

Supported Sheltered Housing



Having lived with three months of restrictions on visiting we are all keen to get back to normal and the announcement by the Health Minister on 30th June revising the restrictions on visiting in care settings has been a welcome step. We will follow this guidance for our supported sheltered houses.

In the revised guidance, the Health Minister recognises the right of people to visit their loved ones but added:

“While today’s announcement will be welcome news, we must remain mindful of the risk of this virus and as such virtual visiting is the preferred option where possible. If this is not possible then social distancing and hand washing remain vital.”

There has to be a balance between the benefits of visits for both residents and visitors against the risk of visitors introducing infection into the house. Or, indeed, spreading infection into the community. People who are shielding are strongly discouraged from visiting. The first priority continues to be reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

The ability to visit our supported sheltered houses is still being controlled in accordance with regional guidance and the risk assessment which we have carried out which takes into account the specific circumstances of each house and those living and working within it.

The guidance may change if there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in a house or there is a local or regional increase in pandemic surge level.

The Department of Health Guidelines for implementation on 6.7.20 provide the following advice:

- **Visits can only be by appointment – ad hoc visits cannot be facilitated.**
The appointment system in place will continue.
- **Virtual visiting (such as facetime) remains the preferred option.**
We will continue to facilitate this.
- **For face to face visiting, outdoor visiting is preferred.**
We will continue to arrange appointments for garden visits.
- **Visits will have to be limited to a maximum number per week per resident.**
This is to allow opportunity for every resident to avail of a visit, assist the facilitation of an appointment system, implementation of enhanced cleaning measures between visits, controlling numbers of visitors to comply with social distancing and infection control.
Initially this is likely to be one visit per week and this will be reviewed every couple of weeks.
- **It is recommended that only one person visits at a time.**
With the agreement of the Support Manager, and depending on the facilities in each individual house, there can be a larger number of visitors for an outdoors visit, possibly up to six, where all social distancing requirements can be met.
Children may only visit in exceptional circumstances and with agreement of the Support Manager.
- **The length of visits will be determined by the visiting policy.**
The guidance states that the visit should be for a maximum duration of one hour. However, this would not be manageable and we have to allow time for cleaning in between visits.
- **Indoor visiting may be necessary where weather conditions are not suitable for outdoor visits, but is dependent on safely managing social distancing and infection control procedures.**
Residents should not be visited in their rooms. We are identifying suitable areas in each house which will allow for social distancing with all residents.
Only one visitor will be allowed at a time, unless there are exceptional circumstances which have been agreed with the Support Manager.

Visitors must follow the guidelines:

- Visitors must adhere to the guidance provided re washing and sanitising their hands, and observing good infection control practice. Hand sanitiser will be available.
- Visitors are responsible for maintaining a 2 metre distance. There can be no hugging or physical contact.
- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or any other infection should not visit, even if these symptoms are mild. Anyone self-isolating following a return from outside the U.K should not visit.
- Visitors must follow instructions about which door to enter, where to wash hands, how to make an appointment, not to overstay their allotted visit time etc.

Thank you for working with us to keep residents, staff and visitors as safe as possible. We will keep the situation under review and update you regularly as the situation develops.



Geraldine Gilpin
Chief Executive



Helen Collins
Regional Housing & Support Manager