

Home | Israel-Gaza war | Cost of Living | War in Ukraine | Climate | UK | World | More
Business | Politics | Culture
Scotland | Scotland Politics | Scotland Business | Edinburgh, Fife & East | Glasgow & West |
Highlands & Islands | NE, Orkney & Shetland | South | Tayside & Central | Alba | Local News

Covid in Scotland: Families make plea to resume care home visits

🕒 10 February 2021

Coronavirus



Relatives of care home residents are telling the Scottish government it is time to let them visit their loved ones.

After almost 11 months, many are still only seeing vulnerable relatives through windows or outside, if at all.

The Scottish government says new guidelines on visiting are "imminent".

But MSPs are due to consider a petition on Wednesday calling for one designated visitor per care home resident to be allowed.

National Records of Scotland statistics show that since restrictions were first introduced in March 2020, 14,273 residents have died inside Scottish care homes.

- Call to improve 'cruel' care home visiting rules
- What went wrong in Scotland's care homes?

Covid has been a factor in one in five of the deaths but relatives fear many more have been caused by the isolation their loved ones have felt over the past year with many simply just giving up.

With almost all care home residents having had their first vaccine dose, families are hoping for good news on visiting.

'Nobody puts their relative in a care home expecting never to see them again'

Elaine Macdonald is one of them.

She has seen deterioration in her mum Jean McKay since the start of the pandemic.

Jean, 81, has advanced Alzheimers and has lived in a care home for five years. Until March 2020, Elaine and her sister took her out twice a week.





Elaine believes that after almost a year, something better should be possible.

"Other groups in society, outside the care home setting, are able to form extended households and bubbles," she said.

"And here we are in care homes and it is like prison - people are not allowed to see their relatives in a normal way, there is no holding hands and no contact.

"It makes me feel frustrated and sad and I am beginning to wonder if we are ever going to get in to see them properly again."



| Elaine Macdonald says the way care home residents are being treated is "inhumane"

She added: "Nobody puts their relative in a care home expecting never to be able to see them again. Nobody would do it, and now I know people who are deciding not to do it."

"It's time to let people have their relationships with their family members again - this whole situation is inhumane and it has to come to an end."

Natasha Hamilton, from Edinburgh, is desperate to see more of her mum Anne, who has early onset dementia and is in a home in East Kilbride. She started a petition in September to give residents like Anne the right to see at least one caregiving relative, regardless of lockdown or levels.

'The faces are no longer there'

"We are doing it for her," she said. "She would fight to see her children, she would fight to see her husband. We are fighting so mum has the right to see her family.

"I find it absolutely awful thinking what is going through her head just now - that those faces she used to know, visiting her all the time, are no longer there. That part hurts me more than me not being able to see my mum.

"We have to learn from this so that care home residents are not kept apart from their families for almost a year again. Residents in care homes have to be living, not just existing."

The petition has more than 92,000 signatures and is to be considered by a committee of MSPs on Wednesday.

During FMQs, Scottish Lib Dem leader Willie Rennie pressed the first minister for a date on when safe visiting of care homes may be allowed.

Nicola Sturgeon said that new guidance on the matter was being worked on and would be "published imminently", but would not commit to a date.

"I very much hope we can reach that position soon but just as I have tried to avoid doing in past, I have tried to refrain from giving simplistic or easy answers.

"I think that would be wrong and run the risk of giving families falsehoods. I want a date we can have some confidence in. I don't underestimate how deeply traumatic this is."



Natasha Hamilton started a petition after her mother Anne Duke, 63, was cut off from family in a care home during the pandemic

Hundreds of relatives have also been sending letters and posters to their MSPs in the "Broken Hearts" campaign to draw attention to the issue.

National clinical director Jason Leitch said during Tuesday's coronavirus briefing that Health Secretary Jeane Freeman was finalising new advice.

He said: "New guidance is imminent that will be published shortly, once the cabinet secretary has final meetings with officials.

"She has met with the care home relatives group, as have I. It's not just about vaccine, it's protection from outbreaks, it's test and protect, it's staff, it's PPE and it is about what should and could be permitted for families to reconnect after such a long time."

Donald Macaskill, chief executive of Scottish Care, which represents the private care sector in Scotland, said everyone involved had been consulted over the new plans.

He added that after 11 months there was a realisation that the risk of the virus and the risk of people no longer being in touch and in contact with their families had to be balanced.



Natasha Hamilton feels that care home residents like her mum Anne are existing rather than living without access to their families

He said: "One of the reasons we are all trying to engage is so we don't get a lottery of one company doing it and another not doing it. The reason people are anxious is because of the fear of the virus.

"No care provider wants to keep people apart. Neither do they want the devastation of this virus.

"What we are doing is to reduce the fear, increase confidence and make sure visiting can happen indoors as a matter of priority."

More about coronavirus



- **VACCINE:** When will Scots be vaccinated against Covid?
- **RULES:** What are the restrictions in Scotland?
- **LOCKDOWN:** Six months that changed our lives
- **WHO?** The people who have died with Covid-19

Related Topics

Coronavirus lockdown measures

Elderly people

Dementia

Care homes

Coronavirus

Top Stories

📺 **LIVE** Gaza hit by intense strikes as Israel says it has cut Strip in two

Few reasons for optimism after US diplomatic dash

10 hours ago

Fashion firm Boohoo breaks ethical promises

4 hours ago

Features



The US is quietly arming Taiwan to the teeth



Barbra Streisand: I haven't had much fun in my life

British Gaza evacuees have 72 hours to leave Egypt



'My life stopped when my brother killed our dad'

The Papers: Met pressure over demos and Gaza strikes intensify



How Football Manager has made millions



'I want people to fall in love with hats again'



WW2 veterans sign history buff's rifle as he collects war tales



Rock in a hard place as French border keeps neighbours apart

Elsewhere on the BBC



'They sampled bits of Shakespeare, people talking...'

Songwriter Guy Chambers looks at the way The Beatles created their songs

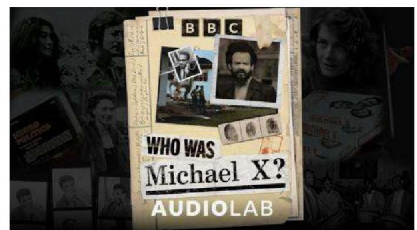
 Sounds



Your first look at a new series of Louis Theroux...

Which cultural icons and industry trailblazers will Louis be interviewing?

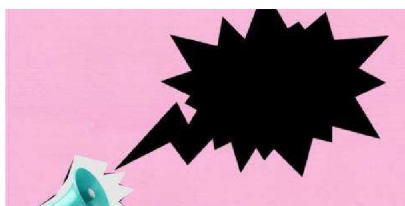
 iPlayer




Who was Michael X?

The intriguing story of the once famous Black British activist you might've never heard of

 Sounds





How well do you know these famous quotes?

You know a quote is truly quotable when it stands the test of time

 Bitesize

Most Read

- | | | | |
|----------|--|-----------|--|
| 1 | Barbra Streisand: I haven't had much fun in my life | 2 | Fashion firm Boohoo breaks ethical promises |
| 3 | Police petrol-bombed in Bonfire Night disorder | 4 | Plan for quick rail getaway after big events axed |
| 5 | How Football Manager has made millions | 6 | Tory MP apologises to doctor over strike tweet |
| 7 | The US is quietly arming Taiwan to the teeth | 8 | 'My life stopped when my brother killed our dad' |
| 9 | Met pressure over demos and Gaza strikes intensify | 10 | Health staff win Covid bonus after legal threat |

BBC News Services



On your mobile



On smart speakers



Get news alerts



Contact BBC News

Best of BBC iPlayer



Immortality, seduction and the undead

 [INTERVIEW WITH...](#)



A modern day online crime wave...

 [CATFISH CRIME GANG](#)



Uncovering secrets from the past...

 [SHETLAND](#)



Britain's housing market is broken

 [BRITAIN'S HOUSING CRISIS](#)

Home	Weather	CBBC	Bitesize	Local
News	iPlayer	CBeebies	Arts	Three
Sport	Sounds	Food	Taster	

[Terms of Use](#) [About the BBC](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility Help](#) [Parental Guidance](#)

[Contact the BBC](#) [Make an editorial complaint](#) [Get Personalised Newsletters](#)

[Why you can trust the BBC](#)

