

Family visits- COVID guidance for Children's services- from 4th July

Family Visits – the wider context for England, Wales and Scotland

The health, safety and wellbeing of our young people, communities and teams across the organisation remain our absolute priority. **There may be additional localised restrictions placed on contact/ visits due to local infection rates.**

At this stage all the visits to our services/homes should be announced.

Some of our young people are clinically shielded and we need to consider the risk to all. If a service has clinically vulnerable young people, the manager will need to assess any risks that may arise from other young people going home or visits to the services including inside the home, where this is allowed by in different parts of UK. Where visits inside the home have been reinstated the **Visitor Risk Assessment - visiting young people inside the home** must be completed prior to the visit taking place.

Government guidelines for the general population is as follows:

*From 4 July, **in England** you will be able to meet indoors in groups of up to two households (your support bubble counts as one household). This includes inviting people from one household into your home or visiting the home of someone else with members of your own household. You should continue to maintain social distancing with anyone you do not live with or who is not in your support bubble when doing so.*

Young people who are shielding remain vulnerable and should continue to take precautions but can now leave their home if they wish, as long as they are able to maintain strict social distancing.

From 6 July, **in England** the government will be advising that the clinically extremely vulnerable:

- may, if they wish, meet in a group of up to 6 people outdoors, including people from different households, while maintaining strict social distancing.
- no longer need to observe social distancing with other members of your household.
- in line with the wider guidance for single adult households (either an adult living alone or with dependent children under 18) in the general population, may from this date, if you wish, also form a 'support bubble' with one other household.

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In **Scotland**, [three households will be able to meet indoors from 10 July](#) - while socially distancing. They can already meet outside.

People will be able to travel for more than five miles for leisure or recreation - although that restriction [will remain in force in parts of south west Scotland, where a cluster of cases has been identified](#).

In **Wales**, [any number of people from two different households can now meet](#) outdoors observing social distancing - but meetings indoors are [still not allowed](#).

As of the 6th July travel into and around Wales will be allowed moving away from the previous restriction of 'stay local'.

Also two separate households will also be able to join together as one 'extended household'. They can meet indoors and stay overnight in a similar fashion to other 'support bubble' arrangements elsewhere in the UK.

Phased return of the face to face Independent Person (IP) visits

Depending on the service, some visits may take longer than 3hrs with the additional work being completed outside the home/service (larger services with multiple homes under one registration). Taking this into consideration, IP visits which are part of statutory duty will be exempt from 3 hrs time limit recommendation for **general visits** explored later on in this guidance.

For children's services as a whole, the following process should be followed:

1. The Register Manager/delegated person must complete a 'Home Visit' risk assessment prior to any proposed visit.
2. As the risk assessment states, if you answer 'Yes' to any of the questions then the visit indoors cannot take place.
3. It's the registered managers/delegated person's responsibility to complete the risk assessment with young people, staff and visitors in mind. Therefore it's the registered managers/delegated person's responsibility to make contact with the visitor and ask them the relevant risk assessment questions. See below for independent visits conducted by NYAS.
4. Once the risk assessment is completed a decision will be made (all risk assessment responses must be No for an indoor visit to be considered). If an indoor visit cannot take place then the option of an outdoor visit (with social distancing), virtual visits or telephone call can be made. Visit/Contact with all family, friends and professionals is essential.

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5. Following the result of the risk assessment the registered manager/delegated person must discuss the decision with their line manager for final approval. Once the type of visit has been agreed then the registered manager/designated person can then proceed to make the necessary arrangements with the visitor (Visitor expectations discussed).
6. One the day of the visit, it's the responsibility of the registered manager/designated person to contact the visitor to check that the risk assessment is still valid and the visitor must confirm that they still have no symptoms. Any changes to the original risk assessment or symptoms will result in the visit being cancelled as an indoor visit but can proceed as a virtual visit or telephone call.
7. The registered manager/designated person must ensure that the home is prepared for the visit. Hand washing , cleaning materials in the toilet for the visitor to use (its recommended that you explain exactly how the toilet and surfaces need cleaning to the visitor) and cleaning materials available following the visit (to wipe down surfaces and door handles etc).
8. During an indoor visit if it becomes clear that the risk assessment cannot be managed then the visit must be stopped and alternative arrangements made.

Services in receipt of NYAS Independent Person visits

As current lockdown restrictions continue to ease across England and now also Wales, NYAS confirmed that they can begin their phased return to face to face service delivery for Independent monitoring visits. This approach may take some time to be fully implemented, but we anticipate that all face to face visits should be fully reinstated by August 2020. There will be some homes which are strictly limiting any visits and may still request that visits are conducted virtually. **The visits should only resume where it is safe to do so.**

Prior to a face to face visit, the following steps must be taken by the Independent Visitor and the Registered Manager:

1. All Independent Visitors have to read NYAS guidance and return IV signature form to NYAS Service Manager (circulated on 3rd July)
2. All visits will be announced. Independent Visitors have to contact Registered Manager to make appointment for visit and to complete risk assessment A (circulated on 3rd July)
3. The Registered Manager must send a copy of the individual homes risk assessment to the Independent Visitor prior to the visit (This is Visitors Risk Assessment – visiting Young People inside the home, circulated on 3rd July).
4. Visitors will return risk assessment A and the homes risk assessment to NYAS Service Manager.

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5. Independent Visitor must check with the home on the day of the visit that it is still safe to proceed with a face to face visit.

Visitors to services - general

There must be a strict protocol in place for visits to young people. We remain with the principle that meetings at a service should be held in **outside areas**. The homes should undertake their own risk assessment before reopening to visitors.

- The homes may need to consider the impact of visiting on staffing levels.
- Visiting should not take place during an outbreak (14 days from last positive case), except in exceptional circumstances which will be assessed on the individual basis. In Scotland a care home will only be able to permit visiting or relax arrangements for communal activities if they have been COVID-free throughout the pandemic or if all affected residents have fully recovered and no residents have had symptoms for 28 days).
- All visitors should sign the COVID visitor register and certify not being symptomatic or in contact with known COVID cases. It is advised that visitors bring their own pen to prevent cross contamination.
- Managers will need to establish a rota of family/ those with parental responsibilities visits – which should be scheduled in advance and **where possible** one at a time. Consideration should be given to limiting their length to no more than 3 hours, however, this should be at the services discretion and in accordance with the risk assessment.
- Respecting social distancing and hygiene guidance. All visitors to use hand sanitiser on arrival.
- Where toilets are used within the home, visitors must wash their hands thoroughly, wipe down surfaces, use separate paper towels and wash or dispose of them safely after use.
- Ask family members/ those with parental responsibilities to bring their own refreshments to prevent cross contamination or offer disposable cups. In high heat, offer an area with shade.
- Services may consider providing PPE to visitors where there may be a risk of difficulty in maintaining social distancing during the duration of a visit (some young people are tactile and may occasionally forget). Where a young person or family/friends are unable to maintain social distancing, visits at this time are discouraged (where a young person/family/carers are unable to comprehend social distancing rules) and virtual communication via tested platform encouraged instead.

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Family meeting – away from services

Where required, staff will accompany young people on visits to support social distancing. Visits will only take place where staffing levels allow and may be time limited according to availability of staff.

From 4th July, in England a young person may visit the home of a family member, **but only if they are able to maintain social distancing.**

Day trips to outdoor open space are allowed. Young people and staff should take hygiene and safety precautions if using services on the way. Young people and staff should practise social distancing from other people outside of the service household.

The government does not advise that private cars are shared by members of different households as there is a difficulty in maintaining social distancing within the confines of a car. Public transport should also be avoided.

Support bubbles are aimed at individuals from a single household. If the relative is within a single household, they may choose their loved one to form a support bubble. The young person may then visit and stay overnight. For the protection of a shielded person, this should be the only “bubble” they have.

Overnight stays - where allowed by respective governments

We are aware that families may wish to have their loved ones home for a longer duration. As the young person lives in a children's home/care home, there are a number of considerations that the manager will need to assess.

Our services should be viewed as a household as young people live together. We need to be cautious in introducing too many contacts to this household.

Relatives are asked to consider the wellbeing of **all** young people within a home/service.

If there are extremely vulnerable shielded young people at high risk within the service, the service may require young people returning from home visits to isolate for 14 days.

If a young person stays overnight, we will request that families do not attend any gatherings outside of the single household, maintain social distancing as much as possible, and clean areas of use such as toilets, surfaces, utensils before and after use.

Factors to consider – all services

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- Will meetings put a shielded young person at risk? Households with shielded individuals should have minimal contact with those from other households. Can the shielded individual be protected from additional risk? If there are concerns, have these been discussed with the family/those with parental responsibilities? Where required, you should extend such discussion to social workers.
- Choose a suitable venue for the meeting e.g. Local park / Go for a walk/ Open public space/ private garden
- Is the young person able to maintain social distancing? Does the young person understand the rules? Is the family/those with parental responsibilities involved and in agreement? Have you considered the young person's capacity (16+) to understand rules, and where required liaised with the family/those with parental responsibilities?
- Are the family/those with parental responsibilities able to maintain social distancing?
- How will conflicts or emotions be managed where some individuals are able to meet family, and others cannot?
- Remember masks are advised in public spaces that may be crowded such as shops or public transport. In England, face covering is compulsory if the person uses public transport. Can young person wear a mask or a face covering where required?
- You should travel to meetings by walking/cycling or in a car. It is difficult to maintain social distancing in private cars, however this may be a lesser risk than catching public transport and using a private vehicle with PPE may be a safer option. Public transport should be avoided as much as it is possible.