

**PE1841/KK**

Amanda Shirra submission dated 14 March 2021

I fully back the above petition which calls for the Government to put into law, that each care home resident should be able to have one designated visitor.

We entered lockdown in March 2020 with the understanding that this restriction would be temporary. We reassured our loved ones of this.

However, a year on and we could not have possibly conceived of the impact on the very basic of Human Rights, including the Right to Family Relationships and the Right to Privacy.

Care Homes have had to deal with the hardest of restrictions, that were the government's response to the pandemic. Essentially locking people away for their own safety. However, as we are aware there were deaths. Many more deaths. Deaths without loved ones nearby to comfort, or to allow goodbyes. This is continuing.

To have been allowed to have just one person to be a constant in their life, to be a partner in their care would have been, I believe a lifesaver.

Family members desperately want to work alongside as partners, as they were prior to the pandemic. Using infection control would be a given. No family member would want to risk infecting their loved one or anyone else in the Care Home.

My family member entered lockdown with a full understanding, real concern and interest in what the world was facing. Now they have been engulfed and imprisoned by the restrictions that have been put in place. Essentially losing their place in the world.

With previous mental health issues being managed extremely well with the support from Care Staff and members of their family, the thought of restrictions for a short while was faced head on. We will get through this. Forever hopeful.

Months of being locked out however were then replaced with a number of supervised, distanced visits, no touch, no privacy. No rights to privacy. Feeling like a non-person.

Communication became false and stilted. No confidences exchanged, no meaningful conversations. Just chat.

This was in no way similar to the fun, loving interaction pre – pandemic.

Anxieties increased and paranoia reared its head.

My relative at present is now detached, frightened in their own thoughts and uninterested in the world around them.

Love makes us stronger and makes us resilient.

Without love, without feeling love, facing one of the worst things in their lifetime, resilience has been worn out and many of our loved ones have sadly given up.

If a child becomes separated from their parent, they first of all cry and look for them. If they do not return, they will then despair, after that they will then retreat into themselves and trust is gone. This is no different for adults who will also retreat if they are separated from their loved ones, or worse, fear that their loved ones have abandoned them. Trust is gone and the world is a different place.

The world that they have now not been part of for over a year.

Citizens, voters, employees, community members, family members, individuals.

Now with no part to play. When the time does come it will be loved ones alongside Care Home staff, working together again to ensure that they do once more play their part. For this they will need no guidance.

October 2020 brought new guidance but a new variant put paid to any of that. Apparently.

February 2021 brought "Open with Care". This was met joyously.

This was read and read again and at times relayed to Care Home Managers before they had the time to read it. "It's okay for government, they don't have to run a care home". "We need to wait on Public Health" being some standard responses.

Hearts sank once more.

We cannot rely on the good will and heart of some Care Home managers to follow guidance laid out in "Open with Care".

There must be a legal obligation to do so. Care Home Managers also need to feel safe in their roles.

Relatives need to know what they are "allowed" to do. So far this has been so different for so many across the country.

If there is a straightforward legal obligation to allow a resident a designated visitor, boundaries are set and there will be no discussion back and forth between the Care Home, Local Authority, Company Manager, Public Health and every other body who has a say in our loved one's lives.

Without this our loved ones and ourselves as relatives face a very frightening and uncertain future, continuing on the journey that has been ongoing since March 2020.

I therefore support this petition in the hope that we will eventually have Anne's Law.