



Verulam House Nursing & Residential Home

Verulam House, Verulam Road, St Albans, Herts. AL3 4DH

T: 01727 853991 F: 01727 855059

11 December 2020

Dear Friends and Family,

The management team at Verulam House would like to thank you for your continued support in protecting our residents at Verulam House throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We are pleased to say that so far, we have insulated our residents and staff from the devastating effects of COVID 19 by adopting the strictest infection control measures. A vaccine is now imminent, but we must still proceed with extreme caution so as not to undo all the hard work to date. We are writing to provide you with an update on the latest guidance regarding visiting residents in the home and residents going out of the home to visit relatives over the Christmas period.

However we continue to live in challenging times and the virus is still circulating in our community.

The virus has NOT gone away just because it is Christmas so extreme caution is necessary.

You have probably seen references in the press regarding Lateral flow testing for the virus and the suggestion that this will enable visits into Care Homes albeit with continued strict infection control, PPE and Testing .

We have therefore studied in detail the voluminous information sent to us from HM Government, Herts County Council Adult Care Services, Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care.

The latest guidance includes allowing visits using the rapid lateral flow tests to enable visits to take place in the home. The lateral flow rapid test in the context of The Coronavirus is a new technology which is STILL BEING EVALUATED.

Full data on the reliability of these tests is still unknown, so we still need to take a precautionary approach. As emphasised earlier the virus is still circulating in our community and therefore any individual visiting or leaving a Care Home should be regarded as a potential risk of transmitting COVID 19.

Verulam House has come so far and done so well throughout this pandemic and with a vaccine imminent the management team consider that using these tests would be putting the home in jeopardy. This we are not prepared to do.



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The updated guidelines on residents going out of the home for Christmas are highly complex would require extra staffing and are also extremely time consuming. The following points must be taken into consideration.

Residents that go out of the home over the Christmas period to visit relatives are to adhere to the following protocols.

- 1) Residents are only able to form a support bubble with one household not three.*
- 2) All members of that household must isolate as much as possible for 14 days prior the resident visiting that household.*
- 3) On the day of the planned visit all members of the household hosting the visit must have a COVID-19 test taken immediately preceding the visit. This will involve ALL members of the household coming to Verulam House and having The Lateral Flow Rapid Test.*

A negative test result would be required for the visit to be able to go ahead. HOWEVER, WE REPEAT THAT THIS TEST IS STILL BEING EVALUATED AND FULL DATA ON RELIABILITY IS AWAITED.

The resident should then be tested using the Rapid test immediately before leaving the home. If an outside visit was to be undertaken then during the course of such a visit those that they are visiting are advised to maintain social distancing, wash hands regularly, let in plenty of fresh air into rooms by opening windows and doors and consider wearing a face covering.

- 4) On the residents return to Verulam house they will have to be tested and be isolated to their room for 14 days.*
- 5) If any member of the household gets symptoms of the virus during the visit, they would need to contact 111 and the resident would NOT be able to return to the Home for 14 days.*
- 6) The risks for Residents leaving care homes is significantly greater for older people than for those of working age.*

The extra tasks and staffing involved to carry out the lateral flow testing has also got to be managed as we still need to carry out 150 COVID-19 Swabs weekly to continue to keep the home safe.



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Taking all the above points into consideration we would ask relatives to support us in the decision of not allowing any resident to leave the home over the Christmas period due to the risks involved to the home.

We understand that Christmas is a time for families, and you will want to see your loved ones over Christmas so we will continue with face-to-face visits over the Christmas period including Christmas day and Boxing day. This will continue to be by appointment and following the system that is already in place. We will also continue with facetime relatives and window visits. Each resident will be able to receive a face-to-face visit, a facetime call and a window visit a week.

We have many Christmas activities in the home over this period and we will make it as festive and jolly as possible. Christmas day is always so much fun with a great atmosphere for everybody. On the 17th and 21st December, we have our staff pantomime "Pinocchio" which I know the residents are really looking forward to.

This will be followed by Residents and Staff Christmas PARTY.

On the 16th December we are having a virtual Christmas carol service with the Cathedral Choir. There will also be The Spicer Street Christmas service on the 18th December. Many more activities are also planned by Our Activities Team.

Finally, we need to remind everyone that if we have just TWO positive tests out of up to 150 that we are doing weekly then ALL visiting must stop for 28 days.

We consider that easing restrictions using a Test which has not been fully evaluated increases this possibility to the detriment of everyone.

We hope you all have a lovely Christmas, and we will ensure your loved ones do too.

We thank everyone for their cooperation during this very worrying time and hope that once the vaccine is rolled out, we will get back to some normality.

Kind Regards

*The Management Team
Verulam House*