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Making Arrangements For Care Home Residents To Visit Family And Friends Over Christmas With A Focus On Risks Associated with COVID-19

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The challenge faced in arranging for adult care home residents to safely visit family and friends has been the subject of government guidance twice during December 2020. It was first considered in Visits out of care homes published on 1 December, which applies to residential care settings for older people and adults of working age in England (footnote 1) and subsequently in part 7 of the more general guidance for England

for Christmas in Making a Christmas bubble with friends and family, updated on 3 December (footnote 2).

The guidance can be read as discouraging visits out of care homes and encouraging instead for consideration to be given to visits to the care home and that visits out should only be considered for those of working age.

For the period of 23 to 27 December 2020 residents out visiting family and friends should only mix with people from one household (or a bubble that includes that household plus another that is already connected in a support bubble or childcare bubble) and not become part of a 3-household Christmas bubble.

All members of the household hosting the visit and the care home resident themselves are advised to:

- be tested prior to meeting up and to provide a negative result
- limit the number of people they meet for two weeks prior to the visit
- maintain social distancing during the visit
- wash hands regularly during the visit
- let plenty of fresh air into rooms during the visit
- consider wearing face coverings during the visit

At the conclusion of the visit, the resident will be required to isolate

for 14 days.

The objective of a Christmas visit and the practical steps involved to achieve this may be reasonably identifiable. But providers will need to be alert, for each step, to the risks of infection and to put in place appropriate measures to mitigate these risks in order to protect, not only the resident who is undertaking an external visit, but also other residents, staff and visitors to the home. Risk assessments will need to be carefully recorded and kept under review to reduce, not only the repetitional damage likely to arise from an outbreak of an infection of COVID-19 attributable to an external visit, but also the exposure to criminal and/or civil action arising from health and safety legislation.

Guidance for Wales can be found at: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-guidance-for-scotland>
Guidance for Scotland can be found at: <https://gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Guidance for Northern Ireland can be found at: <https://www.indirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrangements-for-visiting-out-of-the-care-home/visits-out-of-care-homes>

²<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family>