

Visiting arrangements in care homes framework: Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove

1. Background

The purpose of this protocol is to outline the process for the Directors of Public Health (DPH) to discharge their responsibilities in line with the guidance published 22nd July 2020¹.

The guidance states that the first priority continues to be to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in care homes and prevent future outbreaks as well as to ensure the health and safety of both care workers and residents. It states that DPH and care providers follow the guidance to ensure policies for visiting arrangements and decisions are based on a dynamic risk assessment and that this requires consideration of:

- circumstances of the individual care home (staffing levels, resident demographics and conditions and outbreak status)
- local situations (including levels of community transmission of COVID-19 and outbreaks and exposure risk relating to different high-risk settings)

As the guidance is updated this protocol will be updated.

2. Responsibilities of care homes / providers

Each care home/provider is responsible for following the guidance by establishing their own visitor policy based on the use of dynamic risk assessment which takes into account the health and wellbeing needs of individuals.

See section 2: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes#section-2>

For resident visits out of care home premises see:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household-from-4-july>

Each home should regularly check using the following link the National Tier for their area or identify risks areas using postcodes <https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

3. Framework for guiding care home visitor policies

As part of the COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control Plans the below table sets out when communication from the Director of Public Health will be made to care homes about allowing visitors, based on the national COVID alert levels described in the Contain Framework². The communication will provide clear guidance to care homes on applying visiting restrictions within the care home setting, in the relevant areas affected by a change in local COVID alert level.

DPH or their Public Health teams will not be approving individual risk assessments for care homes and residents.

DPH and public health will for their local area:

- Regularly monitor local test and trace data including numbers of cases and contacts, rates of transmissions, testing, hospital admissions and deaths to provide a single professional interpretation of the local data
- Work closely with Public Health England regarding detection and management of local exceedances of cases and outbreaks

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>

Local COVID alert level (as per national guidance)	Communication from DPH	Actions for care home to take for visiting arrangements	Standards for all care homes
MEDIUM National restrictions apply	DPH notifies care homes that the local COVID alert level in their area is MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care homes must follow the national guidance on visiting by updating their risk assessments and visitor policy to allow safe visiting within the setting See the guidance on visiting relatives in care homes. Consider the National tier the visitor is traveling and unless the visit is under the criteria of “exceptional circumstances” no one should be visiting if they live in a high/very high-risk tier area. Ensure any visits by residents to family/friends outside the home premises have individual documented risk assessments Raise awareness of preventative measures with visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance health and wellbeing priorities of residents against risk of infection Care home’s visitor policy in place Whole home and individual risk assessments for all visiting arrangements and care plans updated Visitor restrictions when there is an outbreak Infection Prevention and Control and enhanced cleaning guidance followed Testing results of staff and residents shared with public health Adequate staffing for supporting and monitoring visits Rapid response to changing local alert level Guidance to visitors to keep to physical distancing outside of the home to reduce risk Home managers should ensure they consider the areas National Tier Rating the visitor is traveling from whatever the level the home is situated. The level of risk comes with them. This should be included in all visiting risk assessment.
HIGH Additional restrictions apply	DPH notifies care homes of the change in local COVID alert level in their area to HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care home closed to visitors and no visits out of the home, except in exceptional circumstances, for example to visit an individual who is at the end of their life. Continue alternative methods adopted to maintain contact e.g. video calls 	
VERY HIGH Tighter restrictions apply	DPH notifies care homes of the change in local COVID alert level in their area to HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care home closed to visitors and no visits out of the home, except in exceptional circumstances, for example to visit an individual who is at the end of their life. Continue alternative methods adopted to maintain contact e.g. video calls 	

