

Care and Support Provider Update: 13th May 2020

Contact with relatives in care homes during the coronavirus pandemic

Dear Care Home Partner,

We are aware that following the Prime Minister's recent announcements, with certain changes being implemented from today, several homes have sought guidance about whether families of their residents should or could be facilitated to attend the home to see their family members. We thought it would be helpful to you to clarify what has changed following the announcements.

Most of the guidance has not changed. In particular, the guidance around shielded populations (those who have received a shielding letter) remains the same. These people should continue to be isolated from their relatives.

The advice for those aged 70 and over continues to be that they should take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household. Anyone who has been advised to shield by the NHS or their GP, including those 70 and over, should continue to do this until at least the end of June. The government says it is keeping the [guidance to shielded people](#) under review.

The government has issued detailed [guidance about infection control and staff safety in care homes](#) to help admit and care for residents safely and protect care home staff. This includes isolation procedures, PPE and infection control training for all staff, cleaning and how to provide personal care safely. This guidance has also not changed.

The rules around social distancing of at least 2 metres has also not changed and public gatherings of more than two people from different households is still not allowed to take place and as before we cannot visit friends and family in their homes, except to spend time outdoors with up to one person from a different household. People can still go out to care for or help a vulnerable person, or to provide other voluntary or charitable services.

Several things have changed though - from Wednesday 13th May there will be a limited number of things people can do. They can:

- Spend unlimited time outdoors – for example sitting and enjoying the fresh air
- Meet one other person from a different household outdoors - following social distancing guidelines.

Some relatives of care home residents may interpret this that they can now meet with their loved ones at the home, following social distancing, in the fresh air if a home has a garden or safe outdoor space, but this is not the case.

We are particularly concerned about the control of infections in care homes in the borough. You will be aware that Sefton has had a high rate of infections and care home deaths and around 33% of care homes in Sefton have been affected by outbreaks. We know that you have all been working hard to tackle this virus and we

are keen that the progress you are making continues. We will continue to support you with the challenges you are facing which includes providing you with emergency PPE to help you manage infection control and testing all staff and residents in care homes, and that will need to evolve into a regular cycle of continual testing.

Residents can continue to make contact with their families and friends, either through a phone call or by a virtual meeting using Skype or Zoom, for example. We are also supporting the #Show Them You Care campaign where family, friends and members of the community can send in letters, cards or postcards to residents to let them know they are thought of. We know that there are care homes in Sefton already signed up to this and their residents are reaping the benefits that this campaign brings. If this is something you are interested in, please contact commissioningandcontracts@sefton.gov.uk.

Regards

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