



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.

Human rights recognise that all people have a right to freedom of movement and the right to see their family and friends. However, there is a need to balance the rights of an individual with the rights of others that share their environment. Many of our service users are at a higher risk of catching COVID-19 and have poor outcomes due to co-morbidities.

The government National Testing Programme has enabled care homes to offer regular testing of visitors, and when combined with other infection prevention and control measures (such as PPE), supports meaningful visits with loved ones. We are determined to find the right balance between the benefits of visiting on wellbeing and quality of life, and the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to social care staff and vulnerable residents.

From the 15th December 2021, every care home service user can nominate up to 3 named visitors who will be able to enter the care home for regular visits (this number does not include essential care givers or pre-school age children). Visits will not be permitted in communal lounges but will be facilitated in the service users own bedroom. Due to limited accessible space, please ensure that visits are restricted to two people at a time. We will have limited availability for visits, so please continue to pre-book your appointments in advance by contacting the Home. The duration of visits will not be limited providing safe visiting practices can be maintained but please be mindful that your loved one may find longer visits very tiring.

Visits for additional family or friends can take place outdoors, at a window or in our “visiting pods”.

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 social distancing from other service users & staff, 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.

All internal visitors will be expected to undertake a Lateral Flow test which gives a negative test result before access into the Home is permitted. This letter sets out the testing process, what it will mean for you and other precautions we ask that you take to keep your loved ones and all our residents and staff safe.

In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19

Internal visits into the Home will be cancelled with immediate effect. The HPT will inform the home how long outbreak restrictions (including visiting arrangements) will be in place for. Since September 2021, if no further positives 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 28 days following the last positive case (assuming there are no variants of concern identified).

During an outbreak of COVID-19 we will be able to continue to offer visits either behind windows or in our dedicated visiting pods. The only exception to this rule will be for the enablement of end of life visits and for essential care givers.

What does testing involve?

You will be asked to take a test using a new technology called a Lateral Flow Test (LFT). You will be tested before visiting to check if you currently have Covid-19.

For this, we will ask you to do a throat and nose swab every time you visit and then we will let you know your result in 30 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 and throat.

The test is very straight-forward, and you will be supported throughout the process by a trained member of staff from the care home. Full instructions can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-lateral-flow-testing-of-visitors-in-care-homes/visitor-testing-guidance-pack>

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.
 - Your temperature will be taken by a member of staff.
 - 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 throat and 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 30 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 self-isolate. You will have to take a second test which is a confirmatory PCR test which we will provide and register for you. You will receive your result in around 72 hours, and you need to self-isolate for a period of 10 days. If you test positive, NHS Test & Trace may contact you to ask for your contacts.
- **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.

It is important to recognise that a negative test will provide us with some assurance as to whether you are carrying the COVID-19 virus. However, it is not a guarantee. To keep your loved one and our care home safe, we ask that you please follow the below guidelines:

- Stay home if you are feeling unwell, including if you have a fever, a cough or a change in your taste and smell.
- Follow national guidance outside of your visit and wash your hands regularly.

During your visit

You will be escorted to the service users bedroom by a member of staff. You will not be permitted to enter 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.

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.

Not all visits require a Lateral Flow Test to be undertaken, these include:-

- Window visits to downstairs communal areas.
- Garden visits – social distancing will apply – independent access into the garden will be available (where settings allow this)
- Designated visiting pods within the home (where no direct access into the home is permitted)

To limit the risk of infection

- Internal visits will be limited, where possible, to two named constant visitors, per service user. Additional external or visiting pod visits can be arranged.
- Visits will need to be booked in advance for a specific day and time.
- Visitors must check with the home on the day of their visit, just in case the situation has changed since their booking.
- 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.
- 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 will not be admitted into the Home.
- Visitors who are not legally required to self-isolate are advised against visiting the Home for 10 days if they have been identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 (unless absolutely necessary) even if they have been fully vaccinated. Where these visits do occur, visitors must provide proof of a negative PCR test result prior to their visit and a negative lateral flow test result earlier in the day of their visit.

- Visitors who are fully vaccinated and have been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, do not need to self-isolate if they receive a negative PCR test result and take daily rapid lateral flow tests until 10 days after their last exposure to the positive case.
- Visitors 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 testing result to gain admission into the Home.
- Visitors will be required to give permission for Lateral Flow Testing and mandatory temperature checks. This sensitive information will be securely stored and used for NHS Test and Trace purposes only.
- Visitors must comply with infection control measures and adhere to social distancing guidelines.
- Where possible, visitors should walk or travel by car, avoiding public transport when visiting the home.
- 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.

Any gifts brought to give to service users must be suitable for sanitising. Unfortunately, flowers, plants or gifts that can not be sanitised will be quarantined for 72 hours before being handed to the service user.

Visiting with children

It is possible for a young person under the age of 18 to be one of the nominated visitors. Any visits involving children should be carefully considered before taking place.

It is very important that any children visiting are able to follow infection prevention control measures which will include social distancing, PPE use (where appropriate), and advice on minimising physical contact.

- Any children visiting (apart from babies and very young, pre-school children) will be counted towards the maximum number allowed to visit.
- Physical contact between babies or young children will not be permitted.
- Children over the age of 11 will be required to wear the same PPE as adult visitors.
- Due to safety reasons, children under the age of 3 will not be required to wear a face mask.
- Children under the age of 11 will not be required to undertake lateral flow testing prior to admission into the Home.
- Children over the age of 11 will be required to undertake a lateral flow test that gives a negative result. The child and parent/guardian must give consent for the test to be completed.
- Children must be supervised by their parent/Guardian at all times.

Visiting Professionals

From the 11th November 2021, all visiting professionals will be required to provide proof of double COVID-19 vaccination or medical exemption status before they are allowed access into the building.

This evidence can be viewed via:

NHS App

NHS Website (www.nhs.uk)

NHS COVID-19 Pass letter.

Additional booster vaccinations are not currently a legal requirement (but this may change in the future).

Exemptions to this rule apply to:

- Emergency assistance (such as a social worker responding to an immediate safeguarding or a member of the public responding to a fire or flood)
- Urgent maintenance assistance (such as a failure/breakdown of gas, electric, water, dangerous electrical faults, damage caused by fire, flood, storm, explosion, burst water service. Serious leaking roof, gas leak, faults to passenger lifts or in fact any fault or damage that makes the Home unsafe or insecure).
- Emergency services executing their duty (such as fire service, Police and Health Service emergency response)
- Under 18 years old (unless over 16 and a front-line health care worker)

Restrictions do not apply to:

- Service users.
- Friends and relatives of service users
- Essential Care Givers.
- Those providing comfort and support to a service user following the death of a relative or friend.

Essential care givers.

Every service user will be supported to choose an essential care giver to benefit from companionship and additional care/support from a person they have a personal relationship with. Essential care givers are allowed to continue to visit during periods of isolation or when there is an outbreak.

Essential Care Givers are in addition to the three named constant visitors. As each service user is different, the exact arrangements will be agreed once an individualised assessment of the resident's needs has been completed.

Essential care givers must:

Take a weekly PCR test and share the results with the Home.

- Take a minimum of 3 lateral flow tests a week (one on the same day as the PCR test), one lateral flow test 2 to 3 days later, and then again after another 2 to 3 days.
- If an outbreak is declared, essential care givers will be subject to additional testing (in line with current government guidelines)
- Undertake training in relevant IPC measures and the correct use of PPE.

Individualised assessments are also required for any service users who are confined to bed because of infirmity or illness – please contact the Home Manager for further details and assistance on visiting under these circumstances.

End of life visiting

Visits at the end of life will always be supported, without limiting the number of visitors. Visitors will be required to be tested using lateral flow tests that produce 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 visitors 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. We will continue to work hard to support and improve meaningful visits with our service users.

Yours sincerely,

Terenia Skevington,

Operations Director.

15th December 2021.