

Introduction

This policy describes the arrangements for residents of Sharob Care's care homes to make visits out of the homes in line with new government and public health guidance taking effect from 30th December 2021 (updated from 15th December 2021). The guidance integrates previously separate guidance for making visits to the home and out of the home, respectively.

For out of home visiting the Government's key message is:

"We expect and encourage providers to facilitate residents to take part in visits out of the care home. This could be for a short walk, to attend a place of worship or for a longer visit including an overnight stay to see family and friends."

Policy Statement

Sharob Care continues to apply its infection control measures fully in line with this latest Government and public health guidance in recognition of the fact that because care home residents are amongst the most at risk by virtue of their age and frailty to being seriously and possibly fatally ill if they are infected by the virus.

Therefore, they will be advised to act in line with the latest government guidance when making visits outside of their home to minimise the risks of being exposed to SARS CoV-2, when out, and risking exposing other care home members in consequence.

Definitions

The term "out of home" or "outward" visit includes any venturing outside care home for a set purpose for a short or longer period, which could include the following:

- to go or to be taken to visit family members or friends
- to stay with family and friends for one or more nights
- to go away on holiday
- to have a period in hospital
- to go shopping
- to visit a café or restaurant
- to attend a sporting event or place of entertainment
- to attend or take part in a local community event
- to go to a place of work or education.

This policy applies to all outward visits as described here.

Principles to be Followed

Sharob Care bases its policy on the current government guidance (applying from 30th December, updated from 15th Decemeber 2021), as follows.

We welcome that where it is safe to do so, residents should take part in out of home visits as any other community member.

We accept that it we are responsible for setting our own out of home visiting policy and arrangements in line with national and local public health guidance provided by the local Director of Public Health (DPH) through

their outbreak management team or group and adult social care services staff who are responsible for their care and support.

We will do so based on dynamic risk assessments for the care home as a whole and individual risk assessments carried out fully in line with the latest government guidance.

We will support out of home visits that are clearly in the best interests of the residents who want to make them or in responding to requests made on their behalf if the person cannot decide because of mental incapacity.

Sharob Care will ensure that all out of home visits are conducted in a risk-managed way that considers:

- the needs of all service users
- their safety and security when making the visit
- the practicalities involved in ensuring the visits can be safely made
- the risks to other residents from subsequent exposure to infection.

Our decisions will therefore be based on balancing the benefits to all residents (and reducing harm because of lack of going out) against the risks of increasing Covid-19 infections and their consequences to the individual and other residents.

Sharob Care recognises that decisions to allow out of home visiting and under what circumstances, will be made in line with local intelligence from testing and vaccination status of the community and of residents and staff, transmission risks in the local community and other information provided by the home, for example, through its Capacity Tracker updating.

We will continue to assess the rights and needs of individual residents, particularly those with specific vulnerabilities as outlined in their care plans and will consider the importance of their making out of home visits in promoting their health and wellbeing.

We will also give special consideration to a resident who wishes to visit someone on compassionate grounds such as to someone close to them who is terminally ill.

We will continue to make appropriate best interest decisions with the help of all involved in their care in respect of residents who lack mental capacity and who might be subject to deprivation of liberty authorisations.

We will follow all Government and local guidance in respect of the arrangements needed to ensure safe out of home visiting by residents under the new testing procedures and vaccination programmes.

If, with any combination of factors, the risks of out of home visits clearly increase, Sharob Care will only support them when it is completely satisfied that all risks have been fully assessed and all necessary control measures are in place.

Implementation

Preconditions

Sharob Care recognises that out of home visiting can only take place provided that:

- there is no one who is known to be infected with SARS-CoV-2 living or working in the home and there has been no outbreak for a period that has been agreed with the local public health protection team.
- there are no residents who have been self-isolating as recent known contacts of someone who has recently tested positive for the virus via NHS test and trace.
- other residents who have been only recently admitted or discharged from hospital have returned negative tests prior to admission and are following current guidance to self-isolate for the required period.

Where any of the above applies Sharob Care will act on public health advice and reserves the right to stop or minimise outward visiting along with the other measures being taken to control the outbreak or risks of infection to the home.

Sharob Care is also mindful of the implications of having its residents vaccinated, which should on the one hand help to reduce infection risks and therefore allow for more outward visiting. On the other hand we recognise that there will continue to be some level of risk from infection even when fully vaccinated, which must be considered in terms of its policy.

Conditions to be met

Sharob Care will follow all Government and local, guidance and ensure that:

- anyone who wishes to go out of the home (and has a right to do so) has a full risk assessment that takes into account their capacity to consent to the arrangements being made
- if unable to consent the person will have a mental capacity assessment to decide if the arrangements being proposed or planned are in their best interests and are safe
- the risk assessment will include any risks to the care home and its other residents
- the risk assessment includes the risks of exposure to the virus in making the visit, including in the use of transport, the visiting of public places, during the visit from other people, or after the visit, including the risks their visit out has caused to other residents and staff.

Risk factors to consider

Sharob Care recognises that residents might not have had the chance to leave the home for a significant period. The visit or outing therefore will have to be carefully planned, and consider:

- the purpose and nature of the outing or visit
- if it involves being indoors (higher risk) and/or outdoors (lower risk)
- if it involves visit involves public (higher risk) or private (lower risk) places
- if it involves use of public (higher risk) or private transport (higher risk)
- if it involves mingling with people whom the person might not know their exposure risk (higher risk)
- if it involves an emergency visit or overnight stay in hospital (considered high risk)
- how much support the person will need from staff or others to make the visit

- how far the current “rules” about physical distancing, wearing of face coverings and hand hygiene will be adhered to (risks will increase with non-adherence)
- if there are less risky alternatives to achieving the same purpose as the outing or out of home visit
- the amount of time available to plan the outing or visit and to take all the precautions necessary to make it safe
- the vaccination status of residents, the people they are visiting, and staff, including the extent of second vaccinations and boosters.
- the availability of rapid antigen testing, which can be carried out before and after the visit or outing
- levels of infection in the community with current variants of concern.

Planning the Out of Home visit

Sharob Care is following Government guidance in respect of care home residents who wish or seek to spend time with their families or friends (as “named visitors”) following the latest guidance issued following the arrival of the Omicron variant.

We will ensure that any resident who is making an out of home visit should during that time only mix with people from one other household.

The home will also ensure that everyone “hosting” an out of home visit must have had a negative result from a Covid test taken immediately preceding the visit. The vaccination status of the “hosts” will also be regarded as an important potentially mitigating factor.

Sharob Care understands that a visit would not go ahead as planned if there is any positive test result. In this case the individual tested should immediately self-isolate and complete a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test which will be provided. If the confirmatory PCR comes back positive, their household must also self-isolate and contacts may also need to self-isolate in line with current government guidance.

Sharob Care will ensure and enable the following:

The resident will be tested immediately before their visit out of the care home with a lateral flow device (LFD), and if the result is positive, the visit should not go ahead. The resident must be immediately isolated in the care setting, complete a confirmatory PCR test, and contact with the local health protection team will be made in line with current guidance.

During the course of a visit the resident and those they are visiting should keep safe physical distancing, wash hands regularly, let plenty of fresh air into rooms by opening windows and doors and consider wearing a face covering.

“Hosts” of the visiting person should be aware of their responsibilities to minimise the risk to the care home resident and others in the care home on their return by following all these safety measures, which should include minimising their risks to exposure before and during the visit.

All visitors, who have been fully vaccinated, on return will have a lateral flow test every day for ten days following an outside visit.

If not fully vaccinated, the person will be asked to quarantine for 14 days on return.

That the resident will also need to self-isolate for the recommended period of 14 days following any visit that has been assessed as high risk and shows no signs or symptoms before returning to the life of the home.

Residents who have **planned** overnight stays in hospital do not need to isolate on return provided that:

- they are fully vaccinated and preferably boosted
- test negative on a PCR test on return (self-isolating until the results are known)
- complete all other testing requirements.

If any of the “hosts” have symptoms of Covid-19 or have tested positive for Covid-19 during the visit, the resident will self-isolate in the visiting setting if possible; or will be quarantined in the care home if there is no alternative to their remaining with strict infection control procedures applied until a negative PCR test result is returned.

Sharob Care should be notified in advance of a resident returning from an extended visit away so that we can manage the risks of the person importing SARS CoV-2 into the home.

Residents will be tested on return from their visit with an LFD test, and with PCR test on visit day +2 and visit day +5.

Hospital Visits

Any overnight stay in hospital that is unplanned will be automatically classed as high risk and the resident will be required self-isolate for 14 days on return.

For planned hospital overnight stays, residents do not need to isolate upon return provided they:

- are fully vaccinated
- receive a negative PCR test following their return to the care home (and isolate until the result is received)
- complete daily lateral flow tests for 10 days following their return
- avoid contact with other highly vulnerable residents in the care home

If there is a COVID outbreak in the part of the hospital where the resident stayed, they must isolate for 14 days on return

Communicating with Host Families and Households

Sharob Care will follow Government guidance in respect of enabling visits to be conducted safely and successfully, including supporting hosts on how to prepare for a visit, including where testing is being used, and how to keep the resident safe during the visit.

We accept that the arrangements for each set of visits will vary and need to be highly individualised.

Considerations

Sharob Care will, in line with current government guidance, support residents in leaving the care home to spend time outdoors, without subsequent self-isolation on return in the following circumstances:

- residents may be (though are not required to be) accompanied by:
 - a care home colleague
 - one or more named visitors
 - their essential care provider (where applicable)
- activities outside of the care home that will not require self-isolation will include:
 - outdoor visits to parks, beaches or gardens
 - medical appointments
 - visiting day centres
 - attending educational settings (where their testing arrangements will be followed)
 - going to work
- indoor out of home visits may only take place to the residents' family or friends (as "named Visitors") private residence. All other visits should take place outdoors, except for the use of toilet facilities
- there should be no visits to crowded places (public or private) where any safety precautions being taken are unknown or there is a risk of non-adherence
- visits should not involve the use of public transport wherever possible.

When outside residents and escorts are expected to follow the rules set for everyone. Sharob Care recognises that all outdoor visits should consider the current local Covid-19 situation and they would be reviewed or stop if there was any increase in local community prevalence that would increase the risks to residents and colleagues.

Sharob Care recognises the importance of frequent testing of residents who make regular trips outside the home, for example, for medical appointments, and of any colleagues or others who accompany them.

Sharob Care follows government guidance that states:

"Residents may wish to be accompanied on visits out, including to medical appointments. Wherever possible, those accompanying the resident should have received a negative lateral flow test on the day of the visit. Once at the clinical setting, whether the resident can be accompanied will be at the discretion of the medical facility they are visiting.

"If residents are required to make multiple visits to care facilities, especially frequently attending hospitals as an outpatient, they should be tested regularly with lateral flow tests. This may be up to three times a week if attending outpatient services daily."

Mental Capacity

In making these arrangements, Sharob Care will observe the rights of residents who may lack the relevant mental capacity needed to make particular decisions about their needs for the out of home visits and visiting plans. We will make all such arrangements in line with individual needs by following best interests decision —

making as set out in the mental capacity laws, and where appropriate in consultation with their advocates or those with power of attorney.

However, we also recognise that people with dementia or without mental capacity for other reasons might also be the ones who will benefit most by making the visit, and their needs given high priority.

Staff Involvement and Training

All staff are made aware of the policy and of the changes made over time. They are also consulted in respect of individual risk assessments, decisions and arrangements, the new rapid testing approach and local test and trace programmes.

Updated: [RW/03/01/22]