

# 'End scandal of care home bans on family visits'

## EXCLUSIVE

By **Giles Sheldrick**  
Chief Reporter

A COALITION of care campaigners has demanded an end to "harmful isolation practices" that continue to deny the elderly basic visiting rights.

It is almost two years since the Covid crisis first erupted and tens of thousands in care homes remain locked up and alone.

Now, the Relatives & Residents Association charity and pressure group Rights for Residents have written to health and care leaders begging them to end the scandal.

Several other organisations representing care providers and users have signed the joint letter which highlights the "severe, detrimental impact" that isolation from family and friends is having.

The letter calls on care givers to fulfil their legal duties by ensuring restrictions on human contact are "proportionate".

Helen Wildbore, of the Relatives & Residents Association, said: "Our helpline hears daily about the devastating impact isolation is having on people living in care. Lifelong

**Action urged...**  
**Helen Wildbore**



**Campaign...Jenny Morrison and Diane Mayhew with Ruthie, centre**

bonds have been broken, relationships damaged and people with dementia think they've been abandoned.

"For older people in the final stages of life, time is precious. They want to live, not merely to exist. Local authorities, public health teams and care providers must work together with residents and their families to ensure rights are protected before it is too late for too many more."

The Daily Express has led the way in exposing a postcode lottery where some care homes are open, while some are staying shut.

In September, the campaigners

Rights for Residents, led by the West End actor Ruthie Henshall, delivered a petition signed by 250,000 to Downing Street demanding "Gloria's Law".

It was named for Ruthie's mum who died at 87 in a care home during lockdown.

The campaigners are calling for residents to have a legal right to an essential care giver, but so far ministers have only suggested it as best practice rather than making it legally binding.

A Rights for Residents member survey found nearly a quarter had been denied ECG status.

ECGs are family members who have a unique relationship with loved ones. At the moment access for them is not legally guaranteed and still depends on providers.

Jenny Morrison, co-founder of Rights for Residents, said: "Removing this essential source of support is increasing pressure on exhausted care staff, at a time of extreme staff shortages and sickness levels."

Campaigners say the impact of loneliness on residents has far outweighed the impact of Covid.

Dr Caroline Emmer De Albuquerque Green, of King's College London, said academic research "highlights the devastating effects of cutting people off from their loved ones" on their mental and physical health.