

More restrictions eased for care homes

- Care home residents will be allowed 5 named visitors from Monday 17 May, up from 2 currently
- Self-isolation no longer required following visits to GPs, dentists and day centres
- Visits will only pause for a minimum of 14 days rather than 28 days following an outbreak

As part of step 3 of the roadmap, the number of named family members or friends able to visit their loved ones in care homes will be increased from 2 to 5, as the visiting restrictions continue to ease. A maximum of 2 visitors will be allowed at any one time or on any given day.

This follows a reduction in COVID-19 cases and the ongoing successful vaccine rollout with 95% of older care home residents receiving their first jab.

Residents will also be able to go to medical appointments, a workplace, educational setting and day centres without having to self-isolate on their return.

Minister for Care, Helen Whately said:

The measures we have taken during this pandemic have always been to protect our most vulnerable, but I have heard first-hand from those living and working in care homes how difficult the restrictions have been.

Thanks to the phenomenal success of the vaccine rollout and a reduction in cases across the country, I am pleased we can now take another step towards getting back to normal, while protecting those in care homes from the continued risk of COVID-19.

The new guidance allows more family and friends to reunite and reduces the need to self-isolate, which I know many have found incredibly challenging. As we turn the tide on this cruel virus I want to make visiting as normal as possible by the summer, and this is an important step on that path.

The period when a COVID-19 outbreak in a care home can be declared over will also change from 28 days to 14 days after the last positive case assuming there are no Variants of Concern (VOCs) identified.

This means visits can resume sooner following an outbreak, once the relevant

testing has been completed and provided all staff and residents tested receive a negative result.

Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care, Professor Deborah Sturdy said:

The pandemic has been so difficult for those living in care homes and our social care workforce have done a brilliant job of keeping their residents safe and supported. I know this change to the guidance will be a huge boost to so many, giving more people the chance to reunite with more of their friends and family.

Chair of the Social Care COVID-19 Taskforce, Sir David Pearson said:

I would like to thank all our social care workers for their efforts during the last very difficult year, and for having the vaccine and supporting those they care for to get vaccinated.

This is a significant step on the road to normality for so many. We are only able to increase visits in and out of care homes thanks to the hard work of social care staff maintaining good infection prevention and control, and the effect of the vaccines in driving down transmission.

The government announced an interim change in guidance last week to allow low-risk outdoor visits out, such as a trip to the park, a garden or the beach, without the need to isolate afterwards.

Thanks to the success of the vaccination roll out and the reducing level of infection across the country, the government is able to keep this guidance under review with a view to removing further restrictions as soon as possible.

Updated guidance will be published in due course.

Residents can now be visited by 5 named visitors (including their essential care giver if they have one), with a maximum of 2 visitors at any one time or on a given day. These daily limits do not apply for very young children or essential care givers.

Visits out of the care home will be planned in consultation with the family and care home managers, subject to testing requirements and risk assessments to protect residents.

Activities outside of the care home that will not require self-isolation include:

- outdoor visits to parks, beaches or gardens
- medical appointments
- visiting day centres

- attending educational settings
- going to work

Recovery testing will take place 14 days after the last positive result in an outbreak, rather than 28 days, except where the outbreak included evidence of VOCs. Where all the recovery testing showed negative results the restrictions on visits would be removed.