

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 e.g. Online video calls and phone calls which we will enable people to do as well.

It remains vitally important that the people we support have contact with family and friends. All care home residents 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 individuals wellbeing and quality of life, and the risk of transmission of COVID or Flu to vulnerable residents and social care staff.

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
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✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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
- With reference to Local Authority restrictions in response to local infection rates and the emergence of new Covid variants 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.

The current National Guidance on Visits TO and FROM care homes is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

Each person supported can choose to nominate an **'Essential Care-Giver'** and **'Named Visitors'**, such people should be identified in the persons support plan.

An **'Essential Care-Giver'** is a friend or family member who is likely to visit more often than others and may take part in some of the support offered to the individual.

There are no upper limit but the number of **Named Visitors** should be manageable at any visit.

The three named visitors should remain the same wherever possible

Every visitor should be tested using a Lateral Flow Test on the day of every visit and produce a negative test prior to their visit.

Measures put in place should provide COVID-secure opportunities for families and friends to meet using visiting arrangements as described below:

- It is still safer to meet outdoors.
- While staff and all professional visitors, CQC, health professionals, contractors, hairdressers etc, must be doubly vaccinated, residents and their family and friends need not be vaccinated.
- All potential visitors should be aware of the requirements for Lateral Flow testing and PPE before a visit takes place.
- Manage expectations and ensure all visitors know that if the Lateral Flow test result shows them to be COVID positive, they will not be allowed to enter the premises.
- Hand-washing facilities, hand sanitizer and face-masks will be made available for all visitors
- Doors and windows should be open to enable adequate ventilation if meeting indoors.
- Visitors must sign in giving contact details to support test and trace
- Visitors should keep physical contact to a minimum.

Each visit must be

- tailored to residents and the environment and should prioritise residents and staff's safety and to limit the possible transmission of COVID
- cancelled if any visitor, anyone that lives in the same household or anyone who lives or works at the service location tests positive for COVID or starts to display symptoms in the 10 days prior to a visit
- cancelled if any visitor has to self-isolate due to

- returning from visiting a country on the Red or Amber list
- following an unplanned hospital stay or any other high risk activity

Managers will consider whether to ask screening questions of potential visitors about recent test results or Covid symptoms.

People we support should have a voice in the decisions about who visits them and should always be consulted. If the person lacks the capacity to have such discussions then advocates and MDT should arrive at a 'best Interest' decision on behalf of the person.

Visits can continue under all circumstances when a person is at end of life.

Residents in care homes who have been identified as close contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID do not need to self-isolate as long as they are fully vaccinated, and can continue to receive visitors as normal.

Managers will also seek advice from their local Director of Public Health or Director of Adult Social Services, both of whom have an important role to play in supporting visiting, and in supporting the care home to deliver a safe visiting procedure.

Essential Care Giver

Every care home resident can choose to nominate one essential care giver who may visit the home to attend to essential care needs.

The essential care giver should be enabled to visit in most circumstances, including if the care home is experiencing a COVID outbreak

But they cannot visit if

- if the essential care giver or resident are COVID-positive,
- or if the essential care giver is not fully vaccinated and is notified they are a close contact of someone who is COVID-positive

Professional visitors

Health, social care and other professionals need to visit care home residents to provide services. Care homes should facilitate these visits while ensuring necessary testing, IPC and PPE measures are adhered to. The arrangements for visiting professionals differ from those for family and friends visiting the care home.

Self Isolation

From 16th August, all citizens, including the families and friends of the people we support who have been doubly vaccinated do not have to self-isolate if they are contacted by Test and Trace.

However, even if they have been doubly vaccinated, potential visitors identified as close contacts should not visit if there is anyone Clinically Vulnerable or Clinically Extremely Vulnerable at the Registered Care home.

They may visit only after ten days have passed since their contact notification.

They should undergo a PCR test in the 48 hours before a planned visit. The negative result can be evidenced by a photograph, e-mail or text but should be dated

They should also undergo a LFT on arrival.
 Only those providing a negative test result re PCR and LFT should be admitted to the Registered Care Home

VISITS OUT OF THE CARE HOME

In all cases, the manager will work with people being supported and their families to make sure that no one with COVID symptoms should participate in a visit and anyone with suspected symptoms should be tested.

Managers will consider:

- testing visitors who are collecting residents and transporting them to or from the setting, and encouraging any others they may be meeting to conduct a test on the day
- offering support so people can find or go to outside spaces to see their relative in a safer environment
- factors to minimise the risk for staff and other individuals in the Registered Care Home (including the layout of the premises and the nature of the support provided)
- the nature and context of the visit – for example, whether the visit would include overnight stays in the family home or visits to a public place
- the support needs that the person may have during the visit, and whether they will need to be accompanied by a staff member, carer, family member or friend
- transport for the visit should avoid exposing the person to those outside the household they are visiting, for instance by travelling in a family car wherever possible
- increased communal risks that may arise in shared areas when people return from off-site visits (including shared spaces indoors and outdoors, on-site grouped services and social activities)
- the need for those returning from off-site visits to self-isolate if they test positive for COVID, which is a requirement. There is no expectation for someone to self-isolate after a visit has happened if this is not the case
- Resident LFD testing following visits out of the Registered Care Home are required every second day for 10 days
- remind them to follow good infection control practice including avoiding close contact, hand hygiene and face coverings, and to consider whether their needs are likely to impact their ability to do so
- where possible, visitors will be given support on how to prepare for a visit and given tips on how to communicate if face coverings are required

5.2 SUPPORTED LIVING (IN ENGLAND)

The current national guidance on visiting in Supported living is here
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-living-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-supported-living#introduction>

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

- 1) In line with National Government legal restrictions

- 2) With reference to Local Authority restrictions and
- 3) Only if no-one at the premises or among the planned visitors has tested positive or is displaying symptoms of Covid-19
- 4) 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:

- 5) **following** the local restrictions
- 6) **being informed** by the service risk assessment **See 5.4**
- 7) **deciding** through supporting individual decision making using capacity assessments and where required best interest decisions. **See 5.5 and 5.6**
- 8) **developing** a support plan to ensure everyone knows how to support contact with family and friends as safely as possible.

Further official guidance

- guidance on the [admission and care of people in care homes](#)
- [COVID-19: guidance for hostel services for people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping](#)
- guidance issued by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) for [individuals, families and informal care workers for households with possible COVID-19 infection](#)
- [COVID-19 guidance on testing for adult social care](#)

5.3 SUPPORTED LIVING (IN WALES)

The current national guidance on visiting in Supported living is here
<https://gov.wales/supported-living-guidance-coronavirus>

People in supported living have the same rights as everybody else to meet and visit other people, and the same responsibilities for their own and other people's safety

We must support visits and contact by:

- 1) **following** the local restrictions as set out by the Welsh government
- 2) **being informed** by the service risk assessment **See 5.4**
- 3) **deciding** through supporting individual decision making using capacity assessments and where required best interest decisions. **See 5.5 and 5.6**
- 4) **developing** a support plan to ensure everyone knows how to support contact with family and friends as safely as possible.

5.4 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.

5.5 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 Mike Brent, 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.

5.6 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 Mike Brent, 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.

5.7 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

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	covid19.projectteam@unitedresponse.org.uk	07500 448877
Clarification on MCA and DoLS	michael.brent@unitedresponse.org.uk	
Document owner	Shonagh Methven	07989479229

7. RELATED LINKS

POLICIES, FORMS AND DOCUMENTS	LEGISLATION
	Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
EXTERNAL BODIES	Coronavirus Act 2020
Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Local Authority Environmental Health Officers (EHOs)	The Health protection Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations 2020 Health Protection Coronavirus (Alert level) Regulations 2020

	Mental Capacity Act 2005 Human Rights Act 1998 Equality Act 2010
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8. DOCUMENT CONTROL		
VERSION	DATE OF ISSUE	DATE OF NEXT REVIEW
4	01/12/21	31/01/22