

PE1841/Z

Judith Coulson submission of 7 March 2021

I am writing to support this petition. The right for one designated visitor per resident needs to be enshrined in law: We cannot rely on care homes to follow government guidance, either now, or in the future; the last year has proved that this is just not happening, in, what I believe are, the vast majority of cases.

Thousands of social care employees have worked so hard to give good care to the residents living in care homes, throughout the last year. However, many care homes, for many different reasons, have not enabled relatives to make meaningful visits to their loved ones, even when government guidance has made clear that it can happen safely, with effective personal protective equipment, and infection prevention and control.

Do we want to live in a country where restrictions on visiting care homes mean that residents are left without the possibility of meaningful contact on a regular basis *with even one member of their family*? The impact to residents over the last 12 months has been devastating in terms of the emotional and cognitive harm caused by being isolated from family and friends.

Do we want to live in a country where, even at end of life, a resident may be left without the comforting touch of a relative's hand - because the bureaucracy, and the guidance, and the delay involved in actually allowing even just one relative into a resident's room meant that it was too late? The discussions on the Care Home Relatives Scotland (Facebook) group demonstrate the anguish caused by situations like these.

Do we want to live in a country where the government only gives "guidance" to care homes? There is no obligation to follow the guidance. The evidence from the last 12 months shows that this approach is allowing care homes and care home companies to ignore the guidance if they wish, or not fully implement it.

We are one year on from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Scotland. I believe that there are care home managers out there who know that visiting can happen safely, they know that at least one relative can be enabled to visit each resident, that residents need meaningful visits from close family and friends, and that to deny them this meaningful contact has had a devastating impact on the wellbeing of residents through the months...and yet, many care home managers are prevented from demonstrating this compassionate approach due to their obligations to a head office. We can only imagine what information may be shared in the years ahead, from care home managers who wanted so much to be able to allow safe visiting, but who were obliged, instead, to follow the instructions from their head office.

The government guidance is never going to succeed in persuading every care home to do the right thing, there needs to be a statutory obligation to ensure that residents have rights.

Relatives are partners in the care of residents in care homes and the Human Rights of residents and relatives have been restricted, to a totally disproportionate extent, over the last year.

It is imperative to introduce legislation. Do what is right. We need Anne's Law.