

COVID INFORMATION **FROM 26 DECEMBER 2020**

Visiting into and Out of Care Homes

These new Level 4 restrictions clearly impact on care home visiting recommendations. Visiting is now to reduce and is aligned to Level 4 visiting guidelines. We realise that this reduction will be difficult for many. However, this is recommended for preventative, protective purposes. In parallel, national prioritisation of care home residents and staff for the COVID-19 vaccine remains in place. The Government's focus on vaccinating everyone living and working in adult care homes as soon as possible means that they are aiming for these additional restrictions to be as time limited as possible.

Under Level 4, care home visiting is advised as follows, at a frequency agreed between the care home and visitors:

1. Indoors: essential visits only
2. Outdoors: visits to the care home to see loved ones via garden or window visits, arranged with care home in advance. As a result of the additional risk posed by the new variant, garden visits should now be limited to one key/designated visitor and visits by children and young people should be suspended.

Essential visits will continue to be supported. These visits include circumstances where it is clear that the resident's health and wellbeing is changing for the worse, where visiting may help with communication difficulties, to ease significant personal stress or other pressing circumstances including approaching end-of-life.

In short, we are reverting back to the protocols that Abercorn Care Limited put in place when visiting first resumed after the first lockdown. The only difference being that we would look to undertake a degree of PCR testing. In addition to reduced visiting, the NHS has reviewed advice for designated visitor testing which is outlined below.

Updated Testing Advice

Routine visiting will be suspended in Level 4 areas from Boxing Day, use of the stock provided for designated visitor testing will be used to test essential visitors. However, as we have already stated Abercorn Care Limited is unable to implement the use of lateral flow testing, which was originally planned for use with designated indoor visitors, but which is now authorised to be used to test essential visitors.

Concerns exist due to the time period between a PCR test and the results, which is usually between 24 and 48 hours. We are advised that this testing is viewed as an additional layer of protection and that there is sufficient confidence in existing safety measures to satisfy these concerns. Therefore, in agreement with designated visitors and the availability of suitably trained staff Abercorn Care Limited would look to undertake PCR testing of designated visitors.

In view of the highly contagious strain of the virus, the Government has recommended that essential visitors also comply with all safety measures as before, i.e. IPC/PPE/Physical Distancing. The NHS/Government have stated that they are reviewing the current approach to Care Home staff testing to ensure it remains comprehensive in light of the emerging circumstances and will issue further guidance on this in the near future.

New Admissions

We are accepting new admissions. All new residents are asked to take a test for the virus ideally before they come into at the Care Home or when they first arrive at the Care Home. Residents will then be cared for in their room so they are isolated from the other residents for 14 days. Please be assured that your friend or family member will be supported during this time with video or telephone calls from family and our staff will make sure they are kept occupied with activities which will be discussed with the friends or family and resident prior to their admission.

Thank You

We have been humbled by our outstanding staff, who continue to maintain the high-quality care expected. We would like to thank them again for delivering care with such compassion, kindness and dedication.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you, for the wonderful words of support, understanding, gratitude and gifts that we have received from relatives and friends of the Residents. It really does mean such a lot to the staff who continue to work tirelessly to care for the Residents and to keep them safe.