



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

# Changes to the rules about visiting people in care homes, hospitals and hospices



**Easy read booklet**

# About this booklet



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

We are the **Department of Health and Social Care**, also called the **DHSC**.



We are part of the government and we decide the rules for health and care services in England.



We want to change the rules about visiting people in care homes, hospitals and hospices.



This booklet tells you about the changes we are making.

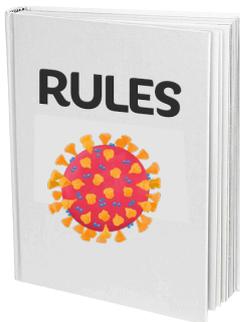
# Why visiting is important



It is important that people can have visitors when they are in care homes, hospitals or hospices because visitors make a big difference to their health and **wellbeing**.



**Wellbeing** means how healthy and happy you feel and how much energy you have.



Extra rules were made in the COVID-19 pandemic to help keep people safe.



We now know that some of the extra rules were not good for people's wellbeing.

# Current rules about visiting



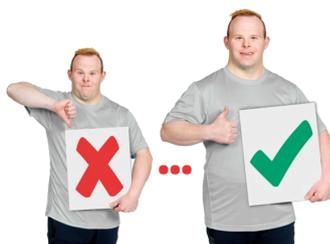
Most care homes, hospitals and hospices now have normal visiting rules again.



All care homes, hospitals and hospices should make it possible and safe for people to have visitors.



We know that sometimes people are told they can't have visitors.



We want to change the rules so that people can have visitors unless it is very unsafe.

# Our consultation



We did a **consultation** in 2023.  
A **consultation** is when we give you information and then ask you to tell us what you think.



We asked lots of people what they think about new rules to make sure people can have visitors.



We asked patients, people who live in care homes, their families and health and care workers.



We got over 1,400 replies. Most people said they wanted these new rules.

# What we learned from our consultation

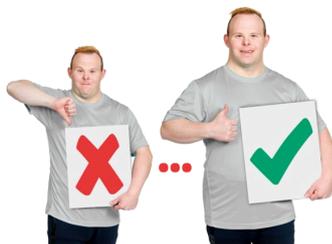


In our consultation people said some things that stopped them visiting were

- rules that were not clear.
- strict visiting times.
- complicated ways to make a complaint.



We asked people what they thought about a new **standard**. The new **standard** means the rules that care homes, hospitals and hospices must follow.



Most people said that the new standard would make things better for people in health and care services and their families and friends.



Most people wanted these standards for everybody, but some people were worried that this might not be safe for example for people who have problems with drugs or alcohol.

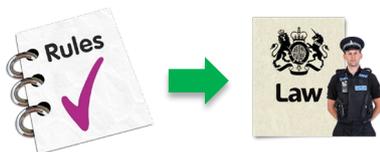
# A new standard on visiting



We will work with the **CQC** to write the new standard on visiting.



The **CQC** is the **Care Quality Commission**. They do checks to make sure all health and care services follow the rules.



We will make sure the standard becomes a law, and make sure health and care services understand that everyone should be allowed visitors.

# If health or care services don't follow the standard



When health and care services do not follow the standard, the CQC can **require** them to make changes.



**Require** means they have to do it.



This will show everyone how important it is that people can have visitors.



We will make sure the new standard is clear and give better information about how to make a complaint.

# Health and care services not included



Some types of health services will not have to follow the new standard.



This includes places that help people who have problems with drugs or alcohol. This is because they need to make sure visitors will not make patients worse.



It also includes homes with supported living or extra care. This is because they have different rules called a **tenancy agreement**.

# Exceptional circumstances



Sometimes health services might say there are **exceptional circumstances** when they don't need to follow the rules.



**Exceptional circumstances** are unusual things that might happen like an emergency.



We know that sometimes visits might not be possible because it is not safe.



The standard will say it is important that visitors are allowed whenever possible, because it is good for the health and wellbeing of everyone.

# Visits out



Sometimes people might want to leave their care home to go outside for a while. This is called a **visit out**.



Visits out can be good for people's wellbeing.



We will include rules in the new standard to make sure this is encouraged.



We want to encourage people who live in care homes to have visits out.

# Thank you



Thank you to everyone who replied to our consultation or helped us think about the new standard.



This has helped us make good decisions.

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The full version of this document is called  
“Government response to the consultation on  
visiting in care homes, hospitals, and hospices”