

Covid-19 Visiting Policy and Procedure

This policy and procedure is based directly on advice given in the government document **‘Guidance on care home visiting’** last updated on 17th May 2021, 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.

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1. 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, staff or visitors.

Normally at The Old Vicarage, we are very proud to offer a welcoming 'open door' to visitors, just like you would in your own home. During these unusual times, we have had to limit visiting to ensure the safety of residents of the home, from the risk of coronavirus infection.

The government has issued and updated advice to all care homes and the full advice can be found at webpage <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes>

The home has a thorough risk assessment, based on government guidance, as well as and the individual characteristics of the home and the residents within. This policy is based on this and will be updated in line with government and local authority advice.

Our over-riding approach to visiting during this time is to ensure the following:

- Residents can continue to have meaningful contact with their family and friends.
- That visits are carried out in a way that poses the minimum risk possible of coronavirus infections within the home.
- That we have a varied choice of visiting choices to suit the individual preferences of residents and their visitors.

2. 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 for any visitor to the care 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.
- book visits in advance for a specific day and time. Do not turn up unannounced.
- 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 any reason to think you may 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 more than 2 metres from any other resident or staff during your visit.

For indoor visiting:

- providing honest and truthful answers to information required prior to visiting (e.g. screening questions or testing requirements).
- complying with all infection prevention and control measures throughout your visit, including a temperature test, hand hygiene, the use of PPE and social distancing requirements.
- working with our staff team to ensure that we keep our all of 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, staff and visitors.

3. Vaccination Status

It is not a condition of visiting that the visitors or the resident should have been vaccinated. However, it is strongly recommended that all visitors and residents take up the opportunity to be vaccinated when they are invited to do so through the national programme

4. 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.

We aim to spread our visits throughout the day and throughout the week. This is to ensure that we do not have too many visitors at one time and so that we are able to provide visiting slots for everyone who wishes to come. We need to carefully manage the number of people on site and also to ensure that we have enough staff to support each visit (and testing requirements). To assist with this, if you are able, please do consider visiting in the week and in mornings as these times tend to be quieter.

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.

5. Track and trace information

In line with the government guidance, we are requested to keep a temporary record (including address and phone number) of any 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.

6. How long will my visit be?

For the visiting room - we will book you in for a 1 hour visiting slot, allowing for 15 minutes for cleaning between visits. If no-one is booked in after you, you are welcome to stay for longer. We can also arrange for a longer visit time, or several visits for those that are coming from further afield.

For indoor visiting – we will book you into a visiting room slot in order to do your rapid test. Once you are indoors, we ask for lounge visits to be 1 hour long (because we have to close the lounge to other residents). Bedroom visits do not have a time limit.

Garden visits – do not have a time limit, but please do still book in advance so we can reserve you a seating area.

7. How many visitors are allowed?

Residents are able to nominate up to 2 people to visit them indoors. It is important that the named visitors remain the same 2 people as far as possible. This is important in reducing the risk of transmission. However, in exceptional circumstances (for example because of illness) a named visitor can be changed.

The resident can meet with both of their 2 named visitors at the same time or on separate visits if preferred.

There is no limit on how many visitors residents would like to have visit in the visiting room or garden, but we do have sensible limits on the number of people per visit, as follows:

- **Indoor visit** – up to 2 people at a time. Residents are entitled to have two individual visitors who can come together or separately.
- **Visiting room** – the visiting room comfortably seats 2 people. There is room for children as well if they don't mind standing or sitting on laps.
- **Garden visit** – Please let us know if there are more than 2 people coming and we can ensure enough seating. We would ask for no more than 4 people (from one household). Do let us know if this is an issue, ie if you have a larger household.
- In exceptional circumstances (such as end of life care) more than 2 visitors can be considered indoors.

8. Can children visit?

Indoor visiting – currently just 'babies in arm' are permitted indoors. They are not counted in the 2 visitor numbers. Visitors are asked to keep hold of babies and (sadly) not to allow contact with residents. No other children are allowed indoors at this time.

Visiting room – children and babies are allowed in the visiting room. There are no PPE or testing requirements for them while in the room.

Garden visits – children and babies are allowed in the garden. Children must be kept under control by parent/guardians and be able to socially distance (2 metres from any resident / staff member). Children over age 11 should wear a facemask.

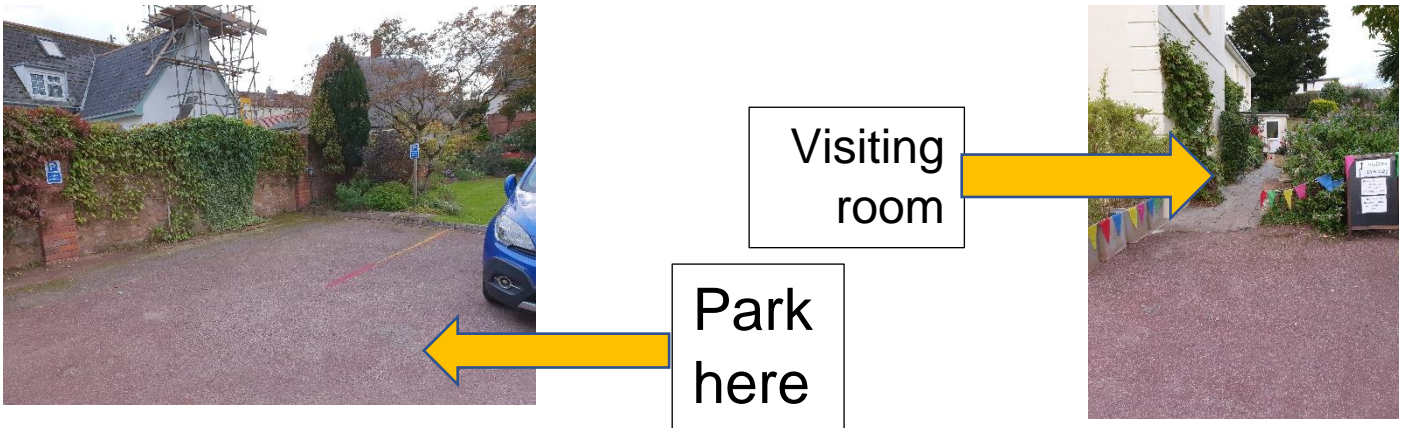
9. Getting to and from your visit

Wherever possible, visitors should try to walk or travel by car and avoid using 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.

10. Parking arrangements

When you drive to us for a visit, there is a reserved parking space on the right-hand side of the drive (as you look at the house). It has a 'reserved for visitors' sign. If the space is taken, you can park in front of the house or at the bottom of the drive. Please wear a facemask when going to and from the visiting room.

Please follow the sign towards the visiting room and remember to socially distance (2 metres) from any residents or staff in the garden. Please wear a facemask until you are inside the visiting room. When you are inside the visiting room, there is a doorbell to let staff know you have arrived.



11. Individual visiting plans

Each resident will be offered their own 'visiting plan' within their 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 or friends whom they would like to visit. These will be discussed individually with each resident and with their family or friends as required.

12. Where and how will visits take place?

To ensure that we have a number of options, visits can take place in the following places:

- Visiting room
- Garden
- Private bedroom
- Lounge

The visiting room

On arrival follow signs to the visiting room. Sanitise your hands for 20 seconds before entering the room. Ring the doorbell inside the visiting room to let staff know you have arrived.

No facemask or other PPE is required to be worn in the visiting room. Refreshments can be served in the visiting room, but staff will leave them outside the room for you to collect.

When you have finished your visit, please ring the doorbell to let staff know you are leaving. Please leave doors and window open when you leave (there is a rope to keep the door open) and pop your empty dishes on the wall outside.

The garden

We will ask you and the person you are visiting where in the garden you would like to meet. When we are fully set up, we will be able to offer; the marquee (if no activities on), the visiting pods, the arbours, or the front lawn.

- On arrival, please report to the back door (the staff entrance to the left-hand side of the building).
- Please be ready to show us your evidence of you LFT test taken the same day (email or text message).
- Staff will take your temperature and ask you some screening questions.
- You can wash or sanitise your hands before your visit.

- Wear a PPE facemask when in the garden and keep a more than 2 metre distance from any other residents, staff or other visitors.

During your visit:

- If you are sitting or walking closer than 2 metres with the person you are visiting, keep your PPE facemask on.
- Sit at a 2 metre social distance if you wish to remove your PPE facemask to talk, drink or eat.
- We can serve you all refreshments / afternoon tea on this visit (2 metre distance).

Garden visit - If the visitor has not had an LFD test:

- Garden visitors are required to have an LFT test before their visit. If you have been unable to arrange this, our staff can assist you to do an LFT test onsite. This will take around 20-30 minutes to complete before your visit.
- If you do not wish to undertake an LFD test, we recommend that you pre-book a visit in our covid-safe visiting room

We will not normally supervise outdoor visits but if you do require some extra assistance, please let us know.

Indoors

All visitors inside the home will need to be tested for coronavirus, answer some screening questions, have their temperature checked and wear PPE for their visit (see individual guidance).

On arrival please report to the back door (the staff entrance to the left hand side of the building). Ring the doorbell to let staff know you have arrived. Staff will assist you to carry out an LFT test in the red gazebo or the visiting room.

- Staff will take your temperature.
- Staff will assist you to take a rapid test from the other side of the screen or at a distance.
- While you wait for the results staff will ask you to complete a form which includes screening questions.
- Staff will check your PCR test result with you.
- Once you have a negative LFT test result, staff will assist you to safely put on PPE for your visit (a facemask, gloves and apron will be provided).

Private bedroom visit

- Staff will escort you via the most direct route to the bedroom of the person you are visiting.

During the visit, we ask the following:

- Do not leave the bedroom without being escorted by a member of staff (you may use the WC facilities in the room if required).
- Wear your PPE throughout your visit. Please ensure that your facemask covers your mouth and nose at all times.
- The window in the bedroom is kept open to ventilate the room.
- Government guidance requests that there should be no close physical contact such as hugging or kissing. Holding hands is allowed but does bring an increased risk.

At the end of the visit:

- Ring the call bell and staff will attend and escort you to the nearest exit.
- Staff will assist you to safely remove your PPE. **Do not remove your PPE until you have left the building and when staff are there to assist you.**
- Staff will bag up your PPE and take it to the clinical waste bins.
- Staff will provide you with hand sanitiser before you go.

Lounge / designated visiting room visit

Lounge visits will be the same as a bedroom visit, apart from the following:

- Visits will usually be limited to 1 hour, because the lounge will be closed to other residents for 2 hours to allow for ozone cleaning.
- There are no WC facilities.
- Staff will be available for support throughout the visit if required.

Please note: staff have been trained and instructed to challenge and correct any breaches of PPE or infection control guidance if witnessed. Repeated breaches may result in further indoor visits being declined to protect residents, staff and visitors.

13. What are the testing requirements?

All indoor visitors, garden visitors and people taking residents for a trip out, must complete a rapid lateral flow test (LFT) on the day of your visit / trip out.

For **indoor visits** and **trips out involving car travel** you will also be required to complete a PCR test 2-3 days beforehand. For these higher risk visits, we ask that you continue to complete your LFT at the care home on the day of your visit, assisted by staff.

On your arrival for your **garden visit** or **outing for a walk only**, you will need to show **evidence of your same day LFT** which you have registered at home, either online or by phoning 119.

New testing requirements are as follows:

- An indoor visit (PCR test before and an LFT test at the care home).
- A trip out with car travel (PCR test before and an LFT test at the care home).
- A visit in the garden (LFD self-test at your home).
- A trip out for a walk only (LFD self-test at your home).
- **No test** is required to visit in the covid-safe visiting room.

We can provide you with a box of 7 LFT tests to take at home (while our stocks last – see below for other options of how to get your free LFT kits).

To register your test result, you will need to use our unique code:

UON Code: 10026573

For guidance on how to complete and register your LFT, please read the weblink below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-for-adult-social-care-settings/visitors-to-adult-social-care-settings-reporting-rapid-lateral-flow-tests-at-home>

Please note:

You will need to be able to provide evidence of your same day LFD test when you arrive at the care home (text message or email).

If you are unable to provide this, we will assist you to complete an LFD test before your visit takes place.

If the care home runs out of 7 pack LFD testing kits, visitors can get themselves free LFT testing kits from the following places:

- Collect a free test kit from the care home (while our stocks last).
- Collect a free test kits from your local pharmacy.
- You may have LFD test kits provided by the government such through a school, workplace or the universal testing offer.
- Or get an assisted test from an LFD asymptomatic testing site (find your nearest location online).

Testing terminology:

- A PCR Test – this is an accurate test which is sent off to a laboratory for analysis. We ask you to complete this 2-3 days before your visit. If you are visiting regularly, we ask you to complete this test once a week.
- A LFD Test – this is a rapid test which we will assist you to do at the home, on the day of your visit. We ask you to do this before each visit.

14. Essential care giver

The essential care giver role is intended as a way of supporting the relatively small proportion of residents who need some element of care and support that could only be provided by someone with a unique personal relationship with the resident. For example, this could be intimate care, such as help with washing and dressing, where the resident becomes highly distressed unless it is carried out by a familiar loved one.

There are no limits on when the Essential Carer visits or for how long. They are also permitted close contact (such as for providing intimate care) and therefore, these visitors will need to follow the same testing arrangements and infection control guidance as for a member of staff:

- take a minimum of 2 rapid lateral flow tests a week: one rapid lateral flow test on the same day as the PCR test, and one rapid lateral flow test 3 to 4 days later, except in the circumstances relating to testing following a prior positive PCR, outlined below. These rapid lateral flow tests can be done onsite or at home with tests that come in packs of 7. These tests should be reported as 'visitor' using the care home **UON Code: 10026573**
- take a weekly PCR test and share the result with the home. Care homes should use their existing PCR stocks to test these visitors and these should be registered as 'staff' tests using the care home UON and be returned via courier with other staff tests
- be subject to additional testing in line with care home staff should the care home be engaged in rapid response daily testing or outbreak testing. If this includes lateral flow tests, these can be done at home with tests from a packs of 7

- These visitors should use the same PPE and [follow the same infection control training as a staff member. They should receive the same](#) training, supervision [and support](#) as members of the care home staff.

15. Indoor visits and wearing PPE

While testing reduces the risk of coronavirus transmission, it does not remove the risk. Due to this the government visiting rules for care homes also state that visitors must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during their visit. This includes:

- A face mask type 11R
- A plastic apron
- Nitrile gloves
- A visor (if resident is coughing, in isolation or has suspected or confirmed coronavirus).

All PPE will be provided by the home. All visitors must be shown instructions of how to don and doff (safely put on and remove) PPE and be instructed by a trained member of staff to do this. Once 'doffed' PPE must be bagged by a member of staff and disposed of in the clinical waste bins.

Visitors are requested to comply with PPE requirements throughout their visit and until they have left the building. Facemasks must be worn over the mouth and nose at all times. Due to this, we unfortunately cannot serve refreshments to indoor visitors at this time.

16. Infection control advice during your visit

To ensure infection control procedures are followed, all visitors are asked to sanitise their hands for at least 20 seconds at the start and end of their visit.

Catch any coughs or sneezes in a tissue, dispose of tissues carefully in a waste bin and clean your hands afterwards.

Maintain a social distance wherever possible and avoid close contact such as hugging and kissing.

Visitors should have no contact with other residents and minimal contact with care home staff (less than 15 minutes or 2 metres). Telephone conversations can be arranged.

17. Residents who are shielding

Residents who have been placed on a 'shielded Patient List (SPL) can still have visits in the same way as other residents.

18. Visiting someone who is in their 'isolation period'

Residents who have been admitted from hospital or the community (including existing residents who have an overnight stay in hospital or visit out of the home) must be isolated from other residents for a period of 14 days.

This isolation period is mandated by the government guidelines and is in place to reduce the risk of contamination of residents in the wider home.

Private bedroom visits, from family or friends outside the care home, can still take place for residents during their isolation period. Visitors should be aware of their own increased risk of contracting coronavirus on these visits and consider wearing additional protective visor for their own protection.

19. Communicating during a visit

Currently all indoor visitors and untested visitors to the garden are required to wear PPE including a facemask. Facemasks can affect communication, 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 clear facemasks available, ask staff for details.

20. Refreshments

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 able to offer refreshments to visitors in the visiting room because there is no PPE required. We can also serve refreshments during a garden visit where the visitor has taken an LFD test.

21. Gifts

If you do bring a gift when you visit, the government guidance suggests bringing items that can be easily sanitised by staff. For example, a cellophane wrapped box of chocolates.

Please do not pass any items or gifts directly to residents. You can leave any gifts either by the back door or in the visiting room. Please clearly mark who the gift is for. Staff will sanitise and deliver your gift.

22. 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, please ring the doorbell in the visiting room or your visitor can ring the home on their mobile phone. A member of staff will come and assist you back to the house or to your room.

Staff – if you assist a resident into the garden, ensure the resident has the means to call for assistance back if required.

23. Visits outside of the home (outdoor visits)

From 4 May 2021, residents should be enabled to leave the home to spend time **outdoors** without the need to isolate on their return. With the following in place:

- Arrangements should be discussed with the resident, the person accompanying them and the home and a risk assessment in place agreed, understood and signed by all parties.
- Resident should be accompanied by either:
 - a member of care home staff

- one or both of their nominated visitors
- The person accompanying on the visit should be tested and wearing a facemask (see testing requirements).
- The resident should complete an LFD test before the trip out.
- Visits should take place solely outdoors (except for the use of toilet facilities).
- There should be no visits to indoor spaces (public places or private homes).
- Residents will be able to access polling stations.
- Visits should not involve the use of public transport.
- If travelling in a car together – testing should be the same as for an indoor visit (PCR & LFD), both the resident and visitor should wear facemasks while in the car together and keep the windows of the car slightly open to allow ventilation.
- No eating or drinking in the car (ie. no removal of PPE while in the car together).
- If eating and drinking during the visit, ensure resident is outside and at a plus 2 metre distance when resident and accompanying person remove their PPE to eat.
- The resident should only be socialising with their two nominated and tested visitors and not other people.
- Crowded public places such as cafes and pubs should be avoided for now.

24. Visits outside of the home (other visits)

Visits out of the care home which do not meet the criteria set out above (outdoor visits) will need to follow the guidance in 'Visits out of care homes', which includes the need for residents to isolate for **14 days on return** to the home. This is to ensure that – in the event that a person has unknowingly become infected while out of the home – they minimise the chances of passing that infection on to other residents and staff.

This includes visits to; inside public places, inside private homes or for overnight stays.

25. Visits outside of the home (medical appointments)

Where possible, the government advise that residents of care homes avoid face to face appointments that involve visiting a hospital or other healthcare facility and for staff to explore the options with the healthcare provider whether these could be held remotely.

If a resident requires support with general health needs, staff should discuss these needs with the residents' GP or other professional remotely (by telephone/video call). Residents should be encouraged to postpone routine, non-essential medical and other appointments at this time.

If a hospital or medical appointment must be attended in person, according to government guidance, the resident must self-isolate for 14 days on their return. This could lead to some residents with medical issues having to perpetually self-isolate which would be discriminatory and life limiting.

Risk management for medical appointments – there are a number of actions we can take to support a safe medical appointment that should mitigate the risk of infection and allow a resident to return without a 14 day isolation period. The following steps for a hospital or other essential medical appointment should be followed:

- Resident to be accompanied by a staff member or essential carer (tested) who will stay with them for the entire visit.
- The resident wears a sunflower lanyard to show that they must be accompanied.

- Staff member or essential carer wear an identity lanyard and explains that they must stay with the resident.
- Accompanying person must verify that throughout the visit IPC measures were followed (use of PPE, handwashing, social distancing, contact staff tested - NHS).

If all of the above actions cannot be followed for any reason (eg. The hospital does not allow carer to accompany) the resident may have to isolate for 14 days as per government guidance. Overnight stays in hospital will be unaccompanied and will require 14 days isolation on return.

26. 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.

27. 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 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 procedure.

28. In the event of an outbreak of Coronavirus

In the event of an outbreak in the home, normal visiting will stop in order to protect residents, staff and visitors. In exceptional circumstances (such as end of life care) visiting may be allowed under the guidance of our Local Authority Public Health Team. Visiting restrictions will continue until the outbreak is confirmed as over, which will be at least 14 days after the last laboratory confirmed or clinically suspected cases were identified in a resident or member of staff in the home.