

# Support for relatives of Care Home residents

August 2020

## Introduction

This is a very difficult time for the relatives and friends of those receiving care. You want your relatives and friends to be safe and well cared for during this pandemic and to help prevent risk of infection to them and others.

This document aims to provide you with support and guidance at this challenging time.

Please [follow Staying alert and safe \(social distancing\) guidance](#)

Care Homes are doing all they can to ensure that life remains as comfortable and sociable as possible. Even though you cannot visit your loved one, there are things you can do to stay in touch.

Discuss with the care staff how you can use technology to keep in touch with your friend or relative and which form of communication might be most suitable, including video calling – FaceTime, WhatsApp, Messenger, Skype, Zoom; telephoning – mobile, or landlines if more appropriate; and virtual assistants – Alexa or Google Home.

How can I stay in contact with my friend or relative from afar?

### Other ways to stay in touch include:

- Sending a small parcel by post with some items to help with a hobby or something of yours which will be familiar to your relative.
- Ordering some flowers, favourite food or drink to be delivered to your relative at the home.
- Posting some photographs, old and recent, to your relative to help them stay connected to you
- Sending cards, letters or post cards with messages of support / updates on family news
- Alerting care staff to upcoming milestone dates, like birthdays, wedding anniversaries, or anniversaries of deaths and ask care staff to ensure you are able to contact your relative on those dates.

You can be assured that every measure is being taken to prevent the spread of the virus in Care Homes. This includes separating processes and equipment for those with the virus from those who do not (cohorting), isolating infected people and maintaining thorough cleaning regimes, following relevant Government guidance: [The Admission and Care of Patients during COVID-19](#), [The care of the deceased from Coronavirus](#) and [Managing the COVID-19 pandemic in care homes with older people.](#)

How are Care Homes preventing the spread of Coronavirus?

Bereavement is a difficult experience in any situation but is even more challenging under the current circumstances. The grieving process and associated arrangements are vital for the health and wellbeing of the bereaved. [Government guidance](#) on arranging funerals during the COVID-19 crisis aims to balance the needs of the bereaved to mourn appropriately, whilst minimising the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

**What are the guidelines on funeral arrangements for my loved one?**

**Where can I find support for my mental wellbeing?**

It is common to feel overwhelmed, scared or helpless in the current situation and it's **OK** to feel this way. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and to look after our physical and mental health. The following tips and resources may help but don't forget to talk to those around you to share your feelings.

## Useful wellbeing links

- The NHS 111 line now has a dedicated mental health and wellbeing service.
- Samaritans offers free, confidential support 24 hours a day on 116 123.
- National mental health services and helplines can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- [Every Mind Matters](#) offers advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.
- [Mind](#) offers information to help you cope during the coronavirus crisis
- The [NHS](#) offers support and guidance for people who are bereaved through Coronavirus
- The Public Health Team has published a [bereavement guidance](#) document to provide advice and support.
- The [Relatives & Residents Association](#) offer a help line to relatives of care home residents
- [The Good Grief Trust](#) provides Coronavirus Bereavement Advice
- [At A Loss](#) is a charity helping people dealing with bereavement and grief during the Covid-19 pandemic

## Wellbeing tips

1. **Connect with others** via email, social media, facetime and telephone. Adjust your social media intake if it is making you anxious.
2. **Maintain a healthy lifestyle.** Try to stay active, eat healthily and drink enough water.
3. **Take notice & focus on the present.** Make the most of any private outdoor space, and engage with nature.
4. **Have a routine..** Get enough sleep. Include time to relax.
5. **Keep learning & do things you enjoy.** Keep your mind active.
6. **Stick to the facts & limit your news intake.** Set yourself a specific time to read updates or limit to checking a couple of times a day – use trustworthy sources such as [GOV.UK](#) or [NHS](#) websites.
7. **Offer support and help others.** Helping others makes you feel good. Check in with friends, neighbours or colleagues who may be self-isolating or vulnerable.
8. [The 5 ways to wellbeing](#) are a set of evidence-based actions which promote wellbeing, which you find useful.



**For Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire versions:**

**Please insert hyperlink to PH Team's bereavement guidance documents published on your Council webpages**