

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

We recognise that maintaining contact and relationships for people is critical for everyone's wellbeing and understand that the impact of Coronavirus and the National and Local restrictions put in place by the government are difficult for everyone. We will support people to see family and friends in line with the legal restrictions laid out by the Government and guidance from the Local Authorities/ Public Health England and we will work with people to balance rights, best interests and the physical safety of the individual, co tenants and staff. We do not have a 'blanket approach' to visits and maintaining contact as an organisation or service. This policy is intended for face to face visits, there are other ways of staying in touch eg. Online video calls and phone calls which we will enable people to do as well.

Our approach to enabling visits and ways to spend time together will be based on what people want, their assessed needs, interests balanced with the risks to individuals and others living in their environment and the legal and safety guidance and restrictions that are in force and change regularly to manage infection.

This policy is separated into different sections for Registered Care Homes, Supported Living in England and Supported Living in Wales as they all have different rules or Government guidance to follow.

### REASON FOR POLICY

- To set out the steps we will take to enable the people we support to visit and receive visits in order to maintain meaningful contact with their families, friends and loved ones, legally permitted and practically possible.
- To set out the circumstances under which other visitors including United Response Managers and contractors will be able to visit the premises.

## 2. PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

All Members of United Response Staff  
People We Support and their family members, friends and loved ones  
Contractors and Freelance Staff Working at United Response Premises

## 3. CQC COMPLIANCE

This policy supports compliance with the following Key Questions that the Service is:

SAFE	EFFECTIVE	CARING	RESPONSIVE	WELL-LED
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### CARE INSPECTORATE WALES (CIW) COMPLIANCE

This Policy supports compliance with the following Key Themes:

WELLBEING	CARE AND SUPPORT	ENVIRONMENT	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
✓	✓	✓	✓

#### 4. LEGISLATION – applies to ALL SERVICES

United Response will ensure that all locations act in line with the requirements of the

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Coronavirus Act 2020 and national guidance issued under that legislation.
- Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations 2020 and local restrictions issued under that legislation
- Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self Isolation) Regulations 2020

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations 2020 regulations include powers for Local Authorities to:

- restrict access to, or close, individual premises
- prohibit certain events (or types of event) from taking place
- restrict access to, or close, public outdoor places (or types of outdoor public places)

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self Isolation) Regulations 2020 set out a series of measures that can be taken where a person declines to self-isolate.

#### 5. PROCEDURE (that all staff MUST follow)

##### 5.1 REGISTERED CARE HOMES

We will support people and their families/friend/loved one to meet safely

- In line with National Government legal restrictions as described in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3
- With reference to Local Authority restrictions and
- Only if no-one at the premises or among the planned visitors has tested positive or is displaying symptoms of Covid-19
- We will support people to make decisions about how they do this by providing information to inform decision making and through a formal capacity and best interest assessment and considering the information in the service risk assessment for supporting visits and contact with family and friends.

Registered Care Homes are often subject to more rigorous national and local restrictions about allowing people to visit the home than supported living locations. Registered Care homes will follow the Local Authority and Public Health orders to stop visits into the home. Registered Managers of Care Homes should follow the guidance from the Local Authority and ensure people

we support and their family and friends are also informed of any changes. This only applies to visits TO the care home.

The current National Guidance on Visits TO care homes is [HERE](#)

**Government guidance for visits inside care homes is:**

**Tier 1** 'To limit risk, where visits do go ahead, this should be limited to a single consistent visitor or maximum of 2 consistent visitors per person' Visitors to registered care homes must abide by social distancing rules and the infection control procedures in each Care Home.

**Tier 2 and 3** 'Visiting should be limited to exceptional circumstances only such as end of life. Where visiting is restricted due to the local COVID alert level and if, after an individual assessment of the resident's circumstances, it is determined that in-person visitation is not appropriate, care homes should support visiting in a virtual manner.'

**Tier 3 only - Exceptions in relation to indoor gatherings**

These are the exceptions relating **only** to indoor gatherings and only to Care homes who are in Tier 3. .

**Exception 1: visiting a dying person**

Exception 1 is that the person concerned ("P") is visiting a person whom P reasonably believes is dying ("D"), and P is—

- (a) a member of D's household,
- (b) a close family member of D,
- (c) a friend of D.

**Exception 2: visiting persons receiving treatment etc**

Exception 2 is that the person concerned ("P") is visiting a person ("V") receiving treatment in a hospital or staying in a hospice or care home, or is accompanying V to a medical appointment and P is—

- (a) a member of V's household,
- (b) a close family member of V, or
- (c) a friend of V

This means that a visit can go ahead, even under Tier 3 restrictions where a person is at the end of life or is staying in a care home.

**Meeting family and friends away from the Registered Care Home.**

In general, until there is further Government guidance visits outside of the care home (including in gardens) we must support visits and contact by:

- 1) **following** the local restrictions as set out by the legal Tiers system. **See 5.4**
- 2) **being informed** by the service risk assessment **See 5.7**
- 3) **deciding** through supporting individual decision making using capacity assessments and where required best interest decisions. **See 5.8 and 5.9**

- 4) **developing** a support plan to ensure everyone knows how to support contact with family and friends as safely as possible

## 5.2 SUPPORTED LIVING (IN ENGLAND)

The current national guidance on visiting and support bubble in Supported living is [HERE](#)

We will support people and their families/friend/loved one to meet safely

- In line with National Government legal restrictions as described in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier3
- With reference to Local Authority restrictions and
- Only if no-one at the premises or among the planned visitors has tested positive or is displaying symptoms of Covid-19
- We will support people to make decisions about how they do this by providing information to inform decision making and through a formal capacity and best interest assessment and considering the information in the service risk assessment for supporting visits and contact with family and friends.

We must support visits and contact by:

- 1) **following** the local restrictions as set out by the legal Tiers system **See 5.4**
- 2) **being informed** by the service risk assessment **See 5.7**
- 3) **deciding** through supporting individual decision making using capacity assessments and where required best interest decisions. **See 5.8 and 5.9**
- 4) **developing** a support plan to ensure everyone knows how to support contact with family and friends as safely as possible.

## 5.3 SUPPORTED LIVING (IN WALES)

We will support people and their families/friend/loved one to meet safely

- Support Bubbles
- Two households may form a bubble and meet in each other's homes.
  - If one person from either household develops symptoms, everyone in the bubble must immediately self-isolate.

- Meetings indoors
- Up to 15 people can meet indoors for organised activity as long as they maintain social distancing and hand washing.

- The venue must be Covid secure.
- Places of worship will resume services.
- Community Centres will be available for small groups to meet safely indoors.
- Pubs, bars, cafes etc are able to reopen. More detail will follow once Ministers have confirmed with the hospitality sector.

- Meetings outside
- Up to 30 people can take part in organised activity outdoors, as long as they maintain social distancing, and all other Covid safety measures.

We must support visits and contact by:

- 1) **following** the local restrictions as set out by the Welsh government **See 5.6**
- 2) **being informed** by the service risk assessment **See 5.7**
- 3) **deciding** through supporting individual decision making using capacity assessments and where required best interest decisions. **See 5.8 and 5.9**
- 4) **developing** a support plan to ensure everyone knows how to support contact with family and friends as safely as possible.

#### 5.4 THREE LOCAL ALERT LEVELS (ENGLAND) : 14/10/20

On 14/10/20 the UK Government introduced three local alert levels of intervention for the effective management of Covid risk across England and each service will fall into one of these levels. The levels will change for areas in line with the rate of infection locally.

**Medium / Level 1** represents the baseline, the minimum level of restrictions applicable to all of England.

**High/ Level 2** is triggered in geographical areas or nationally when there has been a rise in transmission, which cannot be contained through local responses.

**Very High/ Level 3** is triggered in geographical areas or nationally when High /Tier 2 measures have not contained the spread of the virus, or where there has been a significant rise in transmission.

	<b>Medium / Tier 1</b>	<b>High / Tier 2: All restrictions in Medium areas apply, plus:</b>	<b>Very High / Tier 3: All restrictions in Medium and High areas apply, plus:</b>
<b>Face coverings</b>	<b>No change to guidance</b>	<b>No change to guidance</b>	<b>No change to guidance</b>
<b>Support Bubbles</b>	A support bubble is a close support network between a household with only one adult in the home (known as a single-adult household) and one other household of any size. From 14 September, if you form or continue in a support bubble, you cannot then change your support bubble.	A support bubble is a close support network between a household with only one adult in the home (known as a single-adult household) and one other household of any size. From 14 September, if you form or continue in a support bubble, you cannot then change your support bubble.	A support bubble is a close support network between a household with only one adult in the home (known as a single-adult household) and one other household of any size. From 14 September, if you form or continue in a support bubble, you cannot then change your support bubble.
<b>Meeting in homes</b>	Rule of 6 still applies – 6 people from multiple households (including children) can meet indoors. They should	No mixing of households (or support bubbles) in private homes.	No mixing of households (or support bubbles) in private homes.

	maintain social distancing.		
<b>Meeting in private gardens</b>	Rule of 6 still applies – 6 people from multiple households (including children) can meet in a private garden. They should maintain social distancing.	Rule of 6 still applies – 6 people from multiple households (including children) can meet in a private garden. They should maintain social distancing.	No mixing of households (or support bubbles) in private gardens.
<b>Meeting outdoors</b>	Rule of 6 still applies – 6 people from multiple households (including children) can meet outdoors. They should maintain social distancing.  Exercise classes and organised sport can still take place outdoors.	Rule of 6 still applies – 6 people from multiple households (including children) can meet outdoors. They should maintain social distancing.  Exercise classes and organised sport can continue to take place outdoors.	Rule of 6 still applies – 6 people from multiple households (including children) can meet outdoors. They should maintain social distancing.
<b>Pubs, bars, restaurants etc</b>	Rule of 6 still applies – 6 people from multiple households (including children) can meet in hospitality venues until 10pm. They should wear masks except when seated. These venues must all provide table service.  Food can be sold after 10pm through a delivery service, click-and-collect or drive-through.	You must not socialize with anyone outside your household or support bubble in any indoor setting.  You can visit hospitality venues with members of your household or support bubble until 10pm.  Food can be sold after 10pm through a delivery service, click-and-collect or drive-through.	Pubs and bars must close unless they can operate as a restaurant, serving proper meals (eg. Lunch, dinner). They may only serve alcohol alongside a meal.
<b>Meeting indoors for sport, support groups etc</b>	Exercise classes and organized sport can take place indoors if the rule of 6 is followed.  Places of worship remain open.	Indoor exercise classes and organized sport can only take place indoors if it's possible to avoid mixing with people from outside your household or support bubble.	Indoor exercise classes and organized sport can only take place indoors if it's possible to avoid mixing with people from outside your household or support bubble.

	Disability sport is still permitted to take place indoors.	Places of worship remain open.  Disability sport is still permitted to take place indoors.	Places of worship remain open.  Disability sport is still permitted to take place indoors.
<b>Travelling</b>	Plan ahead to avoid busy times or routes, try to walk or cycle when you can.	Try to reduce the number of journeys you make.  Plan ahead to avoid busy times or routes, try to walk or cycle when you can.	Try to avoid travelling outside the Very High alert level area except for things like work, education or youth services, to meet caring responsibilities or if you are travelling through the area as part of a longer journey.  People who live in a Very High alert level area should avoid staying overnight outside that area.  People from outside the Very High alert level area should avoid staying overnight inside that area.
<b>Additional measures</b>	None	None	The government will work with local authorities to apply additional, targeted restrictions on top of the baseline restrictions for the 'Very High' tier.

You can find out which tier applies to a specific location using the [government's postcode checker](#). Please use this to understand the situation where you live and work, as well as when planning a journey or visit.

You can also refer to [the Government's full list of local Covid alert levels by area](#), which will be updated whenever there is a change.

## 5.5 LOCKDOWN - ENGLAND 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER – 2<sup>ND</sup> DECEMBER 2020

On 05/11/20 the UK Government introduced a 4 week lockdown across England and affects every area of the country and all services.

During this period this is the legal position and the guidance everyone must follow. There are no 'blanket restrictions' as every situation is different so the principle is that must support visits and contact by:

- 5) **following** the guidance and the restrictions for lockdown in this section **5.5**
- 6) **being informed** by the service risk assessment **See 5.7**
- 7) **deciding** through supporting individual decision making using capacity assessments and where required best interest decisions. **See 5.8 and 5.9**
- 8) **developing** a support plan to ensure everyone knows how to support contact with family and friends as safely as possible.

The new legislation says all care home residents in England should be allowed to receive visits from their family and friends in a COVID-secure way – with infection control measures, social distancing and PPE 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. Measures put in place should provide COVID-secure opportunities for families to meet using visiting arrangements as described below:

**Visits by a family member or a friend** may happen following the guidelines and in line with the visitors risk assessment:

### **All visitors**

- Must arrange the visit in advance to ensure only one person visits the Registered Care Home at any time.
- Wash their hands on arrival
- Must sign in giving contact details to support test and trace
- Walk, cycle or drive to the service if possible
- Think about whether to bring gifts, because they might need to be decontaminated
- Observe the 1 metre plus rule with no skin to skin contact
- Wear a face covering during the visit

### **The visit must be**

- tailored to residents and the environment and should prioritise residents and staff's safety to limit the transmission of COVID-19
- cancelled if any visitor or anyone who lives or works at the service location tests positive for Covid or starts to display symptoms

### **Support bubbles**

A support bubble can only be in place where one of the parties lives alone. People living in a Registered Care Home cannot visit the home or garden of anyone outside of the support bubble.

**Supported Living** – a visit by one person to provide care or support for someone who is vulnerable can happen as long as the location is Covid secure, – with infection control measures, social distancing and PPE 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 peoples.



Measures put in place should provide COVID-secure opportunities for families to meet using visiting arrangements as described above

In addition, friends/family members/volunteers can visit to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person. E.G. a person can deliver shopping to the home of a person we support.

**Any best interest decisions made previously around visits to support the mental and physical wellbeing of a person we support must be reviewed in light of the new regulations and local infection rates.**

#### **Support bubbles in Supported Living**

A support bubble can only be in place where one of the parties lives alone. If a person we support in SL is part of a support bubble they can continue to spend time in the home of the other person in the bubble, including overnight.

### **5.6 LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS: WALES**

New rules came into force from 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 when the firebreak Lockdown ended.

**Support Bubbles** Two households may form a bubble and meet in each other's homes. If one person from either household develops symptoms, everyone in the bubble must immediately self-isolate.

**Meetings indoors** Up to 15 people can meet indoors for organised activity as long as they maintain social distancing and hand washing.

- The venue must be Covid secure.
- Places of worship will resume services.
- Community Centres will be available for small groups to meet safely indoors.
- Pubs, bars, cafes etc are able to reopen

**Meetings outside** Up to 30 people can take part in organised activity outdoors, as long as they maintain social distancing, and all other Covid safety measures.

### **5.7 RISK ASSESSMENT**

Following discussions with people we support and the team every service manager must complete a risk assessment setting out how we will enable people to maintain contact and visits in line with the local or national restrictions in place. The Risk assessment will also take into account the needs of the people living together, the physical environment indoors and outside and the ability to socially distance and main effective Infection control.

A template risk assessment is available on the Hub. It sets out the risk reducing measures that all services will be taking and provides prompts to complete the local detail and information. All staff must follow the risk assessment when discussing or supporting people to maintain contact with

others. The risk assessment will provide a guide to reducing risks for people and teams and will help inform individual decisions or best interest assessments. The risk assessments are not intended to provide a blanket restriction on contact with friends and family.

#### **Review**

Risk assessments must be reviewed in line with any changes to published guidance from National and Local Government to enable safe visiting within each setting when possible.

### **5.8 DECISION MAKING : A person who has capacity**

Someone who has capacity to make decisions about visits and contact is responsible for the consequences of their actions. Record the discussion about the guidance, risks and consequences of actions on the capacity assessment form.

The capacity assessment should include

- consideration of all risks including
  - to health from infection, and
  - to wellbeing from isolation,
  - maintaining their tenancy and housing obligations
- consideration of potential consequences for the person including
  - ill-health,
  - loneliness, and
  - deprivation of liberty

The information provided should include

- No one is entitled to place others, including those they live with at risk as a result of personal choice.
- In some cases, dependant on local or National restrictions contact outside the household / visiting could result in prosecution and / or fine, you will need to be clear with the person about this.
- Where a person is making an informed choice that places others they live with or their staff at risk you may have to inform relevant authorities to protect others. Seek advice from Deborah Barnet, MCA and DoLs lead before doing so.

Managers should work with the person to **develop a support plan** clearly stating what has been agreed in relation to contact, what actions the person, family and friends and staff need to take to ensure visits and contact happens as safely as possible for everyone to follow.

#### **Review**

Decisions must be reviewed in line with any changes to published guidance from National and Local Government to enable safe visiting within each setting when possible and the support plan should be updated.

## 5.9 DECISION MAKING: A person who is assessed as not having capacity to make the decision.

If someone is assessed as not having the capacity to make the decision a best interest decision must be made, consulting all relevant parties including the Social Worker. This is crucial where a proposed visit could result in prosecution or a fine.

The assessment should include

- whether the wellbeing needs of the individual make visits particularly important and in their best interests: and so should list the benefits and consequences to the person of meeting their friends and family, both to their mental and their physical wellbeing. These could include
  - maintaining close relationships during the pandemic
  - enabling the person to leave the house
  - socialising with people they do not live with
  - reducing anxiety and conversely
  - difficulty or sadness when the meeting ends
- consideration of all risks including
  - to health from infection, and
  - to wellbeing from isolation,
  - maintaining their tenancy and housing obligations
- consideration of potential consequences for the person including
  - ill-health,
  - loneliness, and
  - deprivation of liberty
  - breaking the law in relation to legal restrictions
- whether the people who are in the same household, including the person in question are particularly clinically vulnerable to Covid-19 and so should list the infection control measures we will put in place to make the visit as safe as possible.

Staff will be required to identify the benefits and consequences of any contact or visit, including the consequences of keeping other people safe and well.

If the decision results in additional restrictions, social isolation, increase supervision or shielding then Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards will need to be considered.

Contact Deborah Barnet, the MCA and DoLS lead for support in this area of work and share the assessments.

- Managers should work with the person and family/ friends to develop a support plan clearly stating what has been agreed in relation to contact, what actions the person, family and friends and staff need to take to ensure visits and contact happens as safely as possible for everyone to follow.

### **Review**

Decisions must be reviewed in line with changes to published guidance from National and Local Government to enable safe visiting within each setting when possible and the support plan should be updated.

#### 5.10 COMMUNICATION

Government guidance and Local Authority restrictions change, sometimes frequently and with little notice. They also apply differently to the various types of service we provide. Managers and teams will receive updated information on National Government guidelines and local restrictions through the regular Covid briefing.

All questions should be sent to [covid19.projectteam@unitedresponse.org.uk](mailto:covid19.projectteam@unitedresponse.org.uk)

### 6. CONTACTS

If you have any queries or concerns regarding this policy, please contact the relevant person.

SUBJECT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
Clarification on points of policy	<a href="mailto:covid19.projectteam@unitedresponse.org.uk">covid19.projectteam@unitedresponse.org.uk</a>	
Clarification on MCA and DoLs	<a href="mailto:Deborah.barnett@unitedresponse.org.uk">Deborah.barnett@unitedresponse.org.uk</a>	
Document owner	Shonagh Methven	07989479229

### 7. RELATED LINKS

POLICIES, FORMS AND DOCUMENTS	LEGISLATION
	<a href="#">Health and Safety at Work Act 1974</a> <a href="#">Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999</a> <a href="#">Coronavirus Act 2020</a> <a href="#">The Health protection Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations 2020</a> <a href="#">Health Protection Coronavirus (Alert level) Regulations 2020</a> <a href="#">Mental Capacity Act 2005</a> <a href="#">Human Rights Act 1998</a> <a href="#">Equality Act 2010</a>
<b>EXTERNAL BODIES</b>	
<a href="#">Health and Safety Executive (HSE)</a> <a href="#">Local Authority Environmental Health Officers (EHOs)</a>	

8. DOCUMENT CONTROL		
VERSION	DATE OF ISSUE	DATE OF NEXT REVIEW
1	22/10/20	9/11/20