



ASPECTS CARE

VISITORS

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Date Policy Implemented December 2010 by Paul Graham – Registered Care Manager
Reviewed in line with Mental Capacity Act 2005
Policy reviewed January 2023 by Paul Graham – Director of Services

Aspects Care Covid-19 Visitors Policy

Introduction

Maintaining opportunities for visiting and spending time together is critical for the health and wellbeing of people being supported in supported living placements, and their relationships with friends and family. In addition, for many people, there are important reasons for having in-person visits, as not doing so may be difficult to understand and lead to distress.

There are risks that need to be considered – even where people are vaccinated – but these are risks that can be appropriately managed.

The approach described below sets out how to mitigate the risks of visits (both into and out of the home) and has 3 key elements:

- People living in supported living settings live in their own homes and should be treated as such. This means they, and their visitors, need to follow the same national restrictions as other members of the public, including following each step in the government's roadmap around social contact. The roadmap and associated regulations provide some flexibilities which may apply to people in certain supported living settings (such as exemptions for some indoor gathering and in relation to forming support bubbles)
- Supported living managers should seek to support and facilitate these opportunities wherever it is safe to do. They should develop policies for visits into and out of the setting, that are based on a dynamic risk assessment, and include consideration of the individual needs of the people who live there. These risk assessments should be developed in consultation with them.
- Supported living managers should also work with the people being supported to identify what further steps they can take in order to manage and mitigate risks that arise from visiting.

The default position set out in this guidance is that visits should be supported and enabled wherever it is safe to do so.

In relation to those with impaired decision-making capacity, the guidance provides as follows:

- Any visiting arrangements should be made in agreement with the person being supported. If the person is assessed as not having capacity in relation to this decision, the provider should work within the

appropriate MCA framework to establish whether the arrangements are in the person's best interests. The government has published advice on the MCA and application of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) during the pandemic.

Regard should also be given to the ethical framework for adult social care, and the wellbeing duty in section 1 of the Care Act 2014, and all decisions should be taken in light of general legal obligations, such as those under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998, as applicable. Social workers can help providers to meet these duties by providing advice in individual cases should that be required.

Aspects Care will also consider the rights of people who may lack the relevant mental capacity needed to make a decision about visits out of their home. These people are protected by the empowering framework of the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 and its safeguards. The government has published advice on the MCA and application of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) during the pandemic.

All visits to supported living locations should consider the following points:

- Using garden for visits
- Visitors should limit close contact with other people who live at the location and staff.
- Visitors should ideally be provided with facilities to wash their hands or sanitise.
- Visitors be requested to wear facemasks if the resident prefers this.
- Open windows during the visit to improve air flow.

Covid-19

Currently, there is no requirement for visitors to Aspects Care supported living site to provide a negative LFD test result. Additionally, there is no need for temperatures to be taken before entry or a Health Declaration form to be completed.

However, where any persons supported within their home have symptoms of Covid-19 and/or have tested positive (by LFD or PCR test) only essential visits by family members or friends will be permitted. Ideally, these visits will be supported outside, where practical, but where this is not possible visits within the bedroom of the family member can be allowed.

Visitors should not enter the homes of the people we support if they are feeling unwell, even if they have tested negative for COVID-19, are fully vaccinated, and have received their boosters. Transmissible viruses such as flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and norovirus can be just as dangerous as COVID-19. If visitors have any symptoms that suggest other transmissible viruses and infections, such as cough, high temperature, diarrhea or vomiting, they may not be allowed entry until after they feel better.

Aspects Care understands the need to follow relevant Government regulations and guidance when Covid-19 pandemic restrictions are in place. The company will always endeavour to ensure current Government requirements and guidance are being followed at its supported living sites across the country.

This policy sets out the procedures to be followed when such restrictions are in place and will be amended whenever fresh guidelines or requirements are issued.

This policy is for family, friends and visitors to registered care homes and single or shared supported living settings in England.

Policy for family, friends and visitors for single occupancy or shared supported living settings in England.

Key points for indoor visits

The key points below are followed by more comprehensive guidance for visits both indoors and outdoors.

- Aspects Care will generally adopt the same policy as is applicable to people who live in Registered Care Homes or as Government guideline dictate.
- In such circumstances the last guidelines were that two designated visitors were allowed indoors for the people we support in shared supported living if they cannot meet outdoors and if not having visitors indoors would cause them distress.
- In both cases, visitors would need to have returned a negative lateral flow test result. The government made these available to registered providers. For visitors to supported living services, the manager would agree whether we would provide the visitors with test kits or if they would make use of the test kits being provided free to everyone. Visitors must take the test on the day of the visit and show their result.
- Only the two nominated individuals will be able to undertake visits inside the service. These individuals must be the same people for the duration of the current restrictions.

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- We also ask that, where possible, visitors self-isolate for at least two days before visiting so that the result of the rapid lateral flow test they will take on arrival is more reliable.
- This risk assessment template needs to be completed before any indoor visit can go ahead.
- All normal infection control measures need to be maintained, including temperature checks and the wearing of full PPE by indoor visitors.
- Visitors may hold hands but should bear in mind that any contact increases the risk of transmission.
- All visits must be planned with the locality manager.

Scope and context

This guidance covers visits to people living in single and shared supported living settings where it is not possible to meet outside, where likewise we would allow two designated family members or friends to visit indoors where they have a negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test result.

Aspects Care has decided to apply the same principles as those used in care homes, to all of our shared and single supported living services where a meeting with family or friends is not possible outside of the home in line with the national guidelines and were it would cause distress to the individual we support not to have family or friends visiting indoors.

The guidance has been prepared using the principles from our framework for making decisions about in-person contact during the pandemic and is intended to complement it.

LFD testing to facilitate visits

This guidance starts from the clear position that we want to facilitate meetings between the people we support and their family members and friends after what has been a very difficult year.

Visits by family and friends is a central part of life and is important for maintaining health, wellbeing and quality of life for the people we support. Visiting is also vital for family and friends to maintain contact and life-long relationships with their loved ones and contribute to their support and care.

LFD testing was available to everyone in England via a number of routes in local communities when pandemic restrictions were in place. To support meaningful visiting in supported living settings, the Department of Health and Social Care Date Policy Implemented December 2010 by Paul Graham – Registered Care Manager
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(DHSC) made LFD tests available to order via the Department of Health and Social Care's portal.

For some supported living settings they were able to order and supply tests to visitors from the DHSC, but additionally Aspects Care has a stock of tests that can also be ordered if these routes or local tests are not available to visitors. However, given that there were freely accessible supply of tests within the community, the manager of the supported living service will advise visitors on the route they will need to follow to access tests and provide a negative result prior to the visit. More details on testing routes are covered below. If there are any issues in visitors accessing tests, Aspects Care will provide these in order to facilitate visits as we know how important these visits are.

While testing visitors can reduce the risk associated with visiting, it does not completely remove the risk of infection. However, when used alongside robust Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), it can support homes to safely maintain a balance between infection control and the vital benefits of visiting to the health and wellbeing of everyone they live with.

Our stance on vaccination

The Government's care home and supported living guidance states that: "It is not a condition of visiting that the visitor or the resident should have been vaccinated. However, it is strongly recommended that all visitors and residents take up the opportunity to be vaccinated when they are invited to do so through the national programme." We endorse this guidance for all settings and, likewise, will be supporting people and encouraging everyone to take up the vaccine as they are able to.

Guiding principles

Our priority is to manage and minimise the risks of visits, but we recognise that we cannot eliminate all risks. Therefore, capacity and informed consent are key factors. We are committed to applying the following four principles to the decisions we make about in-person contact during this pandemic:

- **Lawful** – we will follow the law and relevant regulatory frameworks.
- **Proportionate** – we will balance people's rights and risks relating to in-person contact.
- **Responsive** – we will involve people in decisions and keep our decisions under review.
- **Transparent** – we will record and explain our decisions in an accessible way

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Visiting people we support

When in place the Government guidance for shared and single supported living stated that people should follow the national guidance and restrictions applicable to any member of the public where this is possible. The relevant directions put in place at any given time is the option that should be followed wherever practical. Indoor visits are possible, if they are in the best interests of the people who live there, and they are undertaken in a risk managed way. In order to facilitate this Aspects Care would use the same approach to indoor visits that is in place for care home settings. If the person we support is already in a support bubble this will continue – but LFD testing may need to be introduced to support bubble arrangements, if it is not already in use, where others in the home are now receiving visitors via the LFD route below.

- The supported living setting will risk assess the overall level of risk to everyone who is living in the home. This will determine whether the service is a high-risk setting based on the criteria set out in the Director of Public Health guidance.
- Additionally, an individual risk assessment will be completed for the person who is being visited and their designated visitors. The inclusion of the visitors in this risk assessment will help to control risks – for example, a mum in her 70s who drives to the home to visit their daughter, will be a lower risk visitor than a brother who works in retail and uses public transport. This risk assessment will determine the control measures required to facilitate safe visits for everyone.
- In all settings each person we support will be able to nominate two designated individuals to undertake visits to their home. We appreciate that this will be a difficult choice for some people who have large extended families and circles of support, and we ask that you help families understand the limitations that we are operating within.
- Only the two nominated individuals will be able to undertake visits inside the house.
- These individuals must be the same people for the duration of the restrictions that are being set by the government for care homes and the guidance on visits to supported living settings.
- The individuals may be changed if, for example, the visiting family member becomes unable to visit for a period of time e.g. due to ill health or work commitments, but changes must be agreed 14 days in advance with the manager, and must be supported by a best interest's decision for the individual they are visiting. The new visitor may be asked to undertake

additional steps to reduce risk based on the needs of everyone living in the home, for example self-isolation and additional testing.

We also ask that where possible visitors and family members self-isolate for at least two days before visiting (so that the result of the rapid lateral flow coronavirus test they will take on arrival is more reliable) and that they make sure that all of the following apply before visiting:

- They do not have any COVID-19 symptoms
- They have not tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- They are not currently self-isolating o They do not share a household with anyone who has been told to self-isolate (close contact of a COVID-19 case) in the previous 10 days, or anyone who has returned from high-risk countries in the same time period.
- They have not been in contact with someone with COVID-19 symptoms in last 10 days o They have not been contacted by or advised by any Test and Trace system to self-isolate in the last 10 days
- They have not travelled or returned from a trip outside of the UK in the last 14 days
- If someone having contact with family members might put another person they live with at risk, we will need to work with all parties to find a safe solution and may ask external services, e.g. social services care management, to assist us with the risk management.

Visitor Procedures

Visitors to supported living settings will be advised by the manager on how they should access LFD tests. In some cases the service may be able to provide these, but visitors may be asked to access these themselves prior to visiting and provide proof of a negative test result taken in the last 24 hours (unless they are exempt as having had a positive test result for coronavirus in the previous 90 days).

All visitors will have their temperature checked before entering the person's home. If their temperature is 37.8 degrees Celsius or above, they cannot enter, regardless of the test result.

All visitors will be required to wear full PPE, which they will be required to put on before entering the building, and to remove and follow appropriate disposal protocols upon leaving.

The visitor will be required to follow direction to go directly to and from the visiting area – they will not be permitted to move freely around the home, or to interact with other people who live there.

The visitor will be required to follow social distancing, hand hygiene protocols and any other reasonable instruction in relation to Infection Control.

Visitors and people, we support are advised to keep physical contact to a minimum during visits. People can hold hands if they wish but should bear in mind that any contact increases the risk of transmission. There should not be close physical contact such as hugging. Managers should clearly explain to visitors what they can and cannot do and what levels of PPE and hand washing/sanitising will be needed during the visit to reduce the risks from this possible contact.

We understand that more than two family members may travel to the visit. In these instances, two people will be allowed into the home following a negative LFD test result, and others could have an outside visit at the same time. This arrangement must be discussed and planned with the service before visiting to enable timings and support to be arranged.

We can also offer outdoors visits to other friends or family members with arrangements such as outdoor visiting using gazebos, etc., or behind windows where the home have been able to do accommodate this, in line with national guidance on outside visits.

For services where multiple people live, visits will need to be limited to set time frames, and need to be planned in advance and booked with the manager/service so that only two people are visiting at a time.

Service will need to follow a strict cleaning process after visits.

Guidance for supporting outdoor visits in all settings

Visits should happen in the open air wherever possible. This might include under a cover such as an awning, gazebo. For these visits:

- The visitor(s) and person must always remain at least two metres apart and social distancing (between visitors and people we support, colleagues, and visitors from other households) must be maintained at all times – during the visit, and around the building and any grounds.
- If social distancing cannot be maintained, full PPE will need to be worn by the visitor(s)