

Visits to services – Covid19 guidance for Children's services

Management and Support services

The Prime Minister has announced a [National lockdown: stay at home](#) in England and instructed people to stay at home to control the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

More information about rules regarding England, Scotland and Wales at a glance can be found in the ***National Lockdown – 5th January 2021 internal update*** available [here](#).

Find out what the rules are in [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

There is separate guidance for [Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) and additional advice [Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#) updated on the 7th January.

The [National lockdown: Stay at Home](#) guidance has introduced limits on people gathering indoors or outdoors. **However**, there are exceptions to enable people to meet, such as **for work or the provision of voluntary or charitable services**. In the context of children's services providers' this means, for example, **that social workers and independent visitors under regulation 44 of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 can continue to visit children, unless it is unsafe to do so.**

Exceptions also include contact between parents and children where children do not live in the same household as both their parents, and for contact between siblings where they don't live together and one or more of them is a looked after child or a 16 or 17 year old care leaver. **All these visits will be able to go ahead providing the Visitor Risk Assessment allows it at the time their visit is scheduled to take place.**

Also the effective quality assurance checks and visits should **continue to be carried out**, to ensure that the care provided is safe and staff feel supported. The use of virtual visits should be the exception and can be used as a result of public health advice or when it is not reasonably practical to have a face-to-face visit. Any activity carried out remotely should be recorded. Local authorities and providers can refer to:

- [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- [NHS Test and Trace service in the workplace](#)

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Scotland and Wales are also under different restrictions but as England are supporting the notion of visits to take place via the 'Visitor Risk Assessment'.

More specific guidance for Scotland can be found [here](#).

More specific guidance for Wales can be found [here](#).

Taking these changes into account it is critical that visits to services by Caretech and Cambian management and support staff remain **essential only** (see definition below).

Internal (Caretech and Cambian staff) visitors

What can be considered an essential visit?

1. Operational monitoring and support for services at risk- those at Inadequate/ Requires improvement
2. Management support including services under new management
3. Safeguarding audits or management investigations
4. Health, or safety concerns / investigations
5. Therapeutic/behavioural intervention
6. Training - where a risk assessment has been approved
7. Support related to external regulator interventions

Who can complete essential visits?

1. Managers/Senior Managers who are part of the team (service/home/school/college). This includes senior field-based roles, overseeing/supporting multiple services
2. Operations/Managing/other Directors/ Responsible or Nominated Individuals
3. Representatives from any Business Support Function

External visitors

Who is an "External visitor"?

An external visitor is anyone who does not work for CareTech or Cambian. This may include our Regulators, Social workers, Health professionals, Local authority representatives, NYAS

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Independent Visitors, family members/ guardians/ whoever is acting in the parental role or friends.

External visitors should be provided with clear instructions before their visit and a risk assessment **must** be completed for each visitor. This is because we care for some young people whom may be clinically extremely vulnerable.

We cannot refuse entry to our Regulators. In the event of an inspection, should services be concerned, they should contact Amanda Sherlock and their Managing Director immediately.

All visits to our services must be announced.

During current National Lockdown in England people must not meet with anybody they do not live with or have not formed a support bubble with. People must not leave home or travel, including abroad, unless they have a legally permitted reason to do so. People must not travel outside their local area.

However, taking into account the context for children's services - in exceptional circumstances (this might be different for different young people) a social worker will be contacted and the course of actions agreed followed by the risk assessment to facilitate visits. Should services not have suitable outside space to facilitate the visit, services should consider a local park/common area where a socially distanced walk can take place.

Some care homes for young people are part of national care home weekly testing programme. If this is in place the course of action will be taken based on the test result.

Independent specials schools which are part of the national mass asymptomatic testing programme and which remained fully or partially open to vulnerable and key worker children, may already be testing internal visitors, especially those who multisite workers conducting the essential visit.

If a service has clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable young people in, the manager will additionally need to assess any risks that may arise from other young people going home or essential visits to the services, where this is allowed.

Visitor protocol

- No visits should take place if the service has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID
- Visitors are to arrange visits with the service manager to enable coordination of visits
- Visitors must sign in on the COVID19 sign-in sheet, and include contact numbers for Track and Trace.

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- The visitor's temperature is to be checked on entry to a service. Visits should not proceed where the visitor's temperature is outside of the normal range.
- Where services are part of the weekly testing programme, the course of action will be taken based on the test result.
- Visitors are expected to wear a face-covering when they enter the service and continue wearing it during the visit until they leave. If any visitor for any reasons does not have a face-covering available, staff should provide a mask for them to prevent possible transmission.
- Where the visit includes direct contact with the young people, PPE guidance for children's services must be adhered to at all times. The service will provide the necessary PPE.
- Visitors must follow infection control and handwashing procedures in the service.
- Visitors should avoid travel on public transport if possible.
- Face coverings are not a substitute for [maintaining social distancing](#) and good hand hygiene.

In case of any testing taking place outside of the home, for example community or home testing, staff and visitors must inform the care home so that the result is factored into the decision-making process and risk assessment. Visitors who have had a test should not visit the home regardless of that test result, until 10 days from exposure have passed.

Evidence of outbreaks and recovery from outbreaks should also be considered (a recovered outbreak is defined as 28 days or more since the last suspected or confirmed case reported).

The Risk assessment process

1. The Register Manager/delegated person must complete a 'Visitor Risk Assessment' prior to any proposed visit.
2. If you answer 'Yes' to any of the questions then the visit indoors **cannot take place**.
3. It's the Registered Manager/delegated person's responsibility to complete the Visitor Risk Assessment with all young people, staff and visitors in mind. It's the Registered Manager/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 Visitor Risk Assessment is completed a decision will be made (all 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 a

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telephone call can be made. Visit/Contact with all family, friends and professionals is essential.

5. Following the result of the Visitor 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/delegated person can then proceed to make the necessary arrangements with the visitor. It is essential to manage the visitor's expectations.
6. On the day of the visit, it's the responsibility of the Registered Manager/delegated person to contact the visitor to check that the previously completed Visitor Risk Assessment is still valid and the visitor must confirm that they still have no Covid19 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/delegated person must ensure that the home is prepared for the visit. Hand washing, cleaning materials in the toilet for the visitor to use (it's 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 implemented effectively then the visit must be stopped and alternative arrangements made.

Independent Person (IP) visits NYAS

NYAS independent visits can continue being delivered face to face - where it is deemed safe to do so following discussion and risk assessment between the visitor and the registered manager. Where the visit is not deemed safe, NYAS will adopt the virtual visit as they did before during the first lock-down.

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

There will be homes which will be strictly limiting any visits and may still request that visits are conducted virtually, whilst some other homes subject to local /national restrictions will

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be transitioning back to virtual visits. Face to face visits should only resume/continue taking place subject to a risk assessment.

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 (NYAS internal process)
2. All visits will be announced. Independent Visitors have to contact the Registered Manager to make an appointment for the visit and to complete Risk Assessment A (NYAS template)
3. The Registered Manager must send a copy of the home's Visitor Risk Assessment to the Independent Visitor prior to the visit.
4. Visitors will return Risk Assessment A (NYAS template) and the home's Visitor Risk Assessment to the NYAS Service Manager.
5. The Independent Visitor must check again with the home on the day of the visit that it is still safe to proceed with a face to face visit.

Family meeting away from services

Children and young people can continue to exercise alone (where authorized and risk assessed as appropriate), with one other person or with their household or support bubble. This should be limited to once per day, and they should not travel outside their local area. Children young people and staff required to accompany them* should maintain [social distancing](#). See [exercising](#).

This includes but is not limited to running, cycling, walking, and swimming. Personal training can continue one-on-one unless everyone is within the same household or support bubble.

Public outdoor places include:

- parks, beaches, countryside accessible to the public, forests
- public gardens (whether or not you pay to enter them)
- the grounds of a heritage site
- playgrounds

Children under 5, and up to 2 carers for a person with a disability who needs continuous care, are not counted towards the gatherings limits for exercising outside.

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When around other people, stay 2 metres apart from anyone not in your household - meaning the people you live with - or your [support bubble](#). Where this is not possible, stay 1 metre apart with extra precautions (like wearing a face covering).

*Where staff are required to accompany young people on visits to support social distancing/support needs, this will only take place where staffing levels allow and may be time-limited according to the availability of staff.

Meeting in larger groups

There are still circumstances in which people are allowed to meet others from outside their household, childcare or support bubble in larger groups, but this should not be for socialising and only for permitted purposes. A full list of these circumstances ([here](#)) will be included in the regulations, and includes:

- for arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents or guardians
- to allow contact between birth parents and children in care, as well as between siblings in care

Overnight stays and traveling back to a family home /shared care arrangements etc.

Our services should be viewed as a household as young people live together, so we need to be cautious in introducing too many contacts to this household. However, some stay overnight may still have to go ahead, an example of this is where a young person who attends a Residential Special School (38 weeks placement) needs to travel back to a family home to stay over the weekend or during a holiday where such agreement is in place.

Any unusual individual cases must be discussed and agreed with the family (guardians), social workers and where concerns are raised – with the Managing Directors.

We are aware that in the exceptional circumstances families may request 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.

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

If there are extremely vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable young people within the service, the service may require young people returning from home visits to isolate for 10 days.



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If a young person stays overnight, we will expect that families hosting the child/young person will follow [National Lockdown - stay at home guidance.](#)