

PE1841/LL

Deirdre Arnott submission dated 14 March 2021

I am writing in support of this petition to allow at least one designated visitor into care homes in Scotland as a legal right and not merely be left as guidance.

My 91 year old relative has been robbed off any semblance of a meaningful life since March 2020, and unbelievably in a civilised country our government and public authorities, in my opinion, seemed to think that this was, and is, acceptable.

The Open with Care guidance issued from Scottish Government in February, following lobbying from Care Home Relatives Scotland amongst others, has finally acknowledged what families knew all along- that enforced and prolonged isolation and separation from loved ones and from society severely impact on a person's physical and emotional wellbeing.

However, having eventually accepted this crucial premise the government, in my opinion, continues to fail care home residents and their families by not going further and insisting on immediate improvements in opening the locked doors.

Whilst 'Open with Care' remains guidance and is not legally binding it will allow care home managers, local authorities and others to interpret and implement the guidance in a myriad of ways- some of which are sadly the absolute bare minimum- resulting in endless confusion and stress to residents, their families and indeed to the care staff who are left struggling to be all things to all people.

A designated 'visitor' approach accepts that we are essential care-givers in supporting the mental health and well-being of residents.

It will enable the rebuilding of trust and partnership working between staff, families and residents. This can only be to the benefit of all stakeholders and lead to a better and more modern and sustainable care sector.

It will in some ways start to address the mistakes and fears that allowed this inhumane treatment of care home residents to be allowed to continue long after lessons had been learned in the first stages of this most awful pandemic.

It may even, over time, repair the intense pain and loss endured by this most vulnerable group in our country

I fully support petition PE01841 and urge the Scottish Government to back "Annes Law" and show leadership and compassion by enshrining the rights of residents in care homes so that future generations never have to be separated in this shameful way again.

We want care home residents to be safe - they are our beloved family members. The growing body of evidence and expert opinion over the past months shows that with

the correct 'Infection, Prevention and Control' procedures in place this is very achievable. A family visitor poses no greater, and probably less, risk to residents than any staff member providing daily personal care. It is recognised that Covid 19, or a variant, will be around for a long time and so we must all learn to live with it, and not be locked up from it.

We also want, as do the residents, that they be given back their rights to dignity, equality, some freedoms and to the most precious of all human rights – a family life.

Surely these are not incompatible?

Surely Scotland has the capacity to resolve this?

I ask that the petition is included in the legacy document to the next Parliament when action should be prioritised to secure some rights for vulnerable people in all care homes.