

Two visitors allowed in care homes to reunite with loved ones

- Care home residents to be allowed a second regular visitor indoors to reunite families and friends
- Babies and toddlers will also be able to accompany visitors, allowing grandparents to meet grandchildren
- Visitors can hold hands, with tests required before entry and PPE

Care home residents in England will be able to receive 2 visitors indoors from Monday 12 April as Covid restrictions continue to be cautiously eased. Regular visits are being extended from one to 2 people under carefully designed conditions to prevent transmission of Covid-19.

Visitors will be asked to provide a negative test result and wear PPE during the visit to keep themselves, staff and residents safe.

In the coming weeks, as testing capacity continues to increase, some visitors will be able to conduct tests at home, rather than at care homes, to help manage the flow of visitors and allow more visits to take place.

Visitors who are parents will also be able to visit with babies and very young children, who will not count as one of the visitors.

This means grandparents and great-grandparents will be able to meet the newest members of their families for the first time.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

“Reuniting family and friends has been a priority each time restrictions have eased, and the next step will be no different.

“I’m particularly pleased to allow residents to have more visitors, including grandchildren, given the isolation and concern felt by so many this past year.

“Thanks to the tireless work of care home staff, and the success of the vaccine rollout, we’re able to increase the number of visits in a safe and controlled way.”

The drop in community infection rates, and the successful rollout of vaccinations in care homes, means the increase in visiting planned in the roadmap can go ahead as long as infection prevention and control measures remain in place.

Further opportunities for relatives and contacts to have outdoor, pod and screen visits will continue in line with the published guidance which has been in place during lockdown.

Minister for Care Helen Whately said:

“Increasing care home visiting is a top priority as we ease Covid restrictions. I know just how much these visits mean to residents and their loved ones.

“I’m pleased we were able to introduce more meaningful visits to care homes in March. Seeing friends and family reunited has been incredibly moving. Thank you to all of our amazing care workers for helping to make this possible.

“We want to go further, so we’re allowing more visitors at this next stage of the roadmap – and our aim is to make visiting care homes as normal as possible by the summer. We know how cruel this virus can be in care homes so we must continue to follow the science and data, but things are looking up.”

Arrangements for essential care givers for those residents who require the greatest support, and which have been welcomed by residents and care providers, will continue.

Some residents, such as those with advanced dementia, some autistic people, and people with a learning disability need a particular, trusted person to provide some aspects of their care, which is why the essential care giver scheme will also be extended.

Fiona Carragher, Director of Research and Influencing at Alzheimer’s Society said:

“We’re so pleased 2 named visitors will be able to have meaningful close contact visits with loved ones in care homes from 12 April.

“Visits are vital to care home residents with dementia, who have been isolated from their loved ones, without the essential care and support their families so often provide, and as a result experienced a devastating increase in their dementia symptoms over the past year.

“We’ve come a long way since the first lockdown, and soon we hope to see the benefits from people with dementia being reunited with their loved ones. As infection rates continue to drop, and more people get vaccinated, we hope care homes will be able to safely open up further.

“It’s essential that an individual’s circumstances are considered, and care homes do what they can to ensure the needs of all residents are met. If you are finding it difficult to visit a care home, please contact Alzheimer’s Society for support.”

All care home providers, not experiencing an outbreak, will be asked to follow the updated guidance and continue to work together with families, and local professionals, to ensure visits are possible, while continuing to limit the risk of transmission of Covid-19.

Vida Healthcare’s Gil Chimon, home manager at Vida Grange, said:

“The reopening of care homes to one visitor per resident from 8 March was a fantastic morale boost which was welcomed by staff and families alike.

“We’ve seen some incredibly emotional scenes of families reconnecting with their loved ones which has been very humbling. The planned extension of the number of visitors to 2 per resident from 12 April is an exciting step in our journey back to normality, and we’re really looking forward to more family members and friends being able to reunite with their loved ones.”

We have recently announced a further £341 million to support continued rigorous infection and prevention control measures, and extended rapid testing and free PPE, to protect care homes and save lives.

This combined approach to protected visiting is based on the latest scientific evidence and data and represents a balance between the risk of infections and the importance of visiting for the physical and mental wellbeing of residents and their families.

- Free PPE will continue until March 2022.
- Extra support for carers will be provided with continued regular PCR testing and PPE arrangements, as care home workers further reduce the risk of infection to themselves and those for whom they provide vital care.
- Almost 94% of eligible older people’s care home residents have received their first dose of vaccine and almost 78% of care home staff.
- Guidance to cover the new visiting arrangements and visits out of care homes will be published next week.