

PE1841/GG

Irene Carson submission of 14 March 2021

I agree fully with this petition.

Until recent months I was of the view that in a civilised society a petition such as this would not have been necessary. Unfortunately, the lack of compassion and respect for the human rights of care home residents has shown me that I was wrong. This law is absolutely needed and it is needed now. I feel ashamed to live in a supposedly civilised country that has allowed so many vulnerable people to have been discriminated against for so long. So many families have been broken by the treatment of their relatives. So many residents are dying or have died alone.

In the early days of the pandemic when no-one was prepared, I fully understood the need for a lockdown of care homes, but I will never understand why this lockdown has been allowed to continue for a year with some care homes still locking closest loved ones out.

The impact of separation from family, on residents of care homes soon became obvious. For those able enough to enjoy outdoor visits the impact came a little later when it became too cold for visiting outdoors.

In my own situation, I have a relative in an excellent care home which has generally granted visiting within the national guidance, but the toll on my relative was obvious to see. A graph of my loved one's weight loss over time has shown that the steep drops in weight were directly related to periods where visiting was not permitted.

Due to the impact on my relative's health I have been granted essential visitor status and I feel lucky. Imagine having to feel lucky that I can now visit my loved one only because their health has deteriorated so much. The reason I feel lucky is that I know of so many with loved ones in a worse situation than mine who are still being denied the right to visit. Some are still dying alone. This is simply not right and should never be allowed to happen again. While the latest government guidance has made visiting rights clear, guidance which is not enforceable is clearly not enough. We need Anne's Law now.

Unless someone has a loved one in a care home, I don't think they appreciate how bad the situation still is for so many. Many still have no indoor visits and if they do, some are still facing physical barriers or supervision and some get the privilege of only 30 minutes once a week. This is not respecting human rights. This is not acceptable.

Many care homes have suffered from staffing shortages and suggest that they need more staff to allow relatives in. If a designated visitor was regarded as an essential care giver, who was seen as an essential part of a resident's care, they would be in the care home on an equal basis to carers, the need for additional staff to let us in would be negated.

Plenty of evidence has been gathered by the Care Home Relatives Group showing just how bad the situation has been and still is for so many people.

The Scottish Government need to Support Anne's Law now to ensure that never again can the people closest to a resident in a care home be denied contact with their closest loved ones.