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Registered care home providers (adults)  
Copied to  
Chief Officers Health and Social Care Partnerships  
Chief Social Work Officers  
Directors of Public Health  
Chief Executives NHS Boards and Local  
Authorities  
NHS Board Nurse and Medical Directors

By Email.

17 November 2020

Dear Colleagues,

## Strategic Framework for Scotland and Visiting in Adult Care Homes

I am writing to you to provide an update on care home visiting following the publication of the [Strategic Framework](#) which outlines five protection levels to control the spread of the virus. Each local authority has been placed in a protection level, with differing [local restrictions](#). This has implications for care home visiting. Given these new protection levels and other issues that we know are complicating matters for providers, residents and families, we are reviewing aspects of our guidance. This includes a review of advice on 28 day closure following a positive test and consistency of public health advice across Scotland.

In the meantime I hope it is helpful to provide advice on visiting against each of the 5 levels.

### Protection levels and visiting

In summary, current care home [guidance](#) is recommended for levels 1-3 unless directed otherwise by the local Director of Public Health. Current guidance from 12 October recommends a combination of:

- Essential visits
- Indoor visits with one designated person for up to four hours once a week.
- Garden visits with 6 max people from no more than 2 different households 60 minutes once a week.
- Window visits

For level 0– visiting options further relaxed and closer to normal with continued IPC precautions and as advised by the Director of Public Health

For level 4 essential visits only are recommended alongside window and garden visits if the Directors of Public Health judge to be safe.

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It is imperative that **essential visits** should be supported sympathetically at every protection level throughout the pandemic. As outlined in my letter of 12 October, such visits should be supported where it is imperative that friends or family see their loved one. This might include circumstances where it is clear that the person's health and wellbeing is changing for the worse, where visiting may help with communication difficulties, to ease significant personal stress or other pressing circumstances.

With the exception of essential visits, visiting should take place only when care homes are established and declared free of all COVID-19 cases by local health protection teams 28 days from last date of positive test result or where appropriate last symptoms of any resident or staff member. Where the last date of a positive test is a staff member, a risk assessment should be undertaken to determine whether the full 28 day period should be applied. In addition care homes should be participating in the routine weekly testing of care staff.

### **Guidance on travel**

You will also wish to be aware that current travel advice is that people should not travel to or from areas where higher numbers of people may be carrying the virus. However there are a list of limited exceptions for essential travel into or out of Level 3 and 4 local authority areas. The exceptions include visits to a person receiving treatment in a hospital, staying in a hospice or care home. Advice on travel can be found [here](#).

### **Support for visiting arrangements**

Where you would like additional support or consultation about visiting arrangements or indeed any other matter, you should liaise with your clinical oversight leads in the first instance. As you know Clinical and Care Professional Oversight arrangements (or multi-disciplinary teams/MDTs) provide input on a range of issues such as infection prevention and control, health protection, PPE and clinical care, and support with any care home outbreaks. Nurse Directors are leading the support for care homes on Infection Prevention Control. If you have problems accessing your normal PPE supply, you can continue to access your local Scottish Government supported PPE Hubs for support with additional PPE, including provision for visitors until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

### **Communications on updates to national protection level advice**

The levels for each Local Authority area are considered on a weekly basis and it is important that you are informed about the arrangements for your area. We expect local oversight teams to put in place arrangements for communicating any area-wide or individual care home visiting changes. Similarly care homes should ensure that residents and designated visitors are notified where there are changes to visiting arrangements.

Nationally if there are significant changes to the protection levels which have implications for visiting, we will write to care homes and other stakeholders Chief Executives Local Authorities and Health Boards, COSLA, Directors Public Health, Chief Officers Health and Social Care Partnerships, Chief Social Work Officers, Nurse and Medical Directors.

### **Further guidance on visiting**

In the coming weeks I intend to provide further advice on care home visiting to support more people to connect with their loved ones where it is safe to do so. In the first instance, the Clinical and Professional Advisory Group will be issuing a set of principles for supporting visiting during the Christmas period. Following this we will be publishing a local decision making framework to support a longer term and more nuanced approach to decisions on

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visiting which will take account of a number of local factors and is proportionate to the assessment of risk. This will allow increased tailoring of visiting arrangements based on local circumstances.

I would also like to highlight that the recent clinical and scientific review of testing published on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October set out plans for expanding testing to asymptomatic groups to further protect those that are vulnerable. The expanded testing programme will include visitors to care homes and work is currently progressing on delivery.

Kind regards,



**JEANE FREEMAN**

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