

PE1841/O

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport letter to Health and Sport Committee of 24 February 2021

I am pleased to confirm that the Scottish Government has today published new guidance for care homes *Open with Care: resuming meaningful contact with care home residents*. As you know this guidance recommends that care homes now put in place the necessary arrangements to safely resume meaningful contact between care home residents and their loved ones. The updated guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-care-homes-visiting-guidance/>

Protecting care home residents from the risk of COVID-19 has been our priority since the beginning of the pandemic. Given the multiple layers of COVID-19 protections now in place, we are now able to constructively address the risks of isolation and loneliness which have affected many residents, staff and loved ones as a result of necessary measures to protect against the impact of COVID-19.

This revised guidance recommends routine indoor contact between care home residents, relatives, friends and carers resumes, on a safe and compassionate basis and as long as safety considerations are met. It supports care providers to open up safe visiting for up to two designated visitors per resident, twice a week.

Essential visits are unaffected by the resumption of indoor meaningful contact and should always be compassionately and generously enabled by care homes when needed.

Care homes can access support from local oversight teams who have provided ongoing advice and support throughout the pandemic.

The Scottish Government is providing funding for reasonable additional costs incurred as a result of the pandemic, including staffing and non-staffing costs associated with facilitating safe visiting in care homes. This is in line with the financial support for social care providers guidance, published in December 2020.

The Scottish government also provides funding and support for the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) (extended to June 2021 and under ongoing review) as well as care home testing.

The guidance has been developed by the Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Medical Officer's the Clinical and Professional Advisory group for Social Care in consultation with relatives of care home residents, care home providers, Scottish Care, Directors of Public Health, Health and Social Care Partnerships and a range of other partners.

We have written to the sector updating on publication of *Open with Care: resuming meaningful contact with care home residents* and asking them to work with residents and families to resume routine indoor visiting in the coming days.

We also appreciate that for almost everyone, reconnecting will be an emotional time. Dedicated advice for care home residents, their friends and relatives will be available on www.nhsinform.scot/openwithcare from today. This summarises the new guidance and the safeguards in place to have meaningful contact as safely as possible.

Scottish Government has also committed to put in place additional support to residents' loved ones, which will be provided through a helpline by Alzheimer Scotland for anyone who needs support.

I have attached a copy of the guidance for your information and reference which is also available online at: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): adult care homes guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations-petitions/Publications/2020/06/Coronavirus_COVID-19_adult_care_homes_guidance.pdf).