



Your Ref:

Our Ref: YR045/AF

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Date: 1 June 2020

Dear Family and Friends of people in receipt of Adult Social Care services in the East Riding.

Re: Lockdown easement and visiting

I hope this letter finds you safe and well.

I am writing to ask for your continued support for care agencies across the East Riding whose staff teams are working hard to try to protect your loved ones from the effects of COVID-19. During lockdown this has proved a challenging, daunting task with care staff having to take additional precautions to try and maintain the integrity of infection control within care homes, independent living situations (ILSs) and in people's own homes.

As the risk of the spread of the infection increased, we took the very difficult decision to restrict all visitors from accessing care homes, with the exception of only those most essential to protect the health of our residents or the safety of the home. This decision was supported by the change in the law that meant that visiting became unlawful other than to support visits to those at end of life where this was appropriate and safe or to deliver essential care and support to vulnerable people in their own homes.

As lockdown begins to ease, confusion about visiting is starting to impact on care providers. You rightly want to know what form this can take, when it can happen, how frequently and where it can take place, and this letter hopes to clarify in general terms the position of the council in regard of visiting to settings where vulnerable people who still need to be shielded are residing, whatever that setting and until such time as the risk to vulnerable people is considered to be minimal.

From Monday, 1 June 2020 groups of no more than six individuals are permitted to come together in an outside space providing they observe the minimum two metre social distancing regulation. Outside space includes both private and public spaces. So for the foreseeable future visits inside of a person's property, unless it is for the delivery of care and support, is still unlawful and therefore even where a care home or ILS has a dedicated indoor space for visiting this cannot be used until such time as the regulations change to permit it. Even when indoor visits are permitted, very strict social distancing rules will need to apply where the safety of the vulnerable remains a priority.

We understand how heart breaking it is for people when individuals cannot have physical contact other than for care and support and how very difficult it has been over recent months for you and your loved ones to be apart. Despite the really strict rules that have applied during lockdown people across our communities have continued to contract the infection.

Thankfully, many have recovered but tragically there have been those that have not and it is our commitment to you that we will continue to strive to ensure that we do everything in our power to prevent the infection in places where care is delivered in the first place as well minimise the spread of COVID-19 in those situations where an outbreak occurs.

The issue of visiting is a complex one which requires significant levels of risk assessment so there will not be “a one size fits all” to supporting contact with relatives that is not through virtual means. Providers are currently reviewing the arrangements for being able to support some form of visit however their ability to manage this will very much depend on the circumstances of each service, their staffing levels, whether they have a safe space and whether there is an infection within the care setting.

They have a duty to ensure they do not increase the risks to either their staff or to vulnerable people who do not have the mental capacity to understand the impact of contracting COVID-19 or who have expressed a wish to be shielded. For this reason you may not be able to visit as frequently as you would wish, nor will you be able to have physical contact with your loved one, particularly in residential settings.

This letter seeks to clarify that for care settings keeping the most vulnerable safe will continue to be our main priority for as long as it takes to try to prevent the untimely death due to the COVID-19 infection of anyone in receipt of social care services and this will inevitably mean continued restrictions for many months to come. I am asking for your continued support and cooperation with us as we seek to balance the rights of you and your loved ones for contact, the safety of those in receipt of care and those staff who come to work to ensure they have the support and protection they both need and deserve.

I said in a letter some months ago that these are unprecedented times and a worrying period for everyone but I couldn't have predicted how challenging this was going to be or how amazing care staff were going to be in managing this pandemic. I have never been prouder to work in social care and whilst every death is a tragedy for the individual, their family and the care staff who have tended them, I am confident that without the efforts of our care providers there would have been countless more.

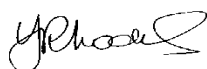
For the very vast majority of people in receipt of care in the East Riding they have been supported by staff who have done remarkable things to make sure that people continue to experience a good quality of life and I want to reassure you that everyone is committed to continuing to provide the best care possible for your loved ones.

If you want to talk about the service delivered to your loved one you can speak with the care provider or with your local community wellbeing team on (01482) 393939.

For more advice about coronavirus and what to do if you are concerned visit www.gov.uk and search for coronavirus.

Please stay safe and we look forward to resuming visits as usual once it is safe to do so.

Yours faithfully



Yvonne Rhodes
Head of Business Management & Commissioning.