

PE1841/D

Scottish Care submission of 22 January 2021

It is Scottish Care's position that we do not formally respond to petitions. However, we are happy to provide some general comment in relation to this particular petition.

In our view, legislation very rarely achieves the desired improvements in situations of sensitivity and nuance, such as the balancing of risk versus access in relation to care home visiting.

What is important is that all parties – in this instance care homes, relatives, Public Health officials and Scottish Government – work consensually to achieve outcomes which both protect health and promote wellbeing. We are pleased that this collaborative work is underway, with regular meetings organised between these parties to address concerns and progress our shared ambition to support and enable more care home visiting in a safe way.

Scottish Care is very aware of the deterioration of residents' health and wellbeing as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown and other restrictive measures, as reported by both relatives and care home staff. We are also very clear that family members are not merely visitors to care homes but are an essential part of someone's care and support network and should be recognised as such. We fully support the need for and realisation of care home visiting wherever possible and our engagement with members has highlighted that those who operate and work in care homes want this to happen as quickly and safely as possible too.

However, it is important to note that not everyone – including care homes, relatives and other stakeholders – agrees that visiting to care homes should be opened extensively, particularly at a point in the pandemic when health and social care services are facing unprecedented challenges, infection and death rates are particularly high and the country is dealing with an extremely infectious strain of the virus.

We continue to work collectively with the Scottish Government to inform the development and improvement of guidance to ensure that visiting measures are clear, consistent and flexible to local and individual service circumstances. We do not support a blanket approach to the severe restriction or prevention of care home visits.

It is our view that the combination of approaches currently available including the rollout of Coronavirus vaccines, testing, use of PPE and social distancing can provide the positive protective measures required to support care home visits to take place more consistently and frequently. It is therefore essential that all continue to be prioritised and utilised effectively together.

At the current time, therefore, we consider additional legislation to be an unhelpful distraction from the crucial work already underway on the ground to support care home visits.

I trust you find the above of some assistance.