



## COVID-19 Guidance on visitations to Residential Care Facilities

V1.1 26.06.2020

Version	Date	Changes from previous version
V1.1	26-06-2020	<p>Generally changes to reflect the importance of visiting for residents and the lack of evidence that managed visiting is associated with major risks</p> <p>Removal of requirement to limit number of people nominated as visitors to 2 and some flexibility around number of visitors to a resident at one time</p> <p>Change to the order in which some elements of advice are presented</p> <p>Flexibility on unscheduled visits</p> <p>Reference to use of cloth face coverings for use by visitors</p> <p>Removal of the restriction on duration of visits to 30 minutes</p> <p>Some visits by children facilitated with appropriate supervision</p> <p>Facilitation of visiting during an outbreak with controls</p> <p>Removal from section 1.2 of material duplicated from section 1.1</p>

## **1. Family and friends visiting**

As Residential Care Facilities (RCF) are the home environments of individuals residing there, the importance of maintaining family connections with loved ones cannot be underestimated from a holistic person-centred approach. As part of this person-centred approach, timely communication in a manner appropriate to that resident will include an overview of the proposed visiting arrangements and any updates or changes that may occur in accordance with Public Health/ Infection control advice.

As per regulatory requirements, visiting is typically encouraged and welcomed in the normal daily functioning of these facilities. This document aims to provide guidance to management, staff, residents and relatives to facilitate visiting during these exceptional times, as visiting restrictions can play a role in preventing accidental introduction of COVID-19 into an RCF

This document while providing guidance regarding operationalisation of these measures also seeks to respect the autonomy of the residents while also mitigating the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Visits to RCFs are at the discretion of the Registered Provider/ Person in Charge in management of each facility and it is their responsibility to ensure that visitations do not compromise overall resident care or adherence to requisite infection control procedures. Consultation with local Public Health teams and Infection Prevention and Control expertise will assist the Registered Provider/ Person in Charge in review of their plans and risk mitigation in order to facilitate visiting. Restrictions to visiting are aimed at protecting residents, staff and visitors from exposure to COVID-19.

All these measures will be in alignment with national guidance in relation to Infection Prevention and Control, current and future guidance and recommendations with regard to social distancing and other public health measures, and in addition, current and future guidance specific to RCFs.

### **1.1 Visiting in RCF with no ongoing COVID-19 outbreak**

Indoor visiting for residents in RCFs where there is no ongoing COVID-19 outbreak should be encourage with appropriate practical precautions to manage the risk of introduction of COVID-19 as follows:

- Each resident should have nominated visitors for whom the RCF has contact details. Generally visiting should be limited to one visitor at a time but when a visitor needs to be accompanied this should be accommodated (for example see below re children). Visits should be arranged in advance with the facility.
- Visits should be scheduled to avoid heavy footfall in the RCF at any time. It is expected that the facility will consider the number of visitors they can accommodate and to discuss these plans with IPC who can then seek PH advice if required.
- A separate entrance and exit for visitors is to be encouraged but is not a requirement.
- Visitors should be made aware of the visiting processes that apply which are symptom and temperature-checking, determination of previous known exposure to COVID -19, and use of correct hand-hygiene techniques.
- In addition, they should be made aware that any visitors with fever or respiratory symptoms will not be admitted.
- Visitors should be asked if they have had COVID- 19 or had close contact with a person with COVID-19 / suspected COVID-19 symptoms within the time period as determined by national guidance. Visitors should declare that they have no symptoms and undergo a temperature check before being entering the RCF.
- Visitors are required to sign in on entry to the facility (regulatory requirement). They should either use their own pen or be signed in.
- Unscheduled visits should not generally be facilitated however some flexibility is appropriate in specific circumstances. The Person in Charge /Designee will be notified of any difficulties encountered in implementation of this measure.
- Visitors should be guided in performing hand hygiene when they arrive.
- Visitors are required to wear a cloth-face covering or a surgical mask if they are not able to maintain social distancing during the visit. The facility should provide a surgical mask if the visitor does not have a cloth face covering.

- Visits should occur either in the resident's room if the room is a single room, or in the case of a multi-occupancy facility, in a room away from other people or in an outdoor area (weather permitting) where distance can be maintained.
- It may be necessary to limit duration of visits at peak times to facilitated visits to several residents while limiting the number of visitors present in the RCR at one time. There is, however, no specific requirement to limit the duration of the visit or the number of visits per week. Visits should only take place when there is sufficient staff on duty to manage visiting. Visits should generally occur away from mealtimes however if a resident is taking a meal in their room and would like a visitor to assist them that can be facilitated.
- No food/ refreshments are permitted. Use of the resident's/visitors' bathroom facilities is discouraged.
- Visits by a child may be facilitated with clear controls on time and duration and requirement that the child is accompanied by an adult and the child is able to comply with the general requirements for visiting.
- The resident's right to decline a visitor shall be respected.

### **1.2 Visiting during an outbreak of COVID-19**

During an ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 within a RCF visits will generally be suspended in the first instance with the exception of the most critical circumstances (for example end of life). When the situation has been evaluated and control measures are in place, family and friends should be advised that visits that are essential will be facilitated (for example end of life) however general visiting will be very limited. All visiting will be subject to the visitor accepting that visiting during an outbreak of infection is associated with some risk to them and their choice to accept that risk. The conditions related to visiting during an outbreak are as above with the exception that visiting will be more limited by necessity of reducing transmission risk to visitors and also within the facility itself. The RCF should request visitors to confirm that they have been advised of the risk to them, that they accept that risk and will comply fully with any measures they are asked to follow for their own protection or the protection of staff or residents. Arrangements should be in place to support virtual visiting (telephone or video-link) to the greatest extent possible. While it is acknowledged that facilities have a right to decline visitors to the facility during an outbreaks it is accepted that visiting constitutes a key element of resident welfare and therefore

all efforts to support same should be made in the appropriate context and with the necessary supports.

The messages around visiting during an outbreak should be reinforced by placing signage at all entry points to the facility and by any other practical means of communication with families and friends.