

- The flu vaccination programme must be unparalleled in its scope and ambition, and reach out to all social care staff and recipients in all settings, and informal carers too, supported by mass marketing
- The financial resilience of care providers must be kept under constant review, with plans in place and regularly updated by CQC, central and local Government, to mitigate any significant market failure
- Total and available care capacity should be published weekly
- The ongoing challenges in data sharing and data governance between health and social care settings must be resolved by September 2020

## A. Restoring and sustaining contact with visitors in care homes

**Conclusions:** We heard that the Government's Visiting Guidance<sup>3</sup> is failing to enable many residents to stay in contact with loved ones.

*"Due to lockdown and Mum isolating in a care home in West Sussex, as I live in Cornwall I haven't been able to visit her since January and I miss her and she can't understand why."*

The Guidance does not give sufficient confidence to understandably nervous care home managers to 'open up'. Plus, organising and supervising visits consumes staff time and involves senior staff in difficult negotiations with anxious families, so it is easier to 'say no'.

Yet the impact on people of being cut off is utterly catastrophic: visitors fill the gaps in care in understaffed settings, without which residents are at enhanced risk of malnutrition and dehydration; they help people living with dementia to retain their cognitive and verbal skills; they provide familiarity and reassurance as well as providing culture-specific support - especially crucial for those with dementia; for all they give a reason to hope. In the absence of visitors, older people and people with dementia are losing function and capacity and dying prematurely, their last few weeks and months lonely and sometimes frightening, despite the best efforts of staff. This cannot go on: we must change it and ensure it doesn't recur through the winter.

Most care homes have been closed to visitors for 6 months already. Without action to ensure care homes open and remain open to visitors this winter, many care home residents may have experienced a full year without contact with loved ones. This is all the more tragic when you consider that half of all care home residents die within 15 months of admission<sup>4</sup>.

However, we heard that visits can happen safely and in [Name Redacted] consistent with infection control -

*"I feel extreme guilt that I can't visit my mother properly, she can't understand why I won't enter her care home. I feel distraught watching her cry or refuse to come to the window to see me."*