

Covid-19 Visiting Policy and Procedure

This policy and procedure is based directly on advice given in the government document 'Guidance **Update on policies for visiting arrangements in care homes**' published on 22 July 2020, in relation to the site of The Old Vicarage in Otterton and its current residents.

It is also based on the recommended advice in the 'Visitors' protocol' from the Care Providers Alliance, other key best practice guidance, as well as feedback from residents, relatives, and staff.

The Old Vicarage, Otterton has undertaken a thorough, dynamic risk assessment which informs this policy and procedure. Both risk assessment and policy will be reviewed in line with any further updates from the government or relevant changes to The Old Vicarage site or it's residents.

The Contents of this Policy and Procedure are as follows:

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Introduction

The aim of this policy and procedure is to provide an opportunity to safely receive visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic, while minimising the risk of introducing the virus or allowing it to spread within The Old Vicarage care home, causing harm to our residents or staff.

We recognise how incredibly difficult it has been for residents, relatives and staff to go against all that we believe in, to restrict visiting, and how important it is now that we find ways to enable meaningful contact and visits in a sensible way.

Normally at The Old Vicarage, we are very proud to offer a welcoming 'open door' visiting policy, just like you would in your own home. For the moment we need to ensure that residents, friend's and family understand that due to the current risk of coronavirus infections, the government advises that all care homes must keep their visiting arrangements strictly controlled. We need to be realistic and honest with you all, that this is likely to mean that the frequency of visits is more limited and the circumstances more controlled, compared with normal times.

We have aimed to take a person-centred approach to our visiting policy, thinking of each resident in our care, their individual needs, and capabilities. We have more work to do individually to ensure that each resident can benefit to the full while we aim to keep everyone safe.

This policy is intended to complement and not to replace the very creative and innovative ways we have all found to communicate over the past few months and we would please encourage all those wonderful experiences to continue in the coming months. The letters, Skype calls, gazettes, emails, phone calls, whiteboard messages, pictures and waving across the lawn have prompted tears and laughter, created unique experiences and memories which coronavirus cannot take away us. If nothing else, it makes us appreciate what we have got.

Responsible Visitor Code

We have been advised to create a '**Responsible Visitor Code**' which sets out a range of responsibilities that visitors should abide by, prior to, and during any visit.

The code asks visitors to the home to be responsible for:

- being well informed before visiting the home. Visitors should read and ensure they understand the current visiting guidance for the home. If you are planning a visit and are unsure of the current procedures, please contact the home to clarify what you should do.
- booking visits in advance for a specific day and time.
- ringing the home on the day of the visit to ensure the situation has not changed.
- not visiting the home if you feel unwell.
- not visiting the home if you have been in contact with anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms in the past 14 days.
- remaining in the designated visiting area and keeping a social distance of 4 metres during your visit.

For indoor visiting:

- providing truthful answers to information required prior to visiting (e.g. honest response to screening requirements about COVID-19 risk factors).
- complying with the infection prevention and control measures, including a temperature test, mandatory hand hygiene, the use of PPE as required and social distancing requirements,
- working with our staff in order to keep our residents safe. While you will be concerned about the safety and well-being of your friend or relative, we will also be concerned for the safety of all our residents and staff.

Booking a visit

Visits will need to be **booked in advance** for a specific day and time. Our Administrator, Penny will usually be your point of contact to book a visit. Penny normally works from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm and you can ring her to book a visit for any day of the week.

Penny or a colleague will book you in for a 1 hour visiting slot, allowing for 15 minutes for disinfecting between visits. We can let you know on the day, if no-one is booked in after you, you are welcome to stay for longer. We can also arrange for a longer visit time for those that are coming from further afield.

Penny will send family and friends a copy of our monthly newsletter so you can see when to avoid activities that your friend or relative may wish to join in with, and also so that you know when to avoid visiting while events are being held in the residents' marquee.

At this time, we can only provide one weather-proof visiting area. While we can permit more than one group of visitors at a time, this would be on the front lawn garden bench (weather permitting).

Visitors and Residents - please do not book your visit directly with your friend or relative as this may result in a double booking and disappointment. Unfortunately, ad hoc visits cannot be enabled at this time.

Visitors – please ring the home on the day prior to your visit just in case the situation in the home has changed, to save a wasted journey.

Staff - the Team Leader on shift is responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of any planned visits that day and ensuring that the resident is assisted to be in the correct place at the correct time for their visit.

Track and trace information

In line with the government guidance, we have been requested to keep a temporary record (including address and phone number) of any visitors or interactions between visitors to support the NHS Track and Trace service. In most cases we will already have your details on file and the person taking your booking will just check with you that none of your details have changed. We are only required to hold the information of who has visited for the previous 2 weeks, after which time any record will be deleted.

Getting to and from your visit

The government have advised that wherever possible, visitors should try to walk or travel by car and avoid public transport when visiting the home. If this causes any problems for you, please do get in touch and we can discuss your individual requirements.

Individual visiting plans

Each resident will have the option of having their own 'visiting plan' within their overall care plan. This will be tailored to their visiting wishes and preferences (wherever possible) taking account of their individual needs, capabilities and the circumstances of their family / friends whom they would like to have visit. These will be discussed individually with each resident and with their family or friends as required.

Where will visits take place?

Government guidance has advised that wherever possible the safest form of visiting is either; outside at a social distance or behind a covid-secure screen made of material such as plastic, perspex or glass. To enable this, we have set up a covid-secure visiting area on the front lawn.

Any resident who is physically able to leave their bedroom, by walking or by wheelchair, will be able to meet their loved ones in the covid-secure visiting area. This will be the safest method of carrying out visiting at this time.

For any resident who is unable to leave their bedroom (for example because they are being cared for in bed or receiving end of life care) visiting can be arranged in their private bedroom. For this protocol, see **private bedroom visiting**.

Visiting the covid-secure visiting area.

Parking for visitors - we are asking visitors not to park at the front of the house, where you would normally. Please park at the end of the driveway and do not pass through the main gate (see picture).



Once you are safely parked up, please make your way to either the **red gazebo** or the **green bench**. Your friend or relative should be waiting for you.



Winter visiting – you may be concerned that we may be out in the marquee in the depths of winter, but fear not! Plans are underway to create a covid-secure indoor or heated facility to enable visiting as the weather gets colder. We are not sure how the pandemic or the government guidance will progress from here, so we are making sure we are prepared for whatever may be required.

Private bedroom visiting

Visiting inside the home brings with it a higher level of risk and therefore this will be the exception rather than the norm for now. There will also be strict infection control procedures for any visitor inside the home. Private bedroom visits will only take place under the following circumstances:

- An 'essential visit' – for example an emergency visit from the Doctor or Ambulance Service or an essential visit from the District Nurse.
- For family / next of kin to visit during end of life care (in this case more than one visitor may be permitted).
- A resident who is physically unable to leave their bedroom to go to the covid-safe visiting area – for example because they are receiving nursing care in bed or are unable to sit in a wheelchair. In this situation the resident will be permitted a single, constant visitor to visit them within their private bedroom, i.e. the same single visitor for every visit.

Any visitor within the home will need to strictly adhere to the following procedure:

- To honestly answer a series of medical screening questions.
- To wash their hands on arrival and when leaving the home.
- To don full personal protective equipment (PPE) – apron, gloves, face mask (to be provided by the home).
- To take the most direct route to and from the private bedroom, without visiting any other area in the house, avoiding contact with any other resident.
- Aim to maintain a social distance of +1 metre within the bedroom.
- To avoid direct contact such as hugging or kissing.

The single, constant visitor should be chosen by the resident and family to be the person who is most able to visit regularly. If this visitor can visit regularly, they should be invited/encouraged to take part in the weekly covid testing programme run by the home for staff. The visitor is asked not to use public transport when visiting the home.

Number of visitors

The government have recommended that each resident should have only one consistent visitor. We have assessed our risk and feel that in the outdoor visiting area, it is safe for residents to have more than one visitor. Therefore, our policy will be the following:

Outdoor visiting – a maximum of two visitors at any one time, in the red gazebo or the garden bench.

Indoor visiting – (only for residents who are medically unable to leave their room), one consistent visitor only, who must be screened for Covid on each visit, wear PPE and be tested weekly.

Children visiting

It is not possible to enable visits by children at present, given the current government guidelines. The exception to this is for babies in arms.

Communication during a visit

If you are visiting in the gazebo, or socially distanced garden bench, wearing a face mask is not mandatory. You may find that you need to speak more clearly and a bit louder than you would usually to be clearly heard through the window or over the distance if outside.

Any visits inside the house will involve wearing a facemask, here are some communication tips:

- Keep eye contact wherever possible – smile with your eyes!
- Avoid wearing other items that obscure your face such as hats or sunglasses.
- Speak clearly and a bit louder than you would usually.
- Make your body language more obvious, for example using your hands more.
- For residents who lip read, there are facemasks available with a clear perspex window (not supplied by The Old Vicarage).

Refreshments

As you will be aware, we would usually enjoy offering all of our visitor's refreshments during their visit. At the current time this presents quite a logistical challenge! For the moment, we are asking all visitors to bring their own refreshments (Otterton Mill and the village shop both provide take-away drinks and food) and both the Mill and the village pub have toilet facilities if required.

At the end of the visit

Residents and visitors – staff will give you space and privacy to have your visit. When you have finished, if you would like assistance back towards the home, please ring the mobile doorbell or ask your visitor to ring the home. A member of staff will come out and assist you across the lawn as soon as possible.

Staff – the staff member who assists the resident out to the visiting area is responsible for ensuring that the resident can contact the home for assistance to get back at the end of their visit. Either – ask the visitor if they have a mobile phone and are able to call the home when the visit has ended, or ensure that the resident has the mobile doorbell to press when the visit has finished.

Gifts

If you do bring a gift when you visit, the government guidance suggests that you bring items that can be easily sanitised by staff. For example, a cellophane wrapped box of chocolates, rather than a bunch of flowers - even if delivered by a florist.

Please do not pass any items or gifts directly to residents. You can leave any gifts on the visitor's bench where a member of staff can collect and disinfect it before handing it to the resident.

Deliveries for residents can still be dropped off at the back door. To access this area, park alongside our lower gate on Ropers Lane (when approaching from the lower end of Ropers Lane, if you reach the main drive you have gone too far). Go through the pedestrian gate and follow the path upwards to the back door. There is a large blue table by the back door for deliveries. You can inform staff in person (socially distanced, ring at the back door) or by telephone about the delivery, the table is checked regularly.

Disinfecting Visitor Areas

Staff - following a visit, there will be at least a 15 minute window to enable the disinfection of both the visitor and resident visiting areas. The staff member who collects the resident, is responsible for returning to disinfect both these areas.

Residents' with reduced mental capacity.

Some residents may not have the mental capacity required to make complex decisions about their safety or social well-being. These cases will be assessed on an individual basis and the home will work closely with their next of kin or health practitioner to make best interest decisions on their behalf if required.

What to do if a visitor is not following the rules.

Staff - will politely correct visitors that are not following the procedures set out in this policy. A visitor may be unaware or have misunderstood the procedures and might need a gentle reminder.

Visitors - we politely request any visitor to listen and follow any guidance from staff who will have the safety of all residents and staff in mind.

The Old Vicarage staff reserve the right to mitigate the risk of infection by refusing entry to the home or visiting area to anyone, or requesting that a person leave the premises, for any justifiable reason consistent with this protocol.

In the event of an outbreak of Coronavirus

If any resident or staff member becomes unwell with Covid-19 symptoms or has a positive test result, visiting will be suspended until the outbreak is under control and the home assessed to be in recovery. Any essential visits during this time would be under the guidance of Public Health England.

This is to ensure the safety of visitors, avoid any spread of disease within the home and to allow staff to focus on the requirements of the residents. In this circumstance residents would be encouraged to stay in their rooms and therefore private telephone calls would be encouraged as the main form of communication with loved ones.