Indoor Visiting Protocol

We are beginning to introduce controlled and time-limited visiting inside the care home. Your

continued support in protecting not only our residents and staff but also you as visitors and the wider community is equally as important.

It is critical during this stage that visits only take place at pre-arranged times. These will be jointly agreed between you, our residents and the care home. This arrangement is in place to ensure we reduce the number of people inside the care home at any one time, to protect our residents and staff.

Visits will take place in [insert location, e.g. the sunroom area at the front of the care home]. This reduces the risk of someone who is asymptomatic inadvertently taking the virus deeper into the care home. This is a critical safety measure to protect your loved one, the other residents and our staff.

Visits will initially be for a period of [no more than 30 minutes] [Note: The guidance does not stipulate a maximum time period for visits – this would be the care home’s decision to implement and adjust as necessary – delete once read]. We would ask for your co-operation in following this limit as this allows us time to implement rigorous infection prevention and control processes to clean the visitor area, thereby enabling other visitors to visit their loved ones safely.

**Action to be taken**

1. You will be asked on entering the home to wash your hands with soap and water in the toilet immediately adjacent to the entrance. Handwashing should take a minimum of 20 seconds, following the handwashing guide on the wall in the toilet.
2. You will be asked to sign that you have read this visiting protocol and completed the accompanying health proforma before being taken to the testing area.
3. You will be required to complete a Lateral Flow Test (LFT) before the visit can take place. Testing onsite at the care home is preferable for assurance purposes; however, we recognise that individuals now have access to testing through other routes and visitors may provide evidence of a recent negative test undertaken through other means, if the test has been taken that same day. Alternative routes may include:
	* Assisted testing at another lateral flow site such as an asymptomatic testing site (ATS);
	* Self-testing at home through test kits provided by the care home using packs of seven test kits (which the MHRA has authorised for self-test use); and
	* Self-testing at home using test kits provided by the government such as through a school, workplace, the universal testing offer, or collected from a pharmacy.
4. If you receive a positive test result, you will be asked to leave the home and self-isolate. If your results are negative, you will be able to complete your visit.
5. You will be asked to bring a face covering with you. If you don’t have a face covering, a mask will be supplied by [insert]. If you are supplied a mask, they are all single-use items and must be disposed of in the bin provided. If necessary, you may be asked to put on other personal protective equipment (PPE). Staff will be on hand to show you how to put on any PPE correctly, thereby reducing any infection risk.
6. You are asked to limit contact with residents and staff and maintain as much distance as possible. We fully understand this is difficult for both you and your loved one; however, it is a critical protective factor for you both, as well as our staff and the wider community.
7. You are asked not to bring in food parcels, flowers, helium balloons and the like. You will need to discuss with our staff any gifts you wish to bring with you on your visit. The gift will need to be something that can be easily cleaned by the care home to prevent cross contamination, for example a box of chocolates that could be sanitised with wipes. This approach is to reduce the opportunity for the virus to be carried into the care home and passed unknowingly to your loved one.
8. Staff will show you how to remove PPE safely. PPE should be removed in a specific order: gloves, apron and finally mask. You must dispose of the PPE in the bin provided and perform hand hygiene immediately on removal.
9. As you leave the building, please use the alcohol-based gel at the outside door to rub your hands as an added protection.

## **Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs)**

Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs) are rapid COVID-19 tests which can be used for:

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| * Scheduled visitor testing;
* Increased resident testing; and
* Increased staff testing.
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LFTs enable rapid display of COVID-19 test results within 20 to 30 minutes and do not require a lab to process. LFTs can be self-administered via nasal and throat swabs, similar to the current tests already in place in the NHS Test and Trace network.

You will be required to complete an LFT before your visit can take place. We ask that if testing is to be carried out when you arrive at our home, you:

* Go to the [insert location, e.g. the sunroom area at the front of the care home] entrance, where you can put on PPE before interacting with others.
* You will be required to go to the [insert location, e.g. the sunroom area at the front of the care home], where you will be able to wait for your test result.

If your test results are negative, you will be able to conduct your visit. If you test positive, you will be requested to leave the home and self-isolate. Visitors that have taken the test earlier on the same day by alternative routes will be asked to show proof of a negative test result before every visit, such as:

* An email or text from NHS Test and Trace; or
* A date-stamped photo of the test cartridge itself.

If visitors are not able to produce a negative test by alternative routes, you may be asked to reschedule the visit or be prepared to take the test at our home.

**Things to consider**

While many of you will have used technology to keep in touch with your loved one, they haven’t seen you face to face for a number of weeks. It will take time for them, and you, to adjust to the new requirements, e.g. maintaining as much distance as possible. Please encourage and support your loved one that this is for their safety.

Your loved one may have changed physical and mentally and it will take time for you both to adjust. Please feel free to discuss any concerns about this with staff. We are here to support you and your loved one.

**Future focus**

At all times, we will follow government guidelines related to visiting. Although the number limit on named visitors is now lifted, your loved one should still identify their named visitors to the care home so that they can be supported for the necessary testing and support required to facilitate COVID-secure visits. Where your loved one lacks the capacity to make this decision, we will discuss the situation with their family, friends and others who may usually have visited them or are identified in the care plan. This is a precautionary approach with the principle of protecting your loved one at its core.

Should these guidelines change, we will amend our protocols accordingly. This could include:

1. Cessation of visiting if there is a spike in the virus or an outbreak in the care home; or
2. Extending the number of visitors permitted or duration of visits, if we continue to see a reduction in the virus ‘R’ number.

We will keep you informed of each change as it occurs and how it impacts on our residents and on you as a family member.