

PE01841/R

Care Home Relatives Scotland submission of 3 March 2021

We are a group of 1,800+ relatives and friends of care home residents who have been campaigning for improved visiting arrangements since August 2020. We fully support petition PE01841 calling for legislation to ensure residents are never again separated from their loved ones. The impact on residents and relatives has been devastating and we feel that it is imperative that the committee are aware of the reality of the past 12 months.

Below are experiences of some of our members in their own words.

- Just had a call from Mum's care home to say Mum had a fall last night asked carer what happened and she said she broke rail at the side of her bed and fell out. Says she spins around a lot and broke rail and fell out. I asked why I wasn't phoned last night when it happened or first thing this morning? Carer says Mum's keyworker must have had other things to do. I feel physically sick. This is my Mum we are talking about. It makes me sick thinking of poor Mum lying there defenceless.
- I just feel I'm battering my head against a brick wall. My husband is now in advanced stages of Alzheimer's. He practically lives in his bed sleeping, is on a fortified diet he has lost so much weight, has assisted eating, very depressed, and I cannot get an essential visit. At video calls he usually is asleep or talking is too much effort. He has given up but care home won't give a visit because he is not receiving palliative care. Their argument is if I get a visit other will have to be given one as well. I keep trying but getting nowhere.
- Went to see Mum today, it was awful they have them in the front dining room with the window shut, she was so happy to see me and wanted me to come in, they told her I couldn't come in and she just withdrew and looked so sad, I couldn't make a word out she said.
- There has been no indication from my husband's care home but I am not surprised as they refuse to give any designated person essential visits. Don't think I can take much more of not being able to spend time with my husband.
- Outdoor visit with my Mum today. She was in a very low mood and said that she is missing her family so much. I came away with a heavy heart, she said three times 'I'm really, really missing you all.'
- Throughout the journey at end of life, we were granted essential visits and the care home worked within their means to support this. They struggled to keep up with the paperwork of 7 Covid tests in one day, which is understandable, but still everyone got in while she was still able to react to us. Then it came down to 2 visits a day and it does beggar belief that a member of my family visited 7 days in a row and every day had to have a Covid test, while staff only need to be tested twice a week. Additionally, the strain of only being able to visit one at a time (even when visitors were from the same household) really took its toll on all of us.

- My aunt passed away while I held her hand late on Tuesday night. The care home staff couldn't have been more accommodating and caring, but she deserved more. She deserved to have all of her loving family around her in those final hours and it breaks my heart that she couldn't be afforded that right when, in reality, the risks were so low.
- My Mum was buried on Tuesday and my Dad still doesn't know. I have been granted a one off 30-minute comfort visit to tell him his wife of 65 years is dead and that he was not allowed to be at her funeral. How do I do that and then get up and walk away after half an hour not knowing when or if I will ever be allowed back in?
- My Mum has been stripped of all her rights, she has had no say in any aspect of her life for the last 11 months. I cannot believe that this is how we treat our most vulnerable, it should never, ever be allowed to happen again.
- My Mum has collapsed twice since Sunday. She recovered from covid and I think she's still weak. I never thought I would ever sit at night with my fingers crossed that she won't die before I get to see her. With agency staff going in and volunteers being recruited it's like being slapped in the face for being a relative. I'd have more luck as a delivery driver