

Written evidence from Anonymous (HCS0022)

What human rights issues need to be addressed in care settings in England, beyond the immediate concerns arising from the COVID-19?

My Mum has been in a care home in Suffolk since March 2020. Since the first lockdown visits from family and friends have been restricted to such an extent that my Mum has declined both mentally and physically. I completely understand the need to protect care home residents but how can it be in their best interest to be deprived of contact with family and friends?

My Mum's care home is currently allowing one 30 minute visit a week for family and friends. The rest of the time my Mum is imprisoned there deprived of social contact with the people she loves. This means that she and all the other residents spend hours, day in day out sitting in their chairs staring into space. While some activities are planned, these tend to be during the week and only for those who are mobile enough to join in. Residents who are unable to get out of bed, for example, spend hours each day isolated from everyone. How can this be right? Who is thinking of their welfare and fighting for their rights? It is beyond cruel.

As a family we have noticed that weekends are particularly bad for our Mum. There is very little going on in the care home and my Mum finds this very difficult and gets distressed. This is because she is bored and frustrated and the only way she can communicate that is to get upset. My sister gets frequent phone calls from the care home asking for her help to talk to Mum to calm her down. The reality is she needs to have a life. We did not sign up for her to sit in a chair for hours on end. She is not living, she is existing. What are we keeping them alive for?

How effective are care providers at respecting the human rights of people under their care?

Care homes make the final decision about visits from family and many are ignoring the Government guidelines which make it clear that visiting should be enabled whenever possible. This is without doubt a breach of the residents' human right to a family life. No one who has family in a care home signed up for this and my Mum certainly didn't.

As MPs you have the power to right this wrong and fight for the rights of thousands of vulnerable people across the country. Please make it law that families have a right to unrestricted visits to care homes. No family members will object to being tested or wearing PPE to keep their loved ones safe. Family members should be no different from the staff. The staff are going home and mixing with whoever they want. Those with children are at high risk of contracting the virus and bringing it in. COVID got into my Mum's home during a lockdown. It can only be the staff who brought it in, therefore there will always be a risk. 18 months on residents cannot remain imprisoned until COVID goes away or worse until they die.

How effective are regulators in protecting residents from human rights breaches in supporting patients and residents who make complaints about their care provider?

They aren't, otherwise, we would not still be fighting to be treated as family not visitors and to be able to see our loved ones when we can. Care homes have got so used to the new

normal that they have forgotten what their role is – to provide a home and support for our loved ones and to ensure that they can enjoy their last years of life. No matter what activities are organised, this can never replace the contact with their families.

Please think about your own families and the impact COVID has had on you especially during lockdowns. Imagine having to book a 30 minute appointment to visit a loved one once a week. How can regulators think this is OK? They are there to protect my Mum, not just from COVID but from abuse. I believe that the current restrictions are a form of abuse. We deprive prisoners of contact with families as a punishment yet this is happening on a daily basis in care homes.

Please make it law that restricted visiting can no longer be allowed and that families and residents should be allowed to decide on what is right for their loved ones not care home managers.

My Mum may be old but she is still a person. She has lived a rich and fulfilling life. Her only 'crime' was to suffer a stroke which made her unable to live alone. She can still chat and has a wicked sense of humour. She loves talking to people, going outside for a walk (not possible now unless a member of staff takes her outside, which is rarely as the staff are too busy) and being around people. Sitting in a chair day in day out was always her worst nightmare. As a family we are wracked with guilt that this is what she faces every day and are powerless to do anything about it. We need your help to stop this.

What lessons need to be learned from the pandemic to prevent breaches of human rights legislation in future?

We know a lot more about COVID now and care homes and regulators have to adapt. It is not going away and residents cannot be imprisoned forever. We know that being double vaccinated offers some protection as does catching COVID. The boosters will also add another layer of protection. When residents caught COVID in August 2021 having been fully vaccinated, the cases were mild, but they still locked the whole home down for weeks.

When COVID first struck we accepted lockdowns without question as we wanted to keep Mum safe. Now I don't because I know this is not going to end any time soon. I would rather Mum were able to live life to the full even if it means that she lives for less time and I know she feels the same.

We need to find a way to improve the quality of life for care home resident and focus on their needs.

Please listen to our appeals for help and please right this wrong and save my Mum from many more months of isolation. She is a person with feelings and needs. Being old makes her no different to the rest of us. The way care home residents are being treated is cruel and you can do something about it.

I want to be able to enjoy Mum's last years with her, not via FaceTime, which she finds difficult at the best of time.

Please give my Mum a voice.



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