

Care home visiting arrangements

Guidance for visiting arrangements in care homes was published on 22 July 2020 by PHE (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus>).

This guidance states that prior to visits being allowed in care homes, the director of public health in every area should disseminate their view on the suitability of visiting in the local authority area, taking into account infection rates and the wider risk environment.

The public health and adult social care teams have reviewed the guidance and the latest evidence around rates of transmission of the virus and what steps are being taken locally to prevent spread. The decision, supported by the director of public health and assistant director (adults' support and safeguarding), is that due to current low levels of COVID-19 in North Somerset:

- care home visiting can be permitted as long as care homes are able to support the visiting guidance and have completed their own risk assessment.
- this decision will be reviewed at a minimum weekly (through the multi-agency North Somerset Care Home Incident Management Team meetings). If there is any change to the advice to allow care home visiting this will be communicated directly with care homes.

The decision on whether to allow visitors, and in what circumstances, is an operational decision and therefore ultimately for the provider and managers of each individual setting to make dependent on their individual circumstances and assessment of risk. This approach is based on the circumstances and needs of the individual care setting including both residents and staff as well as the external COVID environment.

Local principles, protocols and templates based on the national guidance are available here and have been shared with all care homes.

If you are a care home or setting, email the council's adult social care Compliance Team: asc.covid19@n-somerset.gov.uk for advice and support via the dedicated COVID email address for care providers.

If you are a relative of someone in a care home or other care setting email the council's Health Protection Team: health.protection@n-somerset.gov.uk for advice on COVID-19 related matters.