



JOINT STATEMENT

DEADLINE FOR ACTION ON CARE HOME VISITING

As we see Coronavirus case numbers falling, we appeal for urgent and united action to re-open care homes. Getting back to a position where everyone can receive meaningful indoor visits is a matter of safety, common decency, and fundamental human rights. As a first step towards a wider process of 'opening up', we believe that this must be in place for all residents and their essential caregivers by the 1st March.

If we delay any longer, many residents will have waited more than a year to see and touch their loved ones. This is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. The absence of meaningful indoor visiting fails to recognise the fundamental role that relationships and love play in a resident's wellbeing.

Essential caregivers are more than 'just' visitors. They should be recognised as central to the person's care; enabled to provide the support crucial to the health and well-being of their loved one; and provided with relevant PPE and testing in line with the safety measures applied to the staff. Through the use of individual assessments, care homes should balance the risk of harm from the virus with the risk of harm from isolation and lack of connection with those important to the resident. But from the beginning of March essential caregivers should no longer be kept away from their loved-one.

Ultimately it is impossible to entirely eliminate risk. Providers, commissioners, relatives, friends, regulators and the wider public must recognise this as a shared priority – holding a collective responsibility for what we know is right for humanity.

Many care homes have continued to offer visiting throughout the pandemic, balancing risks via individual assessments. Their leadership has been vitally important in showing what is possible. All care homes must now be better supported to enable meaningful visiting. At the same time, many relatives and friends have worked tirelessly to ensure that their loved ones in care homes are not forgotten by 'the outside world'. They have eloquently articulated how grave the risks residents face as a result of the pandemic are to their wellbeing and sense of selfhood, as well as to their physical safety.

Together we must work to ensure that by 1 March, essential caregivers can, once again, visit their loved ones in care homes. We are calling on care providers, relatives and friends, local and national government and the regulator to work together to make this a reality. Despite our

different roles we all want the same thing. We want mother and daughter, father and son, life-time partners, close friends and neighbours to be confident that within weeks they can be reunited and be made whole again. And we want this to happen in a way that brings everyone involved together, not drives them further apart.

Although this statement is limited to England we feel passionately about the restoration of meaningful relationships across all of the UK.

Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director at Age UK

Nicci Gerrard & Julia Jones, Co-founders at John's Campaign

Vic Rayner, Executive Director at National Care Forum

Helen Wildbore, Director at the Relatives & Residents Association

Diane Mayhew, Joint Founder at Rights for Residents

Ian Turner, Chair of the Registered Nursing Homes Association