

Policy for the review of visiting arrangements in care homes

The London Borough of Havering is intent on doing everything practicable to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in local care homes¹ and prevent future outbreaks, to ensure the health and safety of both care workers and residents. This includes minimising the risk that visitors to a care home inadvertently infect residents and/ or staff with coronavirus (or vice versa).

The decision whether to allow visiting is an operational matter for the individual home. Havering Council expects all local care homes to comply with national guidance² which sets out advice for providers:

- when establishing their visiting policy
- when taking visiting decisions for particular residents or groups of residents
- infection-control precautions
- communicating with family and others about the visiting policy and visiting decisions

The Care Provider Alliance have published a sector-led [protocol for enabling visiting](#) to assist care homes develop their own visiting policy. The home's policy should be communicated to residents and families, together with any necessary variations to arrangements due to external events.

National guidance also requires the director of public health (DPH) to assess the risk posed by care home visiting at any point in time and inform relevant stakeholders if they conclude that visiting should be suspended borough wide or in specific care homes based on consideration of:-

- wider local circumstances e.g. the rate of new infections within the community or in the local health and social care system
- the circumstances in individual care homes e.g. an outbreak of COVID-19 or insufficient staff to adequately supervise visiting and undertake essential caring requirements.

This paper sets out how the DPH in Havering will be undertake this risk assessment and communicate the results.

COVID-19 Risk assessment

The decision of the DPH regarding care home visiting is made at the COVID-19 Health Protection Board, which includes representation from the LBH Joint Commission Unit (JCU), NEL CCG, local NHS Trusts and PHE's London Coronavirus Response Cell (LCRC).

Care home visiting is a HPB agenda item each week³. The DPH's recommendation is made having reviewed the weekly COVID-19 status report and considered the views of the C-19 HPB as a whole.

¹ This includes registered residential care and nursing homes for older people and people with learning disabilities, mental health or other disabilities.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

³ From 20th August 2020 onwards.

Triggers likely to result in a decision to recommend that *visiting be stopped borough wide* include :-

- the weekly incidence of COVID-19 cases increases to 25/100K of population or higher and remains so for 2 consecutive weeks
- health partners report concern regarding rising admissions to hospital with COVID-19
- NHS partners and/or LCRC report a significant COVID-19 outbreak within the local health and social care system
- Havering or adjacent authorities are added to the national watchlist⁴

The DPH will recommend that *visiting be stopped in specific care homes* if any of the following criteria are met:-

- the LCRC reports a COVID outbreak at the care home – the home will remain closed to visitors for 28 days after the last case of COVID associated with the outbreak
- (lack of) reporting by the care home via capacity tracker suggests non-compliance with prevailing national policy regarding the frequency of testing of staff and residents
- there are significant concerns regarding infection prevention and control at a care home including visiting policy

LBH Public Health will liaise with the LCRC and maintain a record of homes with a current outbreak of COVID-19 to be shared with the C-19 HPB each week.

The JCU Quality Assurance Team will monitor reporting on capacity tracker and collate any concerns they or partners may have about the effectiveness of IPC in care homes. Concerns will be escalated to the HPB after discussion with LBH PHS (re testing) and the NELFT IPC team (re IPC).

Where, for whatever reason and at any time, an individual or all care homes is/are considered to need to restrict visiting, either temporarily or permanently, the DPH will communicate this advice in writing via the JCU to commissioners of all the relevant care homes, and direct to the registered manager as quickly as possible.

In the event of an outbreak in a care home and/or having received advice from the DPH, care homes should rapidly impose visiting restrictions to protect vulnerable residents, staff and visitors allowing essential visits only. The JCU Quality Assurance Team will monitor compliance with any recommendations made by the DPH.

Mark Ansell
Director of Public Health
August 13, 2020

⁴ The Watchlist is included in the weekly national covid-19 surveillance report published [here](#) and highlights the local authorities currently of greatest concern.