

# Visiting and Visitors Policy

## Policy Statement

The policy aims are on the one hand to promote an open ethos whereby all bona fide visitors are made welcome and comfortable during their visit and are treated with courtesy and respect, and on the other to recognise that the home has a duty of care to protect its residents and staff from intruders and anyone who threatens their safety and security.

The policy thus aims to minimise the risks to residents' safety and security, while enabling them to receive as visitors and guests people of their own choosing at times that are mutually convenient to them.

The policy applies to everyone visiting the home on any business and to all staff in their treatment of visitors. It provides guidance for residents on what they can expect when they have visitors or arrange to have them.

The policy is in line with Care Quality Commission guidance *Information on Visiting Rights in Care Homes* (November 2016).

## Definitions

A visitor is defined as someone who does not live or normally work on the premises as a paid staff member or accredited volunteer and who comes to the home for a short period of time to see residents or staff.

For the purposes of this policy visitors include people who:

- deliver, provide or supply goods and services that have been bought or commissioned by the home, staff or residents, including repairs and maintenance
- provide professional services to residents such as GPs, community nurses, pharmacists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, ministers of religion, social workers, advocates, hairdressers, opticians, etc
- visit residents on a personal or social basis regularly or occasionally, eg relatives, friends and others who come to see an individual resident
- come to the home to see staff members for any reason
- visit the home on a professional or business basis, eg external managers, inspectors and other personnel from the employing organisation or similar who may not be coming specifically to see individual residents, but who may have some contact with them depending on the nature and purpose of their visit.

## Policy on Residents' Visitors and Visiting Arrangements

Residents may receive visitors at any times that are acceptable and reasonable to them and no general restrictions are imposed. There may be occasions when a resident finds it difficult or inconvenient to receive a visitor, eg because of ill health or current circumstances. However, any such decisions to refuse or defer access will be determined by those individual circumstances and the wishes of the resident will always remain paramount.

Residents have the right to receive visitors in the privacy of their own room and for the visits to remain private. Where it is inconvenient or uncomfortable to use the resident's own room, eg because of numbers, the home will arrange for a more suitable venue in line with the resident's wishes.

Staff should make enquiries on the nature and purpose of any visits only where the resident is evidently vulnerable to harm or injury or there is evidence that the resident may have been subject to some form of abuse because of a visit or the actions of a visitor. If there is evidence of abuse, the home will follow its safeguarding procedures.

Normally, the home will get to know whom a resident has or wishes to have as a visitor so there will be no reason to enquire into the nature and purpose of the visit. Where a resident receives a visit from an apparent stranger or at an unusual or irregular time it is appropriate to ask the resident first whether he or she wishes to receive the visitor.

In coming across strangers it may be appropriate and reasonable for staff to enquire about the identity of the person and the nature and purpose of the visit, especially if the resident is uncertain or confused by it. For example, this might happen in the cases of visitors who are cold-calling for commercial purposes.

In connection with their service user plan, residents are asked by the appropriate person whom they are likely to have as bona fide visitors and any people whom they would find unacceptable or whom they would wish to be consulted over first before receiving them. This information, with the resident's consent, is recorded on the service user plan and provides some general guidance to staff under circumstances where they are uncertain about a visitor's credentials or credibility. However, the cardinal rule is to always consult the resident or their representatives whenever in doubt.

## Staff Visitors

Staff are not expected to receive visitors while they are working or to be interrupted in the course of their duties by social calls. However, it is acceptable to have people whom they know as family members or socially to call to leave messages or have some brief contact. This is quite consistent with the open ethos that the home is trying to promote. The same principle applies to staff receiving telephone calls, which are acceptable for information exchange, but not general conversational purposes.

## Procedures for Receiving Visitors

The home has a single port of entry policy so that all visitors (as defined above) report on arrival to [the receptionist/the person in charge/an available staff member], who will ask them their name and whom they wish to see and direct them accordingly.

All visitors who enter the premises other than those who are simply delivering or dropping off items, such as the mail or supplies, must sign the visitors' book. This will record time of arrival, time of departure, any car registration number if parked on the premises and the main contact person. This ensures that the home is able to account for everyone in the building at all times, which is important in the event of any emergency evacuation of the building.

The signing of the visitor's book on arrival and departure signifies that the visitor has agreed to the facts of their presence in the building being known and that they are aware of the necessity on the grounds of fire safety and security. To comply with current data protection requirements, which requires the confidential treatment of all personal data, the visitor can be assured that the information they provide will not be disclosed to third parties or be kept longer than necessary. [Best practice guidance suggests 12 months or 24 months maximum.]

This is done by careful screening/"blacking" of all existing information in the visitor's book/daily removal of previous entries, eg using a ring back diary/a data protective electronic method (there are different options to protect the visitor's personal data).

All visitors will thus in effect have a "responsible person", who can be a resident or staff member, and who will be able to account for the nature and purpose of the visit and visitor's whereabouts.

As part of its general approach to customer service, staff are expected to treat every visitor courteously and to make them feel welcome and comfortable. Where visitors have to wait to see the person they have come to see, they should be offered a comfortable seat and refreshments as available.

Where staff encounter someone they do not know or who seems lost or uncomfortable in the building it is appropriate to ask them politely whether they need help and whom they are there to see.

## Training

All staff receive instruction and training in "customer care" so that they implement this policy at all times.

Signed:	
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