



To:
Registered Providers and Responsible Individuals of
Care Home Services

29 April 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Clarification on care home visiting and testing for professionals

We have previously written to you about the publication of the Social Care Transition Plan on 28 March via CIW:

https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKWALES_CSSIW_INT/bulletins/3114181

The plan emphasises the importance of re-introducing a greater sense of normality and homeliness in care homes and in enriching the day-to-day lives and enjoyment of the people who live there. We understand the challenges and we appreciate all that you and your staff have done and continue to do to achieve this.

We have, however, recently received a number of concerning reports from Environmental Health Officers and through correspondence that a minority of providers are still restricting visiting generally and are also restricting essential visiting during outbreaks. It is important that all providers enable continuity of visiting for people during outbreaks to support their well-being, as well as facilitating routine visiting when there is no outbreak. Visits in exceptional circumstances, such as end of life, should also be facilitated; these types of visit should not be limited to a person's nominated essential visitors.

We are writing to re-emphasise the importance of care home visiting and to clarify what visiting and testing arrangements should look like as we move from emergency response to business as usual:

- Routine indoor visiting should be enabled and encouraged when there is no outbreak at the care home.
- Visiting arrangements should be as open and flexible as possible. If appointment systems are used they should facilitate rather than restrict visiting.
- There should not be inappropriate restrictions on visitor numbers or on the length and frequency of visits.
- People may nominate 2 'essential visitors' who may continue to visit inside the care home during an outbreak. They may visit separately or at the same time.

Whilst we appreciate the anxiety many providers may be facing following an unprecedented two years, we do expect services to be actively transitioning to a more normal way of operating in which visitors are encouraged and welcomed and where people can move more freely in and out of the home.

Providers who do not support meaningful visiting may be in breach of regulations and statutory guidance under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. Care Inspectorate Wales will consider enforcement action if unnecessary restriction of visitors is undermining people's rights and breaching regulations.

We want to take this opportunity to clarify the expectations around visitor testing. Visiting family members/friends and visiting professionals (who are not already part of a regular testing regime) should show evidence of a negative LFD test within the 24 hour period preceding the visit. Care homes should make LFD tests available to visitors for both off-site and on-site testing.

Visiting professionals, such as community health and social care staff, who are already part of a regular testing regime and therefore test twice a week, do not need to take an additional test 24 hours before their visit. These professionals should show evidence of their most recent COVID-19 test result.

Yours sincerely,



Sir Frank Atherton
Chief Medical Officer



Albert Heaney CBE
Chief Social Care Officer for Wales

cc.
Care Inspectorate Wales
Local Authority Directors of Social Services
Local Health Board Chief Executives
Directors of Public Protection Wales (DPPWs)
Incident Management Team (IMT) Chairs