



Keeping safe when visiting care homes

(UPDATED ADVICE DECEMBER 2020)

After such a difficult year, care homes in Knowsley are pleased to be able to welcome visitors once again and allow residents to see their loved ones, in person.

Knowsley Council has been working with care homes across the borough to make changes and enhance measures within settings to ensure the safety of all residents, visitors and staff.

COVID-19 is easily spread from person to person, and many residents of our care homes are more vulnerable than the general population. It is therefore vital that we take extra precautions in order to keep everyone safe from harm.

This leaflet explains the guidance that the council has provided to care homes across the borough, adhering to the latest advice from the Government and Public Health England. We hope that this will provide reassurance that we are all taking the necessary steps to keep your loved ones as safe and comfortable as we possibly can.

Dr Sarah McNulty, Knowsley's Director of Public Health said:

We continue to work closely with all care homes and care home staff to limit the risks posed to your loved ones as a result of COVID-19.

I know how important visiting is for the mental health and wellbeing of everyone involved but I also want to ensure the advice I give protects those who are most susceptible to serious illness as a result of the virus.

By adopting the advice shared by Public Health England, we believe we have the best chance of keeping your loved ones safe, well and happy.

Our care homes have introduced a range of measures and are working hard to stop the spread of the virus. It is important that visitors also play their part and follow the advice being issued.

Before you visit

- Book your visit in advance (we need to limit visitor numbers to ensure social distancing measures can be adhered to).
- For many homes, visits will be limited to one per week and a limited amount of time. This is to ensure that there are enough visiting slots for every resident to see their family member.
- Visitor numbers should be limited to a maximum of 2 constant visitors wherever possible. This will mean the same people visiting each time to limit the number of different individuals coming into contact with residents. This is in order to reduce the footfall through the home, and so reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- You will need to complete a screening form before visiting to confirm that you do not have any COVID19 symptoms or been in contact with anyone who has tested positive. Depending on the home, you may receive this in advance when you book your visit, or asked to sign this when you arrive.

Testing

- You are advised to take a COVID-19 test before you visit.
- Some homes will offer COVID tests within the care home, and each home will let you know if this is available.
- Some homes will not undertake testing themselves and in those cases you are advised to get a test at one of three locations in Knowsley:
 - Volair in Huyton (Knowsley Leisure & Culture Park, Longview Drive)
 - Volair in Kirkby
 - Volair in Halewood (Baileys Lane)
- These centres are open 7 days a week (9am-6pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 4pm on Saturday and Sunday) and you do not need to book in advance.
- Please make sure you take the test no more than 4 hours before your visit.
- You will be asked for evidence of your test result when you arrive at the care home.

Important note: getting tested before you visit, aims to provide additional assurance to you and your loved one that you are not carrying COVID-19. A negative test is not always 100% reliable. Therefore, even if you have a negative result you will still be required to follow safety procedures during the visit. This will include wearing PPE and maintaining social distancing.

Please remember these additional rules are in place to protect your loved ones from the virus.

When you visit

- Keep to your allocated time (please don't come early, unless prior arrangement has been made for those being tested, and please don't stay later).
- If possible, avoid coming to the home by public transport. If you do, ensure that you wear a face covering.
- Please wash your hands for at least 20 seconds when you arrive and leave, and use hand sanitisers and tissues (to catch coughs and sneezes) provided.
- Please maintain social distancing (2m or more) and wear a face covering in all areas within the home.
- Please keep behind the screen in the visiting area, if there is one.
- Whilst we appreciate it is hard, refrain from hugging or kissing your relative – social distancing needs to be maintained by all. This is so important to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
- If you bring a gift, ensure it can be wiped down with disinfectant (COVID-19 can live on some surfaces that aren't cleaned properly) – please hand it to a member of staff in a plastic bag when you arrive so that it can be cleaned.
- Toilets will be closed to visitors.

Please note: We are reviewing COVID-19 cases daily and should an outbreak be identified in a care home, visits will need to temporarily cease. Steps will be taken for the home to reopen once it is safe to do so.

Alternatives to visits

The safest way to keep in touch is through video calls using FaceTime, Skype, Zoom or WhatsApp. Staff in the home can support your relative with these.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation with this guidance during this incredibly difficult time.

Cllr Sean Donnelly, Knowsley Council Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care said:

“We know how difficult it has been for families and friends not to have been able to see their loved ones, especially considering how difficult this year has been. We cannot thank people enough for their understanding, patience and for the support of so many who have worked so hard to maintain the safety, comfort, dignity and happiness of our care home residents.

So please follow the guidance and advice given by the staff before and during your visit. The rules and procedures are there to protect your loved ones, so please help us to help them stay safe.”

If you want to get in touch with us about this leaflet please visit the council's website at www.knowsley.gov.uk and go to 'Have Your Say' or call us on **0151 443 3231**.