

Written evidence from Jenny Morrison (CIL1681)

Dear Harriet and Members of the JCHR

As requested, I've put together a short piece of evidence to show how some managers maintained regular face to face contact visits for their residents and families throughout the duration of the pandemic.

We have quite few examples of care providers / care home managers who began to facilitate face to face indoor visits as early as last Spring and Summer in response to the rapid deterioration they were witnessing in their residents after months of separation from their loved ones. I have outlined just three examples to make the evidence manageable and all of these managers would be willing to speak to you about this in more detail if they were called upon to do so. They feel strongly that the Government's advice throughout the pandemic was too restrictive and that they weren't supported in their desire to place the mental health and wellbeing of those in their care at the forefront of all they did.

They are just a few of the managers that support our Rights For Residents Campaign but we have other examples if required.

These managers made very brave choices but they faced large scale opposition from local decision makers in the LA's and from PHE. In terms of human rights they managed to balance the wishes and rights of those residents and relatives who were against visiting and those that wanted visiting to continue.

The managers are:

Donna Pierpoint from Broomgrove Trust in Sheffield

I have attached a written document and flyer that outlines why Donna made the decision to re-start visits so early on in the pandemic. This sums up Donna's thoughts on care home visiting:

"I am a Care Home Manager myself and I defied all guidance last year and did what I knew was right. I started visits in July and have never looked back. I have not had a single Resident be poorly or die from Covid-19. I have kept totally safe, but recognised that Relatives are less risk than staff so why oh why are we not letting them in the Home.

Elderly people in their 90s were torn away from their parents during the 2nd World War packed up and send off on a train to live with strangers.

Never knowing if they would see their parents again. So how can it be right to repay this amazing, inspiring generation but tearing them apart from their families again. Stay Strong, have faith and be brave enough to do what's right. You can do this. Happy to speak to and advise anyone".

Dawn Bunter - Iceni House Care Home, Norfolk

"Our visiting hasn't been about media coverage or trying to be better than another provider, this has been because we saw a genuine diminish in our residents emotional and health wellbeing. We have had residents sustain falls, become low in mood, lose weight, and refuse

to eat and drink and also isolate themselves from others. This past year has had to be about the residents whom are the foundation of everything we do, this isn't about beds and making money, COVID cannot be about any of that, but this has been about people and ensuring we are safely and proactively meeting the needs of our residents. How can we gatekeep families away when the resources are there and provided to us?"

Adam Purnell - Kepplegate Care Service in Lancashire

Adam has summarised the action they took to ensure vulnerable residents continued to have vital support from and contact with loved ones after the initial National Lockdown:

"As an ambassador for John's Campaign, I was very conscious at the beginning of the pandemic that any visiting restrictions would start to severely impact mental health and wellbeing.

*For April and May of 2020 we worked with our relatives and residents to put together a safe visiting plan to ensure people could continue to keep connected face to face. We decided that socially distanced visits were the best way forward and had them implemented in **June 2020**.*

By October we decided to use our surplus of PCR tests for relatives to add an extra level of safety and reassurance. PCR testing has been essential for our visiting plan and through consultation with all our residents and relatives, they agreed that visitors would adhere to the same testing regime as staff. We also purchased our own rapid tests whilst we waited for the government provided ones so we have had close contact visits since beginning of December. Since June 2020, we have not stopped indoor visiting and since December we have not stopped close contact visiting. We have never had an outbreak of COVID and not had one relative test positive for COVID through either PCR or LFD.

Those living in care homes are all coming to the end of their lives, and as such, need to be respected to have close contact with their loved ones during the time they have left. One of the biggest issues has been a lack of documentation to support providers i.e., dynamic risk assessments, visiting care plans etc, so myself and other providers had to devise our own and share them within the sector.

For those living with dementia, too much damage to their mental and physical health is inflicted when they are kept away from their constants, their familiar faces. Relatives and friends are essential in maintaining cognitive health and without them, memories and recognition disappears a lot fast than it would if their loved ones were close to them. It's for this reason that we have decided not to restrict visiting and we have classed dementia and all other memory and cognitive impairments as exceptional circumstances so that they can have visitors at all times".

Additional information: Broomgrove Trust in Sheffield

Broomgrove – keeping the connection

A care home shouldn't be a prison

Leading Sheffield Care Home Broomgrove has confirmed it will do all in its power to continue face-to-face visits throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Broomgrove was one of the first homes of its type in the country to allow family members to visit residents in June, following the original lockdown in March.

It believes the mental wellbeing benefits of visits, far outweigh the risks providing it is done in a safe manner following guidance.

The home was one of the first in the region to utilise technology to allow residents to communicate with relatives, but it didn't work for everyone.

Donna Pierpoint, manager, Broomgrove Care Home, explained, "Many residents took very quickly to using Skype and Facetime and other technology, but others didn't. The original lockdown proved there really is no replacement for face-to-face visits and we're determined to continue.

"Planning and managing them in a safe manner is hard but these visits are so important. Relatives have been incredibly supportive of our decision."

All relatives visiting Broomgrove Nursing Home are required to use PPE, complete risk assessments, social distance and follow strict infection control guidance.

"I think many people forget that many of our residents are some of the strongest people on the planet," Donna added. "They lived through the harshness of World War Two and the Sheffield Blitz. They deserve dignity and respect. A care home shouldn't be a prison."

To date, there have been no cases of COVID-19 at Broomgrove Nursing Home.

Donna said, "We lockdown early on 16 March and put all infection control measures in place the minute they were published. We didn't accept any new admissions into the home, to prevent the virus entering the home, when we had no testing in place. As a Not-for-Profit Organisation we were able to do this and still balance our finances. We've been ahead of the game with all government publications and ensured good communication with both our staff and relatives. Building up that relationship and good communication has been key to us working as a team. And as the Manager I'm very proud of Team BG."

"The way staff have pulled together in this crisis has been amazing.

"Rainbows for the NHS were everywhere, but what about Care Homes? Where were the rainbows and community support for them? One of my Care Assistants who has worked at Broomgrove for 14 years took matters into his own hands and started creating Rainbow messages for both Residents and Staff to tell us how important we are in this pandemic."

Each rainbow was personalised and done as a collage, with cuttings out of magazines and newspapers to make the words. He put a lot of love into each one of them; residents have them on their bedroom walls, and the staff have them either at work or at home.

"Each time we look at them, it reminds us of how important Care Homes are and the battle we have had over this year to keep all our residents safe," concluded Donna.

To date Tony has done over 50 Rainbows and he is still making them - he is our Rainbow Hero!

19/04/2021