

## A Message from the Minister for Care

Dear Families and friends,

We appreciate how very difficult current situation is for all loved ones to be able to visit in our care homes due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The Minister for Care Helen Whately, has sent the below message to all care homes and we would like to share the message and new information about government plans to support family visiting within care homes as outlined in her message.

We will all ensure we follow the progress of the government plans with acute interest and we will write to update you when we have more details to share with you.

### A message from Helen Whately, Minister for Care, Department of Health and Social Care

In recent days, we have had some good news pointing to a brighter, safer future. We have seen positive results from the late stage clinical trials of not one but two COVID-19 vaccines.

Subject to independent regulatory approval, there is promise of a return to a more normal way of life in the not too distant future.

I'll come back to this encouraging development shortly, but first, I want to mention a matter much closer to home.

I know visits from loved ones are essential to many care home residents. In [our most recent guidance](#), we have done our best to balance the obvious benefits of visiting with the very real need to protect people from infection. As such, these visits will always represent a difficult compromise.

That's why we have begun a [visitor testing programme in 20 care homes across Hampshire, Cornwall and Devon](#), with plans to roll this out nationally in December, reaching all care homes by Christmas.

Testing is one way to minimise infection risks when visiting care homes. If visitors test negative, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow other infection control measures, then physical contact, including, holding hands and hugging will be possible. With Christmas fast approaching, we will do all we can to bring more families, friends and loved ones together safely.

Two new so-called '[mega labs](#)', in Leamington Spa and Scotland, will also add another 600,000 units of daily testing capacity, meaning even faster turnaround times for test results. Combined with the recent news on vaccines, I believe there is now real hope that 2021 will be a better, safer year for many more people – speaking of which...

The impact of vaccines on transmission is not currently known, and won't be for a while, but the reported effectiveness against symptomatic infection appears to be very good news and gives us hope we can protect more lives.

A COVID-19 vaccine will only be rolled out once it has met robust standards on safety, effectiveness and quality through clinical trials and been approved for use by the MHRA. NHS England and Improvement and Public Health England are likewise committed to making sure these vaccines are delivered safely and efficiently.

In the meantime, winter flu also remains a threat to residents and the most vulnerable in our communities. I urge any care workers who have not yet had their free vaccination to do so now. Meanwhile, [people aged 50 to 64 will also get the free jab from 1 December](#) as part of our expanded winter vaccination programme.

For now though, stay safe, stay well and stay strong in the belief that 2021 is the year we put coronavirus firmly in its place.



In the meantime please be assured of our continued commitment to support all our families and residents in our care. Please take care and stay safe.

Kind regards

*Crown Care Group*