The new Health and Social Care Standards for visiting and staying connected:

Guidance for providers

Publication date: 31 March 2022

Publication code COMMS-0329-373

INQ000320174_0001

This guidance supports services to implement the two new additional Health and Social Care Standards for care homes for adults and older people that came into effect on 31 March 2022.

Context

We recognise the complex and challenging circumstances that care homes in Scotland have been operating under during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we acknowledge and commend the continued commitment of care home providers and staff to care for people with compassion and dignity.

Connecting with people is important to everyone. It is a fundamental right and is essential for wellbeing and good mental health. As we move to living and working with Covid-19, it is important that meaningful contact is supported and maintained for people living in a care home setting. We recognise that every individual care home may need to identify the right way to do this. The Scottish Government has created two new additional Health and Social Care Standards that are focused on connection for people. These are specific for care homes for adults and older people and are designed to support people experiencing care to stay connected with people important to them, even when an outbreak means that routine visiting may be restricted. The new Standards will also enable people to be supported and cared for by people who are important to them if they choose.

Implementation of these two new Standards will enable care homes to build on existing good practice in supporting meaningful contact including visiting and support from people important to them when this is their choice.

We expect all registered care homes for adults and older people to meet the new Standards.

The new Standards

The two new Health and Social Care Standards set out the support care homes should offer to people experiencing care so they can stay connected with the people who are important to them. Everyone has a role in supporting care homes in meeting these Standards. We expect care home providers and their staff to take full account of the Standards. They underpin the core values that should be represented in all policy, staff training, decision making and practice.

These are the new Standards.

- **If I am an adult living in a care home and restrictions to routine visiting are needed to prevent infection, I can nominate a relatives/friends (and substitutes) to visit me. My nominated relatives/friends will be supported by the care home to see me in person day-to-day and to be directly involved in providing my care and support if that is what I want.**

- **If I am an adult living in a care home, I can nominate a relatives/friends (and substitutes), who will be supported by the care home to be directly involved in providing my day-to-day care and support if that is what I want.**

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Restrictions recommended by public health departments

In line with public health legislation, care homes may be required to restrict visiting and visitor contact at certain times. Public health departments will advise services when this is required. Restrictions must be in place for the minimum possible period and should support named visitors to continue visiting throughout restrictions.

The Care Inspectorate

We will advise and support care homes to adopt good practice on people staying connected with loved ones, visiting and taking part in their community. Where our support and guidance is not acted on, we will, where necessary, use our powers to ensure people are not restricted from enjoying the company of family and friends, being cared for by people they choose and connecting with their community. The principles outlined in Section 3 of the Open with Care guidance, the Health and Social Care Standards and Public Health guidance should be used to enable meaningful contact.

What do the new Standards mean for care homes?

Care homes are expected to follow this guidance and put mechanisms in place so that residents can choose a named person(s) who may visit them in their private room if they must self-isolate or when visiting is restricted.

Circumstances that result in the need for self-isolation are outlined in Public Health Scotland's care home guidance. Named person visiting is expected to continue unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances will be advised by local public health teams following a risk assessment and are likely to impact on wider outbreak management.

Named visiting is in addition to essential visiting, which Public Health Scotland's care home guidance states must be supported regardless of outbreak status.

Essential visiting is when people are at the end of life or when people experience stress and distress that may be alleviated by essential visitor(s).

If a resident does not have capacity and has a welfare attorney or welfare guardianship in place and activated, care service managers must consult with the attorney or guardian as they may hold legal powers to make decisions for the resident on who the named visitors may be. Residents should be supported to make their own decisions and included in decisions made on their behalf where possible.

All decisions made by people who are a welfare attorney or welfare guardian must be in line with the resident's will and preference. If you believe the decisions made are not in line with the resident's will and preference you should speak to the attorney or guardian and seek advice from the resident's social worker or the Mental Welfare Commission

What care homes need to do to implement the new Standards

- ✓ Ensure the ethos of the Standards is reflected in policies about supporting people to connect and spend time with those who are important to them. Policies should support: people's choices to have those important to them provide care; visiting; accessing the community; visiting family and friends in their homes, including overnight stays.

- ✓ Have a policy that reflects how those who are important to the resident can be supported to provide care, where this is what the resident wishes. Include discussion and the agreement of others if care is given in communal or shared areas, for example a dining room.

- ✓ Ensure staff know the new Standards, the supporting policy and procedures and how to implement these. It is important that procedures focus on what is expected of staff and how they support implementation. Include the importance of staying connected with people and the important role staff play in staff induction and training.

- ✓ Keep a record of the named person(s) who will continue to visit and provide care during periods where routine visiting is restricted. Remember this can change and should meet the person's wishes.

- ✓ Involve the people who live in the care home and the people who are important to them in developing the policy and procedures.

- ✓ Have a clear strategy for communicating with people who live in the service and the people who are important to them about the policy and procedure and how you will support them to be connected.

- ✓ Have in place quality assurance and governance frameworks to gather the views of people living in the care service and those important to them about the effectiveness, impact and outcome of how your service is enabling people to stay connected. Put improvement plans in place and address any issues that arise, including noting and responding to complaints in line with your complaints procedures.

Concerns and complaints

Where concerns or complaints are raised with us about visiting, we will contact the care home to collect information, offer support and advise on solutions to ensure the home is meeting the Standards. In line with our complaints procedure, we will deal with complaints we receive about homes not meeting the Standards or following the guidance.

More information

- More information can be found on:
  NHS Inform: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for visiting loved ones in an adult care home
- the Scottish Government's Coronavirus (COVID-19): adult care homes guidance.
- Care inspectorate website
- Public Health Scotland Covid-19 guidance documents:
  - Care homes for older people should follow: COVID-19 - information and guidance for care home settings (adults and older people)
  - Care homes for with younger adults please follow COVID-19 - information and guidance for social, community and residential care settings.

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