

Barchester Healthcare Ltd,
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12 Finsbury Square,
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Date: 21 December 2021

Dear residents and relatives

Christmas Visiting – 24th, 25th and 26th December inclusive

As promised we are writing to update you on our approach to visiting over the all-important Christmas days of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Thank you for your continued support as we navigate this time, balancing the caution that we strongly believe is needed with the transmission rates of COVID-19 continuing to increase at a fast pace, along with our residents and their families wanting to see each other over Christmas.

As we're sure many of you know SAGE, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, met at the end of last week, and made some very concerning points around Omicron particularly. The information coming out stated that the transmission is potentially 3 times higher in households, and there is no evidence currently that Omicron is any less severe than the Delta variant at this stage, but the vaccination programme continues to be our best defence. As we know you understand, our over-arching concerns are for the safety and health of our residents, not only in doing all we can to protect them from COVID-19, but also to protect our staff, to ensure that staffing levels are in place to deliver the quality of care that both you, and we expect.

Balancing this information with some residents and families wanting to see each other over the Christmas period, we will be making the following adjustments to visiting for a short period of time from Friday 24th December to Sunday 26th December inclusive:

1. Extending visiting indoors to include one Essential Care Giver, as currently in place, **PLUS** one other named visitor, to enable more of those closest to the resident into the home to celebrate Christmas. We continue to ask that they are fully vaccinated including the Booster dose, where eligible, and show proof of this.
2. End of life visits will continue as previously outlined.
3. We ask that Essential Care Givers continue to have a weekly PCR test as they will be visiting more regularly. The other named visitor, or any visitors that are visiting at end of life do not need a PCR test, but everyone must show proof of a negative LFD test taken that day and before entering the home.
4. We continue to balance the wellbeing of our residents wanting to see loved ones with the risk of COVID-19 on all of our residents living in the home, and therefore ask that you think very carefully when considering taking a resident out of the home for Christmas. If this is something that you think is important to do, the General Manager will complete a robust Risk Assessment and discuss with you what is possible. However we will insist that a PCR test is taken on return, and a



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Celebrating life

minimum of 72 hours isolation will be needed but may be up to 14 days depending on the level of risk the outing poses. A PCR test will also take place on day 7 of returning, and LFD testing will need to be in place for 10 days.


5. Our visiting suites, which are available in most of our homes, continue to be available to individuals who are not fully vaccinated, and any others that are not named visitors, who can visit anytime, if they are booked in, and can celebrate Christmas in a secure COVID-19 environment. If the home you want to visit doesn't have a visiting suite please discuss the options with the General Manager.
6. As always video calls will be supported to wish Merry Christmas virtually, which we know is not the same, but many of you see as a good alternative.

As previously mentioned all visiting options should be booked via our visitor booking system on our website, which we know many of you are very familiar with. Sadly, if there are any recent cases of Covid-19, visiting may be further restricted in line with public health guidance, and at the minimum will be Essential Care Givers only. If that is the case the General Manager will let you know. Also please visit with caution, and do not come if you have symptoms, or if anyone you have been in touch with is isolating.

We are mindful of the Government guidance, and are also conscious that this is likely to change, but understand the need for certainty at this important time. We have also engaged with the relevant regulators who are aware of our position, and we are constantly reviewing the situation, and strongly believe a cautious approach continues to be needed, whilst appreciating that you want to celebrate Christmas with your loved ones. The above will be in place for those all-important three days, when we will then revert to the position we informed you of on the 13th December unless any further information is available, which may enable us to change our approach.

If you do have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us with your queries and concerns, or your gratitude and thanks, and we will continue to do our best to respond as quickly as we can. You can do this through the General Manager or Hospital Director, or through our team at feedback@barchester.com. Our only ask is that you do this with kindness and courtesy to the teams that are doing their very best to help, and we know you will.

Sending our very best wishes to you and your families.



Dr Pete Calveley
CEO Barchester Healthcare



Julia Atherton
Director of Nursing

We are sending this with the best intentions and with the latest data we have. If this causes offence we are deeply sorry

