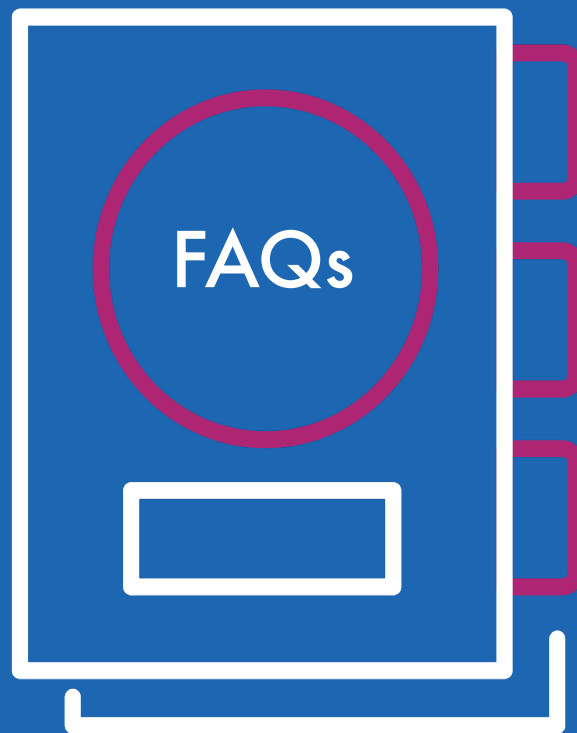
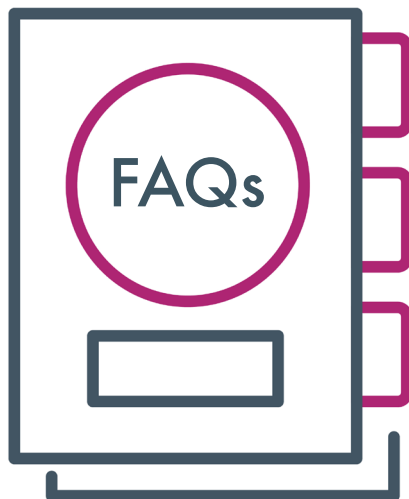




How is my relative being cared for during the COVID-19 pandemic?



Information for families,
friends and carers.



My Relative is in a Care Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Having a relative in a care home during the COVID-19 pandemic can be a source of worry and uncertainty for many families and friends.

This short guide aims to answer some of the common questions relatives have about family members in a care home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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1. How is my relative being kept safe from COVID-19 in the care home?

Visits from staff and relatives are being kept to a minimum to reduce the chance of someone bringing COVID-19 into the care home. However your relative will still continue to receive medical input as needed.

If a resident has suspected COVID-19 they will be isolated for the recommended time, which usually means staying in their bedroom. Staff are washing their hands regularly, cleaning surfaces and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) in line with guidance. PPE in care homes usually consists of a disposable apron, gloves, a face mask and for certain caring activities may also include eye protection.

Public Health England provides care homes with up to date guidance on when they should be using PPE. There may be activities where PPE is worn and others where it is not needed. For the latest PPE guidance go to www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control



2. How can I stay in contact with my relative during this time?

Care homes and families can work together to ensure contact with your relative is maintained wherever possible. Many homes will have a tablet or portal to help residents with video calling in addition to phones.

Other means for staying connected include sending things your relative might enjoy such as photographs, a favourite drink/snack or film. More ideas can be found at www.relres.org/keep-in-touch

Many care homes are receiving more requests to help families keep in contact during the pandemic. To help manage these requests it's helpful to:

- Agree the best time to contact the home
- Discuss with care home staff the most effective way to stay in touch with them and your relative
- Decide amongst your family group who will call the home on behalf of everyone
- Agree amongst your relative's family/friends how you will coordinate sharing information with each other (e.g. setting up your own Whatsapp group)



3. How is my relative's everyday quality of life being maintained in the care home during COVID-19?

Whilst activities vary from home to home, a number of measures are being put in place to maintain resident's' wellbeing.

These include:

- Showing residents their favourite films/tv shows
- Organising calls by phone or video with family and friends
- Encouraging families to send in letters, pictures and items of interest
- Interactive activities in the care home



4. What happens if my relative becomes unwell with COVID-19?

The care home will provide and access support to best meet your relative's needs. This includes a medical assessment from the appropriate services, such as the GP or 111.

See question 6 (page 6) for information on what happens if your relative is admitted to hospital. If your relative remains in the care home steps will be taken to ensure they are cared for in line with recommendations from the medical assessment. This often includes regular reviews with health care professionals such as the GP. Many of these reviews are now taking place virtually using video calls.

To reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 spreading within the care home specific staff members may be assigned to your relative's care, along with reducing areas in the home your relative can access for their period of isolation.

As part of undertaking a holistic assessment your relative's preferences for their care will be taken into account. This may include any views your relative expressed on being admitted to hospital or types of treatment they would/wouldn't want. For most people these preferences will be recorded as part of an Advance Care Plan (ACP). An ACP is a document which helps plan someone's care by taking into account their health conditions, personal wishes and views of their family/carers if the person lacks capacity.

ACP's are not legally binding, however having an ACP means if your relative's health deteriorates there is information available to help guide joint decision making on the best course of action. This supports making timely and appropriate decisions in addition to helping prevent avoidable mistakes. For more information on ACP

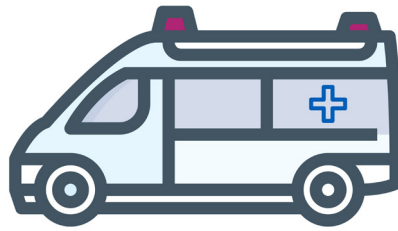
go to www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/terminal-illness/planning-ahead/advance-care-planning



5. Am I allowed to visit my relative if they are unwell?

Visits from family and friends are currently limited to those most urgent to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in the care home. Often this means if your relative is near the end of life you can arrange a visit, otherwise you are encouraged to use alternative methods to keep in contact with them. If you do visit it's important to arrange this in advance with the care home so measures can be put in place to help maintain your safety, along with that of the residents and staff. These measures may include wearing PPE, visiting at specific times and limiting the number of visitors to minimise risk.

Sometimes it may not be safe for you to visit, such as if you are in a high risk category yourself or have symptoms of an infectious illness (including COVID-19 as well as other illnesses). If this is the case alternative ways can be used to contact your relative, such as video calls.



6. What happens if my relative needs to go to hospital?

The care home will inform your nominated family member and give details of where and why they've been admitted.

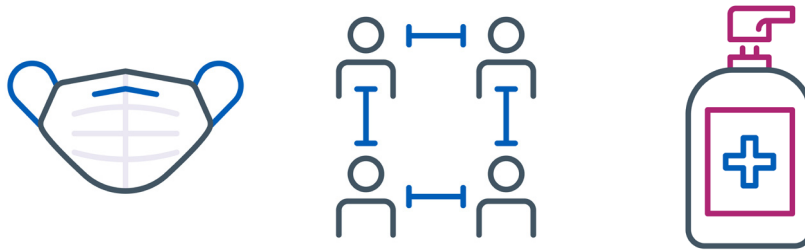
Your relative may be tested for COVID-19 during their stay in hospital, a decision which is made by the hospital team and informed by the latest national guidance on testing.

During their stay the hospital team will keep both you and the care home updated, involving you in any conversations or decisions as appropriate. You should check with the hospital on their visiting policy should you wish to visit your relative.

When it is time for your relative to leave hospital, the hospital will liaise with you, the care home and GP as part of their discharge process. On returning to the care home your relative may need to undertake a period of isolation. In certain situations they may need to go to an interim care placement first before returning to the home.

This could be due to your relative needing a period of rehabilitation as part of their recovery, or if the care home is unable to safely isolate them. The hospital team will inform you and the care home prior to discharge if this is the case.

If your relative needs to attend a hospital outpatient appointment, this will often be conducted virtually. If they need to attend the hospital in person many clinics have been re-organised to keep patients safe whilst there, for example by reducing the number of patients attending the clinic and having socially distanced waiting areas. Your relative and the care home will be contacted by the hospital about any outpatient appointments and their arrangements.



7. What happens if my relative becomes more unwell and passes away in the care home during this time?

If your relative becomes very ill in the care home wherever possible staff will contact you or the designated contact to discuss the situation. If your relative is thought to be near the end of their life they will still receive medical input as needed from the GP and/or palliative care team. You can also consider whether you wish to arrange a visit with the care home. This is a very personal decision which for many people includes considerations such as their own health and individual/family circumstances amongst other things. If you do arrange a visit the number of visitors will need to be kept to a minimum for the safety of other residents and staff. You may also be required to wear PPE. If you are not able to visit the care home can arrange alternative ways for you to contact your relative, such as a video call.

If your relative passes away in the care home during this time, the designated contact will be informed. The care home will arrange for their death to be confirmed and in most circumstances a death certificate will be issued by the GP or another healthcare professional.

Making funeral arrangements during this time can be complex as some cultural practices may not be possible, and to comply with social distancing measures the number of attendees may be limited. For practical tips and advice on arranging a funeral go to Age UK arranging a funeral during covid. www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/coronavirus/coronavirus-guidance/arranging-a-funeral-coronavirus-advice

Grieving and coping with a bereavement can be even more challenging during this period when many of us feel more isolated from others. For a range of support on dealing with a bereavement go to Cruse bereavement support www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief



8. Where can I get additional support during this time regarding worries/questions I may have about my relative?

A selection of helpful resources are listed below. These provide further information on a range of topics related to having a relative in a care home during this time, in addition to support for families and friends on looking after their own health and wellbeing.

Relatives and Residents Association

Provides support to relatives of those in care

Helpline: 020 7359 8148 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-1pm)

Website: www.relres.org

Email: info@relres.org

Age UK

Range of information and advice for older adults including specific COVID-19 info

Helpline: 0800 678 1602 (Mon-Sun 8am-7pm)

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

Email: contact@ageuk.org.uk

Advanced Care Planning

Marie Curie

Information on what advanced care planning is and how to do it

Website: www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/terminal-illness/planning-ahead/advance-care-planning

Bereavement Support

Cruse

Offers support on bereavement and funerals

Helpline: 0808 808 1677 (Mon-Fri 9.30-5)

Website: www.cruse.org.uk

Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

NHS bereavement support

NHS advice on bereavement, grief and loss

Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/

Wellbeing support

NHS mental health and wellbeing

Advice and tools to support your mental wellbeing

Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/

NHS 10 tips if you're worried about coronavirus

Website: www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-tips/

Samaritans

Online and phone mental wellbeing support

Helpline: 116 123 (Mon-Sun 24hrs)

Website: www.samaritans.org

Email: jo@samaritans.org

National Guidance on COVID-19

PPE

Latest national guidance on what PPE should be used and when

Helpline: www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control

Care homes

National guidance outlining the action plan for adult social care on managing COVID-19

Website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-social-care-action-plan



Mid and South Essex
Health and Care
Partnership

