

Orchard Vale Trust

Supporting Adults with Learning Disabilities to Live Life to the Full



3rd December 2020

Dear Families and Friends,

Over the past few days there has been a great deal of information in the media about residential care homes, so I thought you would find an update helpful.

Visiting

The government guidance regarding visits with residents of care homes was updated on 2nd December. The guidance identifies 3 possible types of visit: indoor visits, outdoor visits and visits away from the care home and I have included our revised guidance for the 3 types of visit below.

The most significant change is the introduction of rapid or lateral flow tests for COVID-19, which will give a result within 15 – 30 minutes. All care homes have been informed that they are going to receive these tests and the training to use them this month. Anyone wishing to have an indoor visit will need to undertake a test and receive a negative COVID-19 result. Once a visitor has tested negative for COVID-19 then they will be able to have closer contact with their family member during the visit. We have been told to expect a delivery and as soon as we have received the tests and our staff have completed the compulsory training we will let you know.

The updated guidance does not alter the arrangements we have already shared with you around Christmas Bubbles for residents of care homes.

Visits Outside

- These will follow the government guidance regarding the number of people who are permitted to meet outside – this is one continuous visitor and no more than two visitors
- The visit must remain in the grounds of the residential care home or at a specific outdoor venue that has been risk assessed by the home manager for the purposes of the visit
- Meetings will be for no more than an hour to ensure that staffing and support levels at the homes are sustained
- Staff, family and friends will be provided with a face mask which they will need to wear throughout the visit, for some visits additional protective equipment may be needed and if the home manager will discuss this with visitors in advance

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- The government guidance of meeting outside and maintaining a 2 metre distance will need to be adhered to throughout the visit, unless the visitor has had a negative result from a COVID-19 test conducted at the home on the same day as the visit
- Anyone who is self-isolating as a result of having COVID-19 symptoms, living with someone with COVID-19 symptoms, or who has been asked to self-isolate by the NHS Track and Trace team will not attend any meeting with a resident
- People who are shielding should not attend any meeting with a resident
- Any gifts or items that family or friends wish to share should be given to the member of staff at the end of the visit so that these can meet the infection control requirements prior to entering a residential care home
- If a new local or national lockdown is introduced, and the director of Public Health in the local area of the care home indicates that visits should not take place then the visit will need to be re-scheduled
- Family and friends will follow the infection control guidance that staff follow and wear a fresh set of clothes as they leave the home and try not to make any stops for fuel, shopping etc on the way to the visit

Visits Inside

- Meetings will need to be arranged in advance with the home manager
- In order to ensure that the numbers of visitors on site are managed safely please keep to the timings agreed
- In line with government guidance there should be one constant visitor and no more than 2 visitors
- Children under the age of 16 should not visit the home and they should not be brought onto the home site
- Visits will be for up to 90 minutes
- On arrival at the home visitors will be asked to complete a brief health questionnaire and have their temperature taken by a member of staff
- Before a visit begins visitors will be offered a COVID-19 rapid test which is also known as a lateral flow test. A rapid COVID-19 test provides additional protection for everyone involved in the visit. Visitors will be asked for written consent to administer the test; if a visitor would prefer not to take a test they should discuss this with the home manager prior to any visit being arranged

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- If the result of the test is positive, then the individual will have to leave the site and self-isolate immediately without the visit taking place. The home will provide a PCR test (this is the test which can be submitted by post and is the same as that which is administered at COVID-19 testing centres) which will need to be completed following the government guidance.
- A negative test will mean that the visit can take place inside, using the identified indoor visiting space at the home
- Visitors will need to wear PPE which will be provided by the home and undertake appropriate hand hygiene
- If a visitor is wearing PPE, has a negative COVID-19 test, as a result of the rapid test that has been administered at the home that day and has followed all other infection prevention and control measures required, then it should be possible for visitors to have contact with their loved one, such as hand holding and a hug
- Close physical contact is important to everyone but even with PPE and a negative COVID-19 test, it does increase the risk of the transmission of infection, so visitors are asked to consider the balance between physical contact and limiting transmission. This will be different for everyone and visitors are encouraged to discuss this with the home manager before visiting
- Family and friends will need to stay in the area identified for visits, under no circumstances should a visitor enter the home or any building other than the one identified for visits
- In order to ensure that masks are worn throughout the visit drinks and food cannot be consumed during the visit or in the area designated for visiting
- For some visits additional protective equipment may be needed and the home manager will discuss this with visitors in advance
- Anyone who is self-isolating as a result of having COVID-19 symptoms, living with someone with COVID-19 symptoms, or who has been asked to self-isolate by the Track and Trace team will not attend any meeting with a resident
- People who are shielding should not attend any meeting with a resident
- Any gifts or items that family or friends wish to share should be given to the member of staff at the end of the visit so that these can meet the infection control requirements prior to entering a residential care home
- If the home is experiencing an outbreak or a potential outbreak of COVID-19 then all visits will be suspended and re-arranged

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- Family and friends will follow the infection control guidance that staff follow and wear a fresh set of clothes as they leave the home and try not to make any stops for fuel, shopping etc on the way to the visit

Visits Off-Site

- Visits out of care homes can be considered for residents of working age. However, spending time with others outside the care home will increase risk of exposure to COVID for the resident and potentially to other vulnerable residents on their return.
- Careful consideration will need to be given as to whether making visits out from the home is the best thing to do, or whether a [visit at the home](#) would provide meaningful contact in a safer way.
- Off site visits can only happen in agreement with the home and subject to individual and whole home risk assessments.
- Outward visits can take place in any Tier – as long as the resident and whoever they spend time with on their visit adhere at all times to the local rules as set out in the tier system restrictions and any regulations in place at the time of the visit
- The care home in which the resident lives is considered one household for these purposes, and the resident should not form a bubble with another household (apart from at Christmas when the separate guidance should be followed)
- Prior to a visit taking place the people who are involved with the visit should minimise their contact with others for 14 days before the start of the visit
- It is advised to keep the number of people with whom the resident has contact to a minimum and the home manager will need to risk assess each off-site visit. During the visit social distancing must be maintained, regular hand washing should take place, windows and doors should be kept open and face coverings should be worn
- All members of the household hosting the visit must have had a negative result from a COVID test taken immediately preceding the visit
- The resident should be tested immediately before their visit out of the care home with a lateral flow device (LFD), and if the result is positive, the visit will not go ahead
- On return to the home after the visit, the resident will need to isolate for 14 days
- If any member of the household where the resident is visiting tests positive for COVID-19 or has possible symptoms then the resident will need to self-isolate where they are for 14 days or until a negative COVID-19 result is received from the person with symptoms

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- If the resident develops symptoms of COVID-19 or has a positive COVID-19 test then they will need to be supported to self-isolate where they are visiting for 14 days
- If you would like to read the government guidance then please follow the links:
- [Visiting arrangements in care homes](#)
- [Arrangements for visits out of the care home](#)

COVID-19 Vaccinations

At a recent briefing with Somerset County Council, I was informed that all adults with learning disabilities, living in residential care homes, would be included in the first tier offered COVID-19 vaccinations. We have been told that we will be given details of the vaccinations that will be offered as well as information that we can share with residents, family and friends. We have not currently received any further updates.

Please be assured that once we have further information regarding the offer of COVID-19 vaccinations to adults with learning disabilities we will contact you directly.

I appreciate there is a lot of information to read through, so please contact either me or the home manager if you have any questions or there is anything you wish to discuss further.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'E. Page'.

Liz Page
Chief Executive

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