

**Visiting a care home during COVID-19
Guidance for staff, residents and visitors**

1 April 2021 update

Introduction

The following guidance is for staff, residents and visitors of care homes. It sets out how visits should be managed as the COVID-19 vaccination programme rolls out. The guidance will be regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects changes to COVID-19 transmission rates in Jersey and risk level to care homes.

Allowing residents to see loved ones is beneficial to their health and wellbeing. However, many risks remain for care home residents and staff. While the COVID-19 vaccine offers a good level of protection to the person receiving it, it does not prevent illness from COVID-19 in every case, and it is likely that it only prevents around two-thirds of the onwards spread of infection. So, we should collectively take a slow, cautious approach to increasing visits.

Care homes are responsible for ensuring that all care giving arrangements are safe with regards to COVID-19 but residents and visitors also have a role to play as they must also help to protect themselves and others.

This visiting guidance is in addition to the general care homes COVID-19 guidance which can be found on the Jersey Care Commission website: https://carecommission.je/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020.11.19_Gudance-for-Care-Homes-during-COVID-19_winter-update-2.pdf

We are advising that visits to residents in care homes may take place under the conditions set out below.

Visits to residents who are fully vaccinated:

- a maximum of **6** named visitors per resident
- a maximum of **2** visitors per visit
- no limit on frequency of visits. This should be determined by the care home in accordance with the level of visiting that can be safely managed

All visitors to fully vaccinated residents should provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test at least once a month. This is regardless of whether the visitor has been vaccinated.

Visits to residents who are not fully vaccinated:

- a maximum of **3** named visitors per resident
- a maximum of **1** visitor per visit
- no limit on frequency of visits. This should be determined by the care home in accordance with the level of visiting that can be safely managed

All visitors to residents who are not fully vaccinated should provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test once per week. This is regardless of whether the visitor has been vaccinated.

Care home residents, staff and visitors are considered 'fully vaccinated' two weeks after their second dose of vaccine.

Some care homes may need to implement internal policies if they are to safely manage visits across all residents in an equitable way. For example, introducing 30-minute time limit on visits, or reduced frequency of visits.

Visitors can book a PCR test by phoning the Coronavirus Helpline on 01534 445566 or 0800 735 5566 (free phone number).

Where additional named visitors are requested on compassionate grounds, this should be agreed with the care home manager.

The following guidance should also be followed in all care homes.

Prior to visiting

- All visits should be booked in advance.
- Visits should be staggered and scheduled when the main cohort of staff are on duty. Mealtimes should be avoided.
- Visitors should not visit the home if they have had symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days or have had a positive COVID-19 test result in the last 14 days.
- Care home staff should confirm that visitors have not, to their knowledge, been exposed to COVID-19 at the time of booking the visit.
- Visitors should be advised that they should inform the care home and not attend if they become ill or are exposed to COVID-19 in the time between booking the visit and the day of the visit.
- Visitors should be asked if they have travelled off-island in the last 14 days. Visitors who have travelled in the last 14 days should provide the care home with evidence of all relevant post-travel negative PCR test results ahead of visiting.
- Visitors should be encouraged to download the 'COVID ALERT' app if they have a mobile phone.

On arrival and during the visit

- Visitors should sign in on arrival and provide full contact details.
- Visitors should be escorted by fully vaccinated staff wherever possible.
- Visitors should be guided in performing hand-hygiene when they arrive and agree to use the correct hand-hygiene techniques thereafter.
- Visitors should avoid spending time in areas where other residents may be present. However, if safe dedicated visiting areas have been set up by care homes these may be more appropriate.
- Visitors should wear appropriate PPE including a surgical mask, apron and gloves regardless of whether the resident or visitor is fully vaccinated. This will be provided by the care home and its disposal will be monitored.
- Where masks cannot be tolerated visitors are an acceptable replacement.
- It is also recommended that residents wear PPE during visits, where this is considered acceptable by residents and their visitors. This is most important where the resident has not been fully vaccinated.
- Visitor use of resident/visitor bathroom facilities should be discouraged.
- Visitors should be aware of and follow the Public Health guidance on how to reduce the spread of COVID-19 available on gov.je (or by phoning the Coronavirus Helpline for those who do not access the internet).

Care homes where there is a confirmed active case of COVID-19

If a Care Home resident has a confirmed case of COVID-19 all visits should be immediately suspended until the Government of Jersey's Infection Control Team advises that it is safe to continue visits. This is to protect residents, visitors and staff.

Whilst visiting is suspended, visits on compassionate grounds should be assessed on a case by case basis in discussion with Infection Control staff, and a risk assessment should be undertaken.

If a member of staff has a positive test, care homes should pause visiting until investigation by Infection Control deems that it is safe to reopen. The member of staff and the Care Home should follow guidance on the Jersey Care Commission website:

https://carecommission.je/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020.11.19_Gudance-for-Care-Homes-during-COVID-19_winter-update-2.pdf.

This guidance highlights that staff must not attend work if they have symptoms of or a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 and should follow the advice of the Contact Tracing Team.

Visiting in Jersey Hospice Care

It is vital that the Jersey Hospice is protected from COVID-19 as it is an essential and unique centre of respite and palliative care in Jersey. However, flexibility must be afforded to those in end of life circumstances and as much freedom given to see loved ones, as is safe to do so, during this critical time.

Jersey Hospice Care should assess and determine visiting on a case by case basis, in accordance with the unique needs of Islanders receiving this care. This should be with consideration to the wider care homes visiting guidance, to ensure that visiting is safe where it is permitted.

Factors that may be considered include:

- Circumstances of the individual in care
- Length of time and purpose of stay

For example, for those patients in care for a short duration before returning home, it may be appropriate to have more restrictive visiting, unless an emergency end of life situation arises during the stay. This will help protect the Hospice as a whole from COVID-9 transmission, while having a relatively low impact on the patient in care. However, for those in Hospice who are at end of life stages and/or are in care for a longer duration, more liberal visiting will likely be needed, with more named visitors permitted. All visits to the Hospice should still be safely managed with respect to the wider visiting in care homes guidance wherever possible.

Visitors taking residents out of the care home

Trips outside of the care home grounds are no longer strongly discouraged. However, for residents who are not yet fully vaccinated, it is recommended that trips out are with their 3 named visitors, or with people who are members of the same household as their named visitors.

Whilst vaccination offers good protection from severe disease, it does not fully prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others in every case. Therefore, all care home residents, whether they are vaccinated or unvaccinated, should follow public health guidance if taking trips outside the care home, as trips out may introduce risk of infection to unvaccinated residents.

The following is recommended for all residents and their family or loved ones when taking trips out:

- Physical distancing of 2 metres should always be maintained with anyone other than named visitors.
- Although not always possible to keep 2 metres physical distance between residents and visitors, this should be attempted in all situations where it is possible.
- Wear a face mask whenever possible. This is especially vital when:
 - physical distancing of 2 metres cannot be maintained, for example when travelling by car.
 - when indoors, including someone's home.
- Any surfaces that more than one person touches, such as a door handle, should be sanitised. For example, if travelling in a private car, car surfaces should be wiped down before travel with disinfectant wipes.
- Residents should be guided to use 60-70% alcohol hand-sanitiser frequently where regular handwashing is not possible.
- Avoid use of public transport.
- Spend time outside wherever possible. Do not mix with anyone, other than named visitors or their direct household members, in indoor environments.
- Tell the care home if any risk of exposure to COVID-19 occurs.

For residents who are not fully vaccinated in particular, the level of risk of certain activities should be considered. An [Activity Risk Guide](#) highlighting factors that make an activity higher or lower risk is available at gov.je/shielding (or by phoning the Coronavirus Helpline for anyone who does not access the internet). A lower risk trip could involve, for example, going for a drive or walk with named visitors, or visiting the named visitors' home when no one else is present.

Guidance for professionals visiting care homes to provide a service

Professionals or external support staff who need to visit the Care Home should be made aware of the need for; a pre-visit screening call, symptom checking, determination of known exposure to COVID -19; use of correct hand-hygiene techniques; requirements to wear appropriate PPE and compliance with Infection Control and public health guidance.

Group activities run by external professionals and others play a vital role in supporting residents' wellbeing, but these should only take place if carried out in line with physical distancing guidance and other public health advice. If there is a confirmed active case of COVID-19 in a care home, these visits may be suspended, depending on the nature of the visit.