



Visiting Protocol

This guidance supersedes previous visiting guides issued by ArmsCare Ltd.

This protocol aims to provide a set of principles to help service users have the opportunity to safely receive visitors during the COVID-19 Pandemic. ArmsCare Ltd recognises how difficult restricted visiting has been during the pandemic but we have a duty to ensure that our service users, staff and visitors remain protected from infection.

In line with the governments next steps for living with COVID19, our visiting protocol has been updated in response to the new guidelines.

Thanks to the success of the vaccination programme and access to antivirals, alongside natural immunity and increased scientific and public understanding about how to manage risk, the population now has much stronger protection against COVID-19 than at any other point in the pandemic. For additional protections our Service users will soon receive a Spring booster jab to top up their immunity to COVID-19.

This is enabling the country to begin to manage the virus like other respiratory infections, therefore free Lateral Flow Testing kits for the general population ceased on the 31st March 2022. If you personally prefer to continue testing yourself for COVID-19, you do have the option to purchase these, for a nominal fee, from the local Pharmacy, supermarkets or on-line.

From 1 April 2022, updated guidance advises people with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including COVID-19, and a high temperature or who feel unwell, to try stay at home and avoid contact with other people, until they feel well enough to resume normal activities and they no longer have a high temperature. Anyone with a positive COVID-19 test result will be advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days, which is when they are most infectious.

COVID-19 is spread through the air by droplets and aerosols exhaled from the nose and mouth of an infected person. All visitors have an important role to play in keeping other people safe by taking appropriate steps to reduce the risk of infection. Visitors will be required to observe all infection control measures, PPE requirements and hand hygiene practice whilst on our premises. Due to the vulnerability of our service users, we also require all visitors to wear a face mask. Visitors who provide personal care will also be tested in line with current government guidelines.

Access inside the care home

Contact with relatives and friends is fundamental to our service user's health and wellbeing and visiting is always encouraged. There should not normally be any restrictions to your visits into or out of our care homes. The right to private and family life is a human right protected in law (Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights). Where visiting is modified during an outbreak of COVID-19 or where a care home resident has confirmed COVID-19, every service user will be enabled to continue to receive one visitor inside the care home. End-of-life visiting will always be supported, and testing is not required in any circumstances for an end-of-life visit.

Visitors should not enter the care home if they are feeling unwell, even if they have tested negative for COVID-19, are fully vaccinated and have received their booster. Transmissible viruses such as flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and norovirus can be just as dangerous to our service users as COVID-19. If visitors have any symptoms that suggest other transmissible viruses and infections, such as cough, high temperature, diarrhoea or vomiting, they should avoid the care home until at least 5 days after they feel better.

Precautions for visitors

Some service users may need support with personal care from a visitor with whom they have a close relationship. Visitors who are providing personal care will be required to wear appropriate PPE and have a negative COVID-19 lateral flow test result from a lateral flow device before entering a care home, unless medically exempt. We are being provided with test kits to support this. If these visitors attend once or twice a week, they should only test on that day (testing can be completed at home or on site). If they choose to visit more than twice a week, they should test a maximum of twice weekly, 3 to 4 days apart.

Visitors providing personal care will be required to show proof of their negative test result prior to entry into the home. This may be an email or text from reporting the result, a date stamped photo of the test cartridge, or any other proof. If they are not able to produce a negative test, they will be asked to reschedule. We will not be retaining records of this proof.

What does testing involve?

You will be required to undertake a test using a Lateral Flow Test (LFT) before admission into the Home. You will be tested before admission to check if you currently have Covid-19.

For this, we will ask you to do a nose swab and then we will let you know your result within 15 minutes. We will ask you to complete the swabbing yourself, supervised by a trained staff member. A swab is a small piece of soft, absorbent material on a plastic stick that is used to take a sample from your nose.

The test is very straight-forward, and you will be supported throughout the process by a trained member of staff from the care home.

Key steps you should be prepared for during the test include:

1. When you first arrive at the care home

- You will be provided with PPE and asked to put it on as advised by a member of staff. This will include gloves, mask and apron. A staff member will help you with this.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form to take the test and share personal information with us so we can record and tell you your result.
- You will be checked in for your visit.

2. Your test will then be registered

- Please complete our visitor consent form. This is how NHS Test & Trace can link you to your test sample and collect contact details to send you your result.
- If you cannot complete this form yourself, a staff member can help you.
- To complete the registration, our staff will provide you with:
 - Details of your test kit barcode -- used to track your individual test
 - The test site ID number -- used to link your test to the care home

3. Take your test:

- After you check in, you will be given a swab.
- You will then need to take your own nose swab, supervised by one of our trained staff members. We will walk you through how to swab yourself which will only take about 30 seconds to do.
- Once you have handed over the swab, you will be asked to wait until your result is ready which will take approximately 15 minutes.

4. What does my result mean?

We will tell you your result and NHS Test & Trace will also send your result via SMS and/or the e-mail that you provided on the registration consent form.

- **Positive** – you will not be able to visit. You must go home immediately and are recommended to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days. You are recommended not to visit the home for the next 10 days.
- **Inconclusive** – we will ask you to do another LFT test. If this is inconclusive too, we will discuss your visit with you.
- **Negative** – your visit will be able to go ahead, as long as you comply with all other infection prevention and control measures (see below). This does not guarantee that you definitely do not have Covid-19, so we still need to make sure visits take place in a safe way, such as ensuring you wear your PPE at all times. If you have any questions about this, please do ask.

During your visit

You will be escorted to the service user's bedroom (or designated area) by a member of staff. Currently you will not be permitted to use any of our communal lounge areas. Toilet facilities will be made available on the day of your visit. We ask that you continue to wear your face mask and any other PPE that you were asked to wear by a member of staff.

Provided you are wearing appropriate PPE and following other infection control measures then it will be possible for you to have physical contact with your loved ones, such as holding hands. Gloves are not needed for handholding, providing hand washing/sanitising has been completed.

Visitors will be required to wear face masks, irrespective of whether the service user is known or suspected to have COVID-19 or not. This is referred to as "universal masking" or "source control" and is a means of preventing any spread of infection from the mask wearer. If they are providing personal care they will be required to wear masks, gloves and aprons to ensure visits can happen safely. This will be based on individual assessments, taking into account any distress caused to our service user's by use of PPE or if there is a detrimental impact on communication.

Behaviours that are not allowed during your visit

- Taking off any PPE without permission and guidance from the member of staff.
- Entering into any part of the home that is not designated for your visit.

Visits, if you prefer, can still take place outdoors in our gardens, behind glass or in our "visiting pods".

Visits outside the home.

Our service users will no longer be asked to isolate following high-risk visits out of the care home (including following emergency hospital stays) and will not be asked to take a test following a visit out.

In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19

An outbreak is defined as “2 or more positive (or clinically suspected) linked cases of COVID-19, that occur in the same setting within a 14 day period. This applies to both staff and service users, and includes PCR and LFD results.

If the home has a declared outbreak, this has an impact on visiting. Internal visits into the Home will be restricted with immediate effect. The HPT will inform the home how long outbreak restrictions (including visiting arrangements) will be in place for. If no further positive cases are identified in the 2 rounds of whole home recovery testing, subject to the HPT risk assessment, then the outbreak restrictions will be lifted. This could mean that outbreak restrictions may only be in place for 7 to 8 days in some outbreaks. However, outbreak controls may be in place for up to 10 days following the last positive case (assuming there are no variants of concern identified).

To limit the risk of infection

- It is strongly recommended that visitors receive 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, plus booster especially in light of the emergence of the Omicron variant and variants of concern.
- Visitors are also recommended to have a flu vaccination (if it is offered to them).
- Visitors must be free of any COVID-19 symptoms on the day of their visit.
- Visitors must not be unwell on the day of their visit (even if they have tested negative for COVID-19 and are fully vaccinated and have received their booster)
- Visitors who have a cough, high temperature, diarrhoea, or vomiting should avoid visits to the Home until at least 5 days after they feel better.
- Visitors who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 10 days are recommended not to visit the Home.
- Visitors (who are providing personal care) that have previously tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days will not be re-tested (in line with Government Guidelines). They must however provide the proof of a positive test result to gain admission into the Home.
- Visitors (who are providing personal care) will be required to give permission for Lateral Flow Testing.
- Visitors must comply with infection control measures and adhere to social distancing from other service user’s.
- Visitors must use the hand sanitiser provided before, during and after their visit.
- Hand sanitiser should be applied before and after putting masks/PPE on and taking them off.
- Visitors must wear clinical face masks at all times inside the Home (unfortunately medical exemptions are not acceptable in care homes at present).
- Physical contact such as hand holding is acceptable providing handwashing/sanitisation protocols are followed.
- Close personal contact such as hugging, or kissing presents a higher risk. This risk is reduced when both the service user and the visitor/s have been double vaccinated, wear PPE and follow good hand hygiene protocols.
- Visitors should have no contact with other service users or visitors and minimal contact with staff – you are welcome to contact the home after your visit when staff will be happy to answer any questions.
- Coughs and sneezes must be caught in a tissue and your hands re-sanitised after the tissue has been disposed of.
- Access will be permitted to allocated communal toilet facilities.
- Unfortunately, refreshments will not be available during your visit.
- Double vaccination for both the service user and visitor/s is highly recommended, but it is not a requirement.

Visiting with children

It is very important that any children visiting are able to follow infection prevention control measures. Due to safety reasons, children under the age of 3 will not be required to wear a face mask. Children must be supervised by their parent/guardian at all times.

Visiting Professionals

Health, social care and other professionals may need to visit service user's within the home to provide services. All visiting professionals – such as healthcare workers, social workers, CQC inspectors and therapists - will be required to provide proof of a negative Lateral Flow Test result (within the last 72 hours) before they are allowed access into the building. They will also be required to follow current infection control measures.

End of life visiting

Visits at the end of life will always be unrestricted and fully supported. Visitors will not be required to be tested using lateral flow tests or provide proof of a negative result.

Communicating with others when wearing a facemask.

Please remember to

- Speak loudly and clearly
- Keep eye contact
- Try not to wear hats or sunglasses which might conceal your face further.
- Try to wear clothing that the service user will recognise
- Some of our service users may become distressed at the beginning of your visit as they cannot see your face – it may help if you bring a photograph with you as a general reminder.

In the event of a suspected or actual outbreak, we will rapidly impose visiting restrictions to protect our vulnerable residents, staff and other visitors. An immediate exclusion to all but essential professionals and one visitor per service user will be implemented.

During these restrictions contact with service users will be facilitate via

- Telephone
- FaceTime
- WhatsApp
- Skype
- Zoom

Armscare Ltd will follow Government infection control guidance and will put in place measures to ensure your safety. However, we cannot guarantee that you will not become exposed to the COVID-19 virus whilst visiting our premises.

**A copy of our insurance waiver notification and current Risk Assessments on display.
Copies are available on request.**

Please be aware that you will be asked to leave the premises if you fail to adhere to this visiting protocol

Thank you in advance for your patience and co-operation.

Yours sincerely,
Terenia Skevington,
Operations Director.
8th April 2022