

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Public Health
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Date: 9 September 2020

To: Providers of residential care

CC'd for information: CCG, NHS Trusts, Primary Care

RE: Guidance for visiting arrangements in care homes (with or without nursing) and supported living

Dear

Cheshire West and Chester Council contacted recently all providers of care homes and supported living environments (referred to as care settings in this document) in the borough to promote the national guidance for visiting arrangements in care settings.

I am writing today to offer further guidance on how providers of care should implement this guidance within their own facilities and to outline the role of the Director of Public Health (DPH) in assisting providers of care in assessing the risk of implementing visiting and developing their visiting policies.

Principles

The Department of Health and Social Care guidance for visiting arrangements is based around several key principles:

- That reducing the risk of infection from COVID-19 in care settings and preventing future outbreaks remains a priority
- Recognising that lockdown has been difficult for residents and their families and that visits are important for all those in care settings for their mental as well as their physical well being.
- Wherever possible and safe visits and contact should be supported.
- That decisions about the types of visiting to be allowed are based on dynamic risk assessments by both the individual provider and by the Director of Public Health (see below for further detail on the DPH risk assessment process in Cheshire West and Chester)
- Dynamic risk assessments within care settings should take into account the vulnerability of residents – alongside consideration of the wider wellbeing

needs of residents and whether their needs make visits particularly important (for example, people with dementia, a learning disability or autistic people may be permitted visitors when restricting visitors could cause some of the residents to be distressed) as well as the environment of the care setting.

- That care settings may apply different visiting policies to different cohorts of residents depending on the particular needs and vulnerabilities of residents
- That visiting arrangements for individual residents should be drawn up in consultation with family members wherever possible
- The care home's visiting policy should be made available and/or communicated to residents and families, together with any necessary variations to arrangements due to external events.
- The decision on whether or not to allow visitors, and in what circumstances, is ultimately for the provider and managers of each care setting to make.
- Things they should take account of may include – the weather, we are aware that some care settings have created a space outside for people to meet in – this may not be suitable as we go into Autumn/Winter.
- Care settings should support NHS Test and Trace by keeping a temporary record (including address and phone number) of current and previous residents, staff and visitors, as well as keeping track of visitor numbers and staff
- This decision should be based on the advice from the director of public health, as well as any additional advice or guidance from the local infection-control team and Public Health England.

The Department of health and Social Care Guidance for care home visiting can be found here:

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

Director of Public Health Dynamic Risk Assessments and Recommendations

The Director of Public Health is responsible for making a dynamic risk assessment of the suitability of visiting in the local authority area taking into account infection rates and the wider community risk environment.

A dynamic assessment is a continual process of observing and analysing the risks in the wider community.

Data and intelligence on local infection rates and risk factors are reviewed daily by the DPH and each week a decision is taken as to the appropriateness of visiting care homes and as to whether any additional restrictions or recommendations on the types of care home visiting should be made, in addition to the visiting guidelines contained within the guidance produced by the DHSC. These decisions are taken by the DPH jointly with the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS).

Should the DPH feel there is a requirement to advise further restrictions on visiting in care homes in the borough, based on the dynamic risk assessment described above,

these will be communicated with all providers immediately with advice on any changes that may be required in providers visiting policies.

Where the DPH assessment is that no additional restrictions on care home visiting should be recommended, the providers of care should continue to facilitate visiting for residents and their families in line with the recommendations contained within the DHSC Guidance for visiting care homes as outlined above.

What to do next

We ask all providers of residential care to take the following action:

- Review the DHSC guidance on visiting care homes regularly to be sure you are aware of any updates
- Be alert to any additional recommendations or restrictions to local care home visiting that may be made by the Director of Public Health
- Continue to ensure that your organisational risk assessments for care home visiting are reviewed in the light of current guidance
- Ensure decisions regarding visiting arrangements consider the individual needs and circumstances of residents
- Explore spaces indoors as well as outside so all can be accommodated (whatever the weather).
- Ensure that visiting policies are made available to residents and their families

For Infection control advice and support contact:

Infection, Prevention and Control Team
Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust

Telephone: 01244 397700

Email: cwp.ipct.admin@nhs.net

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all providers of care and their staff for their continued efforts throughout the ongoing pandemic to provide high standards of care in a way which protects all residents and staff from infection and promotes the wellbeing of staff, residents and their families in these challenging times.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Ashworth
Director of Public Health Cheshire West and Chester Council

Charlotte Walton
Director of Adult Social Services Cheshire West and Chester Council