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**Corporate Director - Health and Adult Services**  
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**Contact:** Richard Webb

**Our ref:**

To: All North Yorkshire Care Providers

25 September 2020

Dear Colleagues

**North Yorkshire Care Provider update – including new requirements around visiting to residential and nursing homes and supported living schemes**

Thank you to all colleagues for your response to protect care home residents and staff as the Covid-19 infection rates rise across North Yorkshire and around the UK.

Last Friday, I wrote to you to update about a number of issues, including the steps that the County Council and NHS partners are taking; potential funding; new Government policy announcements; and updates on PPE and testing. I also requested that all provider colleagues take further steps around Covid security and a recommendation that, in three districts (Harrogate, Scarborough and Selby), providers should put restrictions in place for care home visiting, with the exception of visits to people who are nearing the end of their lives. I said that these arrangements would be in place until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

I am grateful for your feedback and ideas in response to that letter. I have had a number of conversations with provider colleagues as well as with some care home residents and their relatives. I have also held the first of our weekly *NY Care Connected* webinar sessions and we have had some discussions about this issue there, too.

I am writing to you today to update you further.

**Care home and supported living visiting**

Infection rates have increased again in the last week and whilst we have a good overview of outbreaks and are working hard to contain and manage them, including within the care sector, the overall rates within the community are worrying and we are

seeing household and community transmission. Infection levels are evenly spread across 5 of the 7 districts within the County, with Craven being higher and Ryedale lower. At this stage, the virus is mainly presenting amongst people aged under 60: however, this creates a real challenge in terms of staffing for care services and continuing with normal visiting within care homes.

The Director of Public Health's advice is that care homes and supported living schemes should now cease routine visiting (except for people who are near the end of their lives) across the County and that we should do so for a fixed period of time, so that we can:

- Protect people early on as cases and hospital admissions increase
- Review Covid security for care home visits, as part of the task group I announced last week and see what, if anything, we can do to provide Covid-secure visiting options that meet the imperative of protecting people from the virus and ensuring that residents and families can keep in touch

Our strong preference would be to have a locally responsive, Covid-secure approach that allows visiting to continue. Given the current capacity issues with the national testing programme, a more flexible approach, which could test regular named visitors, is difficult to guarantee at the present time and, therefore, reluctantly, we are introducing more stringent measures for the time-being.

I am writing to advise and recommend that **all residential and nursing homes and supporting living schemes in all parts of the County:**

- **Cease routine visiting (except for people who are near the end of their lives and for essential visits by NHS and social care practitioners) with effect from 00:00 on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> October** – this timescale gives you time to prepare residents and to enable weekend visits to take place
- **Continue window visits for all residents** so that family members and residents can still see each other face to face
- **Encourage remote contact** by telephone and other technology

**We recommend and advise that these arrangements should be in place until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020** and that during this time we will assess them in the context of 1) the infection and outbreak rates and the prevalence of the virus and 2) assurance about any alternative measures which could help providers to re-introduce some form of visiting throughout the Winter in a safe and secure way

**Please take this letter as our advice and recommendations to prepare for restrictions to be in place from 1<sup>st</sup> October.** In the meantime, please ensure that indoor visits over the next few days are planned and managed well, to ensure the maximum protection from the risk of Covid.

During October, we would advise that **visits can still continue for people who are, sadly, near the end of their lives and for individuals who need support from an**

**NHS or social care professional.** In both situations, national rules around hand-washing, face masks, PPE, distancing and other requirements need to be followed. We will issue further advice about other activities such as hairdresser visits into a home but we would recommend that you to restrict these to a minimum where possible for the time being.

We would also recommend that you do make arrangements for regular window visits to continue during this time as well as increased contact via technology.

### **Care home and supported living residents' trips into the community**

At the same time we are recommending that you reduce, and make more Covid-secure, any visits by residents into the local community. Ideally, any trips should be in open space and socially distanced, for exercise and fresh air. People are advised to wear face coverings where they are able to do so and to be vigilant when in the community.

### **Extra care**

We will be reviewing the situation with regard to visits to, and from, extra care schemes and we will issue further advice in the near future. For the time being, however, we are not recommending restrictions to visiting in extra care schemes or to trips out by extra care residents. The reason for the difference is that people live in their own self-contained apartments. However, we would advise all schemes to consider, and prepare for, further potential restrictions; to enhance their Covid security; and to plan the flow in and out of buildings to reduce the risks.

### **Funding**

We are still awaiting the detailed guidance on the next round of the national Infection Prevention and Control Fund. We will contact you as soon as further information is available and we will be keen to get money out to providers at the earliest opportunity. We have also reviewed our North Yorkshire additional Covid payments and can confirm that we will extend these for a further 4 weeks at the 2.5% premium that has been paid to eligible providers during September (having tapered from 5% earlier in the year) and we will keep this arrangement under review. PPE will also be provided nationally on a free basis to care providers.

### **Supporting you**

As mentioned in my letter last week, we will continue to support you as much as we can. A mix of daily calls and daily electronic contacts are in place. We are continuing to offer webinars with practical advice and training. And there is an open invitation to a weekly briefing, *NY Care Connected*, every Wednesday at 5pm:

To join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/210744229>

New to GoToMeeting? You can get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/210744229>

A number of our teams are also available to help and our Quality Improvement Team,

alongside NHS colleagues, will be undertaking drop-ins and are available to provide practical help.

Thank you for all that you are doing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R Webb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a long, sweeping underline.

**Richard Webb**  
**Corporate Director Health and Adult Services**