

VISITING PROTOCOL DURING AND AFTER COVID-19

GUIDELINES FOR VISITORS TO RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING HOMES

Introduction

From April 2022 the restrictions on care home visiting were changed to allow unrestricted visiting unless in an outbreak situation. The following is Waltham Hall Nursing Home's policy on visiting.

General Principles

This guidance applies to visits into care homes.

Given the significant vulnerability of residents and the increased risks visiting will present, our staff and resident's will be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. We will also continue to test regularly for COVID-19. Any Essential Care givers will be required to test along with staff, twice weekly. Visiting professionals will routinely test in the same way as our staff due to the nature of their job, we will ask for confirmation of their latest test results before admitting them into the home. Any other visitors to the home will not need to test before a visit can commence.

Essential visits such as for residents approaching the end of their lives should continue in all circumstances. This has remained unchanged since the beginning of the pandemic.

Types of visits

There are several ways in which visiting is possible. These are outlined below.

1. Garden visits
2. Visiting pod
3. Residents bedrooms
4. Inside designated visiting room
5. Video calls and telephone calls
6. Visiting outside the home

COVID-19 mitigating measures

In line with national guidance and good infection prevention and control measures, care homes need to ensure the following elements are in place and clearly described to friends and families as part of the care home's visiting policy.

- Visits must be pre-arranged with the manager/person in charge of the home. This is to support the home to manage the flow of visitors.
- This visiting policy of the care home should be shared with residents and families and should include tips on how to communicate with their loved one while wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and expectations with regards to adherence to infection prevention and control measures.
- Processes should be in place to ensure visitors are informed that a planned visit may be cancelled or postponed at short notice if the visit cannot be safely facilitated in accordance with national guidance or where the resident is unwell, or in situations where the visitor fails to comply with COVID-19 mitigating measures.
- All visits must be overseen by staff to ensure infection control and social distancing measures are adhered to. It is the responsibility of the care home to ensure there is appropriate staffing capacity to manage this.
- Visitors will need to wear a face covering throughout the visit. The home will need to ensure they have sufficient supplies of surgical face masks as these will need to be provided by the home if visitors do not bring their own. Additional PPE may also need to be considered and offered beyond a face covering if appropriate to the need of their visit. A very small number of residents may have great difficulty in accepting staff or visitors wearing masks or face coverings. In these circumstances, an individual comprehensive risk assessment should be undertaken. If visors or clear face coverings are available, they can be considered as part of the risk assessment. Under no circumstances should this assessment be applied to the whole care setting.
- During visits inside the care home, it is important that visitors do not come into contact with other residents.
- In order to minimise contact with staff who are providing care, any discussion with staff that is likely to take longer than 15 minutes should take place over the phone after the visit is complete.
- Social distancing between all individuals (visitors, residents, staff, and visitors from other households) should be maintained at all times. There will be some situations where social distancing measures between the resident and visitor will need to be reviewed e.g. where it does not meet the communication needs of the resident. Where possible, seats should be provided 2 metres apart in the designated area and the visitor advised that these must not be moved, Skin to skin contact such as handshakes or hugs, should be kept to a minimum.
- Ensure the designated visitor room is clutter free and cleaned in line with national cleaning guidance for care homes at least daily or more frequently if needed. Particular attention should be paid to frequently touched surfaces/touch points between visits. The visiting space/room must be used by only one resident and visiting party at a time.

- National guidance for care homes now allows children, although we would like to limit this wherever possible due to risk of infection and the vulnerability of the residents Children over 11 will be expected to wear PPE.

Advice to care homes on visiting arrangements for residents receiving end of life care

The following is guidance but we will risk assess each individual case by case

- Up to two visitors at a time, with PPE if necessary.
- Social distancing should be maintained between visitors as far as possible. Relatives should be facilitated to hold the dying person's hand if they wish using appropriate PPE – gloves – and hand washing afterwards.
- No restriction should be placed on the length or timing of visits but families to recognise they need to share the time between themselves. Relatives must not move around the Care Home and should go straight to the resident's room.
- Relatives cannot visit anyone at the end of life if they:
 - Have tested positive for COVID-19
 - Have had a test and are waiting the result
 - Have any symptoms of COVID-19
 - Are otherwise unwell for any non COVID-19 reason

PLEASE NOW READ AND OBSERVE

OUR POLICY

Policies and procedures

Waltham Hall Nursing Home will work closely with their staff teams to provide appropriate support, policies and procedures to enable staff to facilitate visits safely and in line with all the relevant guidance.

Waltham Hall Nursing Home wants to **carefully regulate and limit the number of visitors** in order to minimise the risk of the introduction of COVID-19.

Visits between residents and their visitors must **operate fully in line with the latest infection prevention and control guidance** including provisions relating to the use

of designated areas for visits and the use of social distancing practices, good hand hygiene, and use of PPE for visitors and residents.

Visits will need to **be booked in advance for a specific day, time and length of visit.**

Waltham Hall Nursing Home has created a '**Responsible Visitor Code**' which sets out a range of responsibilities that visitors must abide by prior to and during any visit.

The code will state that visitors must:

- Book visits in advance for a specific day, time and length of visit
- Be free of any COVID-19 symptoms on the day of their visit
- Not be unwell on the day of their visits
- Comply with the infection prevention and control measures, including a temperature test, mandatory hand hygiene, the use of PPE as required and social distancing requirements, remaining in the designated visiting area

Waltham Hall Nursing Home will discuss with potential visitors the best way to get to and from the home. Wherever possible, visitors should try to walk or travel by car and **avoid public transport when visiting the home**, in line with the latest government advice on travel during COVID-19.

Ability to suspend visiting

In the event of any suspected or actual outbreak of COVID-19, or a suspected or known case of COVID-19 within Waltham Hall Nursing Home, visitor restrictions may need to be immediately implemented which suspend some of these enabling approaches and will include exclusion of any non-essential visitors. This will be implemented in a transparent manner with open and clear communication to residents and relevant family members.

Waltham Hall Nursing Home will vary their responses to enabling visits in person to care settings as COVID-19 risks change with their local community, using their dynamic risk-based approach.

Effective communication

Waltham Hall Nursing Home will ensure that they communicate effectively with relatives and other key stakeholders in an open and transparent way about their approach to visiting.

Learning as the situation develops

Waltham Hall Nursing Home will review their visiting policies as they learn from their implementation of opening up to visitors and as the wider COVID-19 situation and guidance/advice evolves.

Rights and responsibilities

This protocol include a set of rights and responsibilities for both care providers and visitors which put the welfare and wellbeing of residents/people receiving care at the heart of the approach to developing their visiting policies.

RIGHTS	
Waltham Hall Nursing Home has the right to:	Visitors have the right to:
Mitigate risk of infection by refusing entry to Waltham Hall Nursing Home to anyone or requesting that a person leave the premises, for any justifiable reason consistent with this protocol.	Access Waltham Hall Nursing Home in accordance with the entry requirements set out in the visiting policy.
Consider increased visitor restrictions when an outbreak (including non-COVID-19) occurs within Waltham Hall Nursing Home, or declared outbreak/clusters have occurred within the local area or if there are other extraordinary circumstances that require it, and usage of such circumstances will be closely monitored.	Be notified by timely and regular updates and information about what is happening in the home, in relation to visiting and local COVID-19 prevalence and transmission risk.
	Be provided and supported with additional ways to connect such as video conference or telephone calls in addition to a limited number of in-person visits.
RESPONSIBILITIES	
Waltham Hall Nursing Home have a responsibility to:	Visitors have a responsibility to:
Provide a clear policy and information on how they will facilitate visitors, using a dynamic risk-based approach, and make this publicly available as needed.	Follow the Waltham Hall Nursing Home visiting policy and Visitor Code, including booking in advance.
Provide clear information about how the visit will work and the infection and prevention control measures that must be followed.	Not to visit when unwell or displaying any signs of a cold/flu, respiratory or COVID-19 symptoms.
Appropriately support staff in order to facilitate visits including written processes and procedures.	Respond truthfully to COVID-19 screening questions asked by the home's staff and to sign the checklist/visitor.
Treat all visitors with respect and courtesy, and to provide clear instructions about the visiting policy.	Treat all staff with respect and courtesy, and to follow their instruction on the visitor policy.
Proactive communication with residents and families where an outbreak occurs, and the impact on the visiting policy.	Follow visiting requirements including, infection and prevention control measures such as washing hands, use of visiting windows, remaining in designated areas and social distancing requirements – as directed by Waltham Hall Nursing Home staff – and that failure to do so may affect the future ability to visit.

Stephanie Harding – Matron

Reviewed and Updated April 2022

To be reviewed annually – next review due April 2023