

# Guidance on care home visiting (England only)

## Background

This document shares the current government guidance on care home visiting and shares some advice on alternative ways of keeping in touch.

## What we think

It is important that family members are still able to visit people with Parkinson's who are in care homes, to help maintain mental wellbeing and communication skills. However this must always be balanced with the potential risk of carrying the virus into the care or nursing home and infecting residents, who are typically at extremely high risk if they catch coronavirus.

The costs of tests and personal protective equipment (PPE) should not be passed on to care home residents.

We think people living in care homes or assisted living facilities should be supported, with the appropriate safeguards, to spend time at home with their families.

We think it is important that individual care homes work with the family to provide opportunities for them to visit and on pages 2 and 3 of this document we have shared some ways to make the most of these visits.

## Government guidance

Government guidance will continue to be updated as the risk posed by coronavirus changes. They recommend checking the [guidance](#) at regular intervals to ensure that you are viewing the most up-to-date information.

### Supported living and visits out of a care home

- Guidance for supported living settings is available [here](#).
- Guidance for visits out of a care home is available [here](#).

## Resources to support care home staff

The National Care Forum, Rights for Residents and other partners have developed a set of resources, designed to provide practical support to care home staff, residents and visitors observing the current care home visiting guidance. It's called [Partners in Care](#) and has a range of tools to help friends and relatives and care homes to work together to help make the most out of visiting.

## Infection-control precautions

These should be set out in the care providers visiting policy and communicated in a clear and accessible way.

Government guidance provides a number of measures and considerations that care providers should take into account. They cover providing clear guidance and procedures for visitors to follow, including:

- the wearing of face masks,
- frequent hand washing and
- use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) even if people have had both vaccines and have a negative lateral flow test.

A comprehensive list of precautions that care homes should take can be found in '2.1 Infection control precautions and the wider care home environment' [section](#) of the guidance.

## Preparing for the visit

Advice for residents and families should be set out in the visiting policy of the care home and shared with them. This advice should cover issues such as:

- information for visitors about how to prepare for a visit and given tips on how to communicate if face coverings are required, for example:
  - speaking loudly and clearly
  - keeping eye contact
  - not wearing hats or anything else that might conceal their face further
  - wearing clothing or their hair in a way that a resident would more likely recognise
- reassurance for visitors, including that some people with dementia might struggle at first to remember or recognise them. Care home staff should try and prepare the resident for a visit, perhaps by looking at photographs of the person who is due to visit, and talking to them about their relationship.

Friends and family should be informed that their ability to visit care homes is dependent on the specific circumstances of the local community as well as the care home and those who live and work there. This means that the rules on visiting may change.

In some instances where a person has newly entered a care home for example from being discharged from hospital you could advise the family member or friend to use the Alzheimer's Society '[This is me](#)' tool to inform the care home about their loved one, their likes and dislikes and their individual needs. This may provide the family some reassurance that their loved one is being taken care of if they are unable to visit straight away.

The range of visits made available will be negotiated between the care providers, their residents, their staff and their visitors. It may be possible for residents and visitors to have visits in a variety of these forms, as circumstances allow.

### **Getting the most from your visit**

In the current circumstances friends and family of care home residents are finding it challenging to have meaningful visits. In some cases it has been traumatic for the person they are visiting as well as themselves.

Barbara, who visited her husband Barney in a nursing home for many years until he passed away last year, has some advice for making the most of visiting a friend or relative in a care or nursing home.

She suggested creating a checklist of things you used to do on visits pre-covid. For example:

- 1) What time did they visit? Eg tea time or to help with feeding, hair dressing, etc
- 2) Listen to their favourite music, sing or dance.
- 3) Exercise together, if you can.
- 4) Play games.
- 5) Read or look at photo albums.
- 6) Watch TV or a favourite film.
- 7) Talk to friends or family members by phone.
- 8) If you're able, embrace on arrival or hold hands.
- 9) Visit any outdoor space/the garden.

Barbara's advice is that before a visit, plan it with the care home staff. Discuss the type of activities you'd like to do and how it can be achieved under the guidelines and if not how to explain specifically why it can't be done. After the visit have a debrief with staff and ensure that if there is a problem discuss how it can be resolved for future visits.

For further information or if you have any questions:

- please contact our helpline on 0808 800 0303
- or email [hello@parkinsons.org.uk](mailto:hello@parkinsons.org.uk)

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