

Given the evidence and the fact that steps are now being identified to begin phased re-openings across our community, it is recognised at all levels that a more balanced and pragmatic approach to visiting in care homes is needed. The approach agreed must continue to protect care homes from the introduction of COVID-19, but also enable family caregivers and visitors to provide much needed contact, support and care to residents, to maintain and enhance their overall health and wellbeing.

### **Moving Forward**

In light of the above, the Department of Health (DoH) has commissioned the PHA to lead a Working Group to re-examine arrangements in care homes, and consider how we **return to something akin to “normal” care home business, or “as close to normal as is possible”**. This work entails developing an **indicative “journey back to business as usual” for care home residents**.

The purpose of this working Group is to establish a proposed plan, co-produced with key stake holders including residents, families and care home providers. This plan will identify steps to support families to engage in a meaningful way with their loved ones, including visits outside of the care home. In addition it will provide direction to enable residents to engage safely with their local community including pastoral visits, social events and engagement with external agencies. The plan will provide the required public health and clinical advice to inform DoH policy, aligned as far as possible with the 'Moving Forward: Executive's Pathway out of Restrictions'

The working group will report back to the Department and the Minister presenting the proposed plan which will include:

- what the realistic, achievable path back to safe **business as usual** is;
- when it could be introduced (aligned with public health advice);

You have been invited to support this work as a key stake holder.