of Life Visits

End of life care is an important part of what the Home offers to residents and to their loved ones, and we appreciate how important this time is for everyone.

The Home considers End of Live visits to be 'emergency' visits in the context of government guidance. These may therefore take place outside of the usual visiting framework, and even within a resident's isolation period.

Planning for palliative care is a key part of the preparation of the Care Plan for every resident, and next of kin are always notified as soon as any resident moves into the last phase of their life.

At this stage, individualised assessments will be made about visiting arrangements, which would usually include visits at the bedside without social distancing, but with appropriate PPE.

Testing

This policy has been drawn up on the basis that the current residential setting "Whole Home" weekly antigen testing regime is in operation. Although this does not keep infection out of the Home, fast detection of any infection would be critical to prevent spread.

Smoking

The Home of Comfort is a fully no smoking site, in accordance with current legislation and with NICE guidance. Visitors who wish to smoke must leave the Home's premises to do so, and are asked not to linger outside the Home's gates while smoking.

This policy also applies to the use of e-cigarettes.

Review and Updates

This policy is based on the advice and guidance issued to the Home at the time of writing, and on the latest local infection rate data.

If there are changes to guidance, it will be updated to reflect those changes.

If the local infection rate increases, it may be necessary for the Home to introduce additional visiting restrictions or controls at short notice.

In the event of an outbreak at the Home, all visits will have to cease immediately for the duration of the outbreak. In such circumstances we would be guided by advice from Public Health England and our local care home support team.

All friends and family members of residents are encouraged to receive updates from the Home by:

- Subscribing to our email bulletins (there is a simple form to do this on our website home page, or you can give us your email address),
- Joining our 'friends of the Home' facebook group (There is a link on our website, or we can send this to you by email, skype or WhatsApp)
- Informing us that neither of these methods is convenient for you, so that we know we need to let you know of major changes by some other means.

References

The following information has been used in drawing up this policy:

1. Guidance from the UK government on Visiting In Care Homes:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>
This was published on July 22nd.
2. Guidance from the UK government on 'Admission and Care of Residents in a Care Home During Covid-19"
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-admission-and-care-of-people-in-care-homes>
This was last updated on 2nd September
3. Information provided by the local Director of Public Health to Portsmouth Care Homes "Portsmouth Covid-19 Infection Summary" (Not publically released)
This is updated weekly.
4. The Care Provider Alliance Briefing for care providers "COVID-19: Visitors' protocol"
published on 19 June 202
5. Guidance from the Portsmouth CCG Care Home Support Team circulated to all care providers in Portsmouth.
6. Guidance received through the Hampshire Care Association, Registered Nursing Home Association and National Care Forum, which includes guidance issued by Hampshire County Council and CCGs, and other commissioning authorities, and developed by advisors for those bodies.