

18 December 2020

Dear relative

I am writing to update you on our current situation in respect of visits to our care homes. I really appreciate how difficult it must have been for you to not have close contact with your loved ones, and I absolutely don't underestimate the effect this must have had on all families. I hope you, in turn, will appreciate that we have at all times followed government guidance to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all the people in our care.

We have been working in close partnership with SMBC to find a way to facilitate indoor visits in line with the rigorous procedures that are required to ensure this does not pose a significant risk to the people who live in and work in our care homes. Despite this, we regret that we are unable to offer indoor visits at the moment but please be assured that we continue to work with SMBC to find a way to do so as soon as possible.

The main challenges we face are:

- Identifying areas in the home that can be used for testing and analysing the test results as these must be rooms that are not used for any other purpose, and meet various other stringent conditions.
- Ensuring we have sufficient staff available to carry out the tests, coordinate and supervise visits, crucially without impacting the essential care and support for residents.

To try to overcome these challenges and facilitate safe visiting for all, we will initially be trialling an approach to indoor visits in only two of our homes, and for a very small number of visitors. Further details of this will be shared as soon as we have made the necessary preparations.

We are of course continuing to facilitate pod / window visits, which can be booked with the homes directly, so please take advantage of these options as your first step. Because of the very strict procedures in place for indoor visits, the number that we would be able to offer, even when we overcome the other challenges, will be extremely limited, whereas pod and window visits require far less of you, and far less staff intervention and therefore, we are able to be far more flexible and offer far more visits.

We appreciate how disappointed you must be to receive this update, particularly given deliberately misleading news stories, which suggest the process is simple, but please accept our assurance that we are doing everything possible to ensure we can offer indoor visits as soon as possible.

Staff in our homes have worked incredibly hard during the pandemic to support and care for your loved ones, facilitate contact with families and keep up with the ever-increasing pressures that Covid has placed on the services. I hope that you understand that they are very keen to open the homes up to visitors as soon as they are able to, but for now we ask that you work with us to ensure we can offer as many visits as possible.

We have set up an email address for you to use for any questions, concerns, etc. The email address is: testing@boroughcare.org.uk. Please do not use this email to book visits, this must be done directly with the relevant care home.

Thank you for your continuing co-operation and support.

Kind regards

Julie Sutton
Operations Director