

## Care Home Visiting Restrictions in England, April-September 2022 Full Report

### A survey of friends and relatives of residents

#### Background

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, government guidance advised various visiting restrictions be put in place for care settings across the UK. This guidance was updated and changed several times between 2020-2022, to reflect changes in the course of the pandemic, general infection rates, vaccine rollout and also to better balance restrictions against the serious risks to residents of continued isolation from loved ones.

In line with the government's 'living with covid' plan, all remaining covid-related restrictions for the general UK population were lifted at the start of Feb 2022. However, it was almost another two months until care home residents benefited from the new plan when, at the end of March, all government-advised restrictions on visiting within care settings in England were lifted, with the exception of infection prevention and control measures during an active outbreak. The 'Essential Care Giver' (ECG) role was removed from the government guidance and instead, during an outbreak, it was stated residents could have one visitor.

In July the government guidance was further updated to clarify that this meant 'one visitor *at a time*', with no limit on the number of different visitors allowed. One consideration behind this decision was the pressure put on families when care settings only allowed one nominated individual to visit during outbreaks. Rolling outbreaks can last weeks at a time and individuals were often trying to balance the ECG role with work/other caring responsibilities, or travelling long distances; the 'carer burnout' that resulted was in many cases seriously affecting their ability to provide the level of support needed by their loved one.

While care homes in England are not legally required to follow government guidance on restrictions, they are expected by the Care Quality Commission to do so. Despite the changes to guidance detailed above, over the months that have followed, the 'Rights for Residents' campaign group and the charity 'Relatives and Residents Association' have continued to receive concerning reports from members and followers that their loved ones are still having visits restricted above and beyond the 'one person at a time' rule during outbreaks. In some cases, visiting restrictions are also reported to remain in place outside of outbreak situations. When challenged, many relatives report that care settings are informing them the additional restrictions were advised by local Public Health teams or the Local Authority.

#### Aim of survey

The aim of this survey was to collect information on the proportion of care settings that followed the updated government guidance in the period following the guidance change (April-Sept 2022). It also aimed to examine the reasons given by care settings where additional visiting restrictions were imposed.

Specifically, the survey was designed to provide information on:

- The proportion of care settings applying additional restrictions of any kind during outbreaks (*additional* restrictions meaning restrictions that go beyond the ‘one at a time rule’ stated in the guidance)
- What types of additional restrictions are most commonly being applied in these cases
- The most common reasons given by care providers for imposing these additional restrictions
- Whether visiting restrictions are still being imposed in a more general way outside of known outbreak situations and if so, what types of restrictions are most commonly being applied

## Survey Design & Implementation

The survey was designed using GoogleForms. A link to the survey was posted on the ‘Rights for Residents’ and ‘Relatives and Residents Association’ social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) several times over a six-day period from 20/09/22-26/09/22, with an accompanying message encouraging group members/followers to complete the survey. The only pre-requisite to completing the survey was that the care home resident must live in a care setting in England (as the government guidance the survey relates to, only applies in England). This pre-requisite was clearly stated in the survey title and introductory information.

The survey consisted of two different main pathways, which responders were directed to depending on their answers to questions (see **Appendix A** for flowchart of survey design).

‘**Pathway 1**’ was designed to examine visiting restrictions in place specifically during outbreak situations, in cases where the responder indicated there had been a coronavirus outbreak at the care setting since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. Data from this pathway provides the main data for this report and is detailed in **Section 1**.

‘**Pathway 2**’ was designed to examine visiting restrictions that may have been applied in other situations (where information about restrictions in outbreak situations specifically could not be supplied). This may have been because there had been no outbreak at the care setting, the responder was not sure if there had been any outbreaks, or the responder was not sure what visiting restrictions had specifically been applied because of the outbreak (if one did occur). Data from this pathway are detailed in **Section 2**.

The survey varied in length from 4-9 questions, depending on individual responses. Questions were a mixture of checkbox options (with responders only able to select one of the options listed for each question), multiple choice options (where responders could tick all options that applied) and free-text answers. All but the free text answers were compulsory, requiring a response before the responder could move to the next question.

## 1. Overview of Survey Results

The survey opened at 9am 20/09/22 and was closed to responses at 9am on 26/09/22. 657 responses were received over this 6-day period.

### Geographical Overview of Responses

Region of England	% Of Responses
North West	20.7 %
South East	16.6 %
Yorkshire & the Humber	14.9 %
South West	11.3 %
West Midlands	9.4 %
North East	9.1 %
East Midlands	7.8 %
East of England	5.9 %
London	3.5 %
Don't know	0.8 %

**Question 1** asked responders to indicate which region of the UK their loved one's care home is in. The purpose of this question was a) to assess whether different regions of England were well represented in the responses and b) to provide a mechanism to later drill down into data on a regional basis if required. Table 1 shows the % of total responses by region. All regions were represented in the responses, with the North West, South East and Yorkshire regions together accounting for just over half of all responses, and the other 6 regions together accounting for just under half the responses.

**Table 1: Distribution of the 657 Survey Responses, By Region**

### Proportion of Care Settings Experiencing an Outbreak Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022

Question 2 was applied to all 657 survey responders:

**Q2: "Since 1st April 2022, have there been any outbreaks of coronavirus at your loved one's care setting?"**

- Yes
- No\*
- Don't Know \*

\* Those replying 'No' (194 responders) or 'don't know' (68 responders) were directed to 'Pathway 2' (reported in Section 2 of this report).

Those replying 'yes' (395 responders) were directed to Question 3:

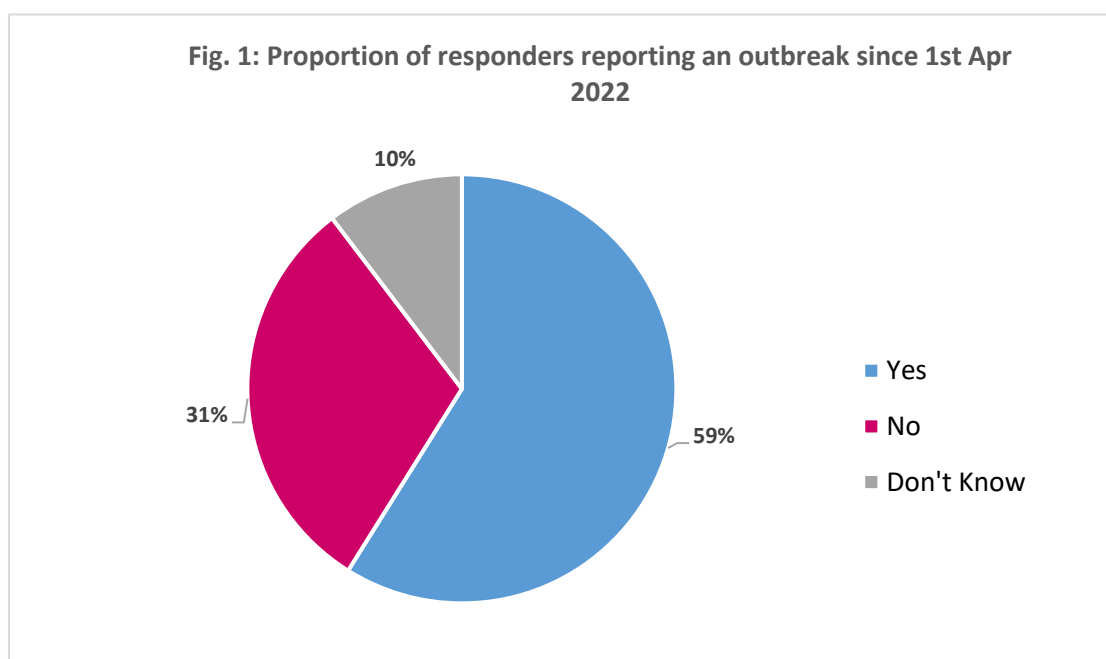
**Q3: "In what month did the most recent\* coronavirus outbreak occur at your loved one's care setting? "(If the outbreak spanned more than one month, please select the month it began)**

- Apr 2022
- May 2022
- June 2022
- July 2022
- August 2022
- Sept 2022
- Last outbreak began before April 2022 \*\*
- Don't know

\* 'Most recent' was specified to direct responders to provide the most up to date information available if there had been multiple outbreaks in this time period.

\*\* This option was included as an extra validation check, to filter out any responses where the responder knew the outbreak had actually commenced prior to April (i.e. prior to government visiting restrictions being lifted). 8 responders selected this response so were re-classified as 'no outbreak since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr' and re-directed to Pathway 2. This left 387 responders confirming an outbreak had taken place since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 2022.

Overall, 59% (387/657) of all responders confirmed their loved one's care setting had experienced at least one coronavirus outbreak that began after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 (**Fig. 1**). These 387 responders continued on 'Pathway 1' of the survey; their data are presented in Section 1 of the report below.



The distribution of the 387 outbreaks by the month in which the outbreak began are shown in **Table 2**. 35 selected 'don't know' for the month. These responses remained in 'Pathway 1' alongside the responses where the precise date was known.

Month outbreak began	No. of Responses	% Of Total	% In Time Period
Apr 2022	47	12.1 %	Apr-Jun: 38%
May 2022	45	11.6 %	
June 2022	55	14.2 %	
July 2022	87	22.5 %	Jul-Sep: 53 %
August 2022	61	15.8 %	
September 2022	57	14.7 %	
Don't know	35	9.0 %	Don't know: 9%

**Table 2: Breakdown of responses by month in which the most recent outbreak began.**

Overall, 38% of all outbreaks reported occurred in the first half of the time period being surveyed (Apr-Jun) and 53% occurred in the second half of this time period (Jul-Sep), with 9% unsure of the precise start date. Therefore, we can be confident that the survey data does adequately reflect the recent situation and is not skewed towards earlier outbreaks occurring just after the guidance was changed. The 387 responders reporting outbreaks between Apr-Sep were asked to provide further information on visiting restrictions in place during the outbreak. These data are presented in Section 1 of this report.

## SECTION 1

### VISITING RESTRICTIONS APPLIED IN CARE SETTINGS DURING OUTBREAKS

As detailed above, 387 responses were carried forward into 'Pathway 1' – looking at visiting restrictions during outbreaks that began after 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 2022. These 387 responders were directed to a further question:

**Q4: “During the most recent coronavirus outbreak, were any visiting restrictions applied by the care setting?”**

- *YES – there were some visiting restrictions during the outbreak*
- *NO – there were no visiting restrictions of any kind during the outbreak \**
- *Don't Know \*\**

\* Those answering 'NO' were directed to the end of the survey.

\*\* Those answering 'don't know' were re-directed into pathway 2 of the survey.

89% (343) of the responders indicated there were visiting restrictions of some type in place during the outbreak.

These 343 responders were then asked two further questions to find out whether the restrictions applied during the outbreak went beyond those stipulated in government guidance for outbreak management:

**Q5: “During the outbreak, were residents limited to only one visitor at a time?”**

- *YES*
- *NO*
- *Don't know*

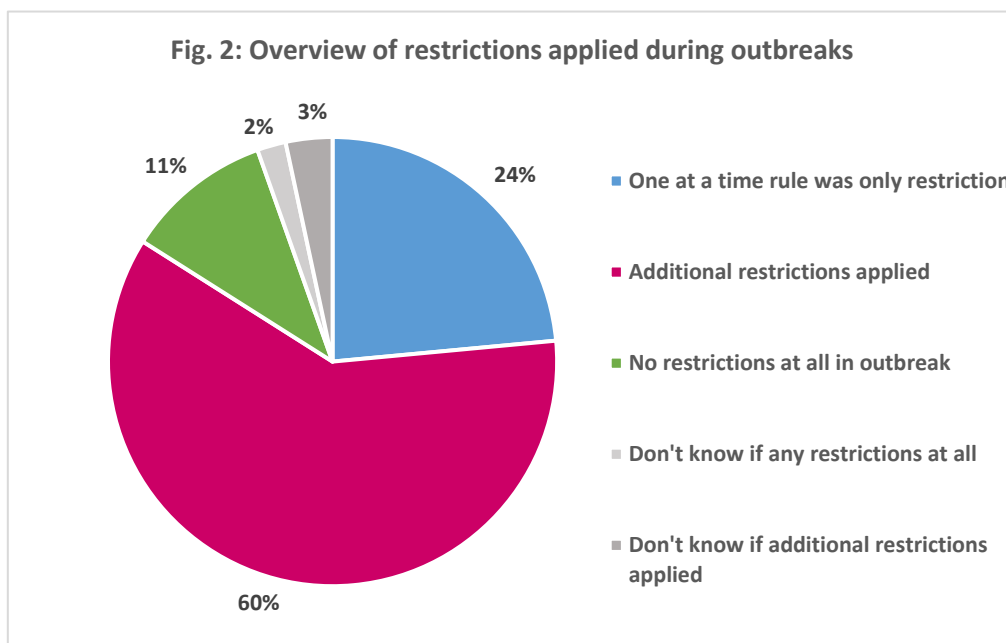
**Q6: Aside from the 'one visitor at a time' rule, were there any other visiting restrictions during the outbreak?**

- *YES*
- *NO - the 'one at a time' rule was the only restriction in place \**
- *Don't know \*\**

\* Those answering 'NO' were directed to the end of the survey.

\*\* Those answering 'don't know' were re-directed into pathway 2 of the survey.

Combined, the results of Q4-6 showed that out of all the outbreaks reported between Apr-Sep 2022, **60%** (234 responses) **involved additional visiting restrictions**, aside from the 'one at a time' rule that was stipulated in the government guidance (**Fig. 2**).



## WHAT OTHER RESTRICTIONS WERE APPLIED DURING THE OUTBREAKS?

The 234 responders who indicated that ‘other’ restrictions applied were directed to the following question:

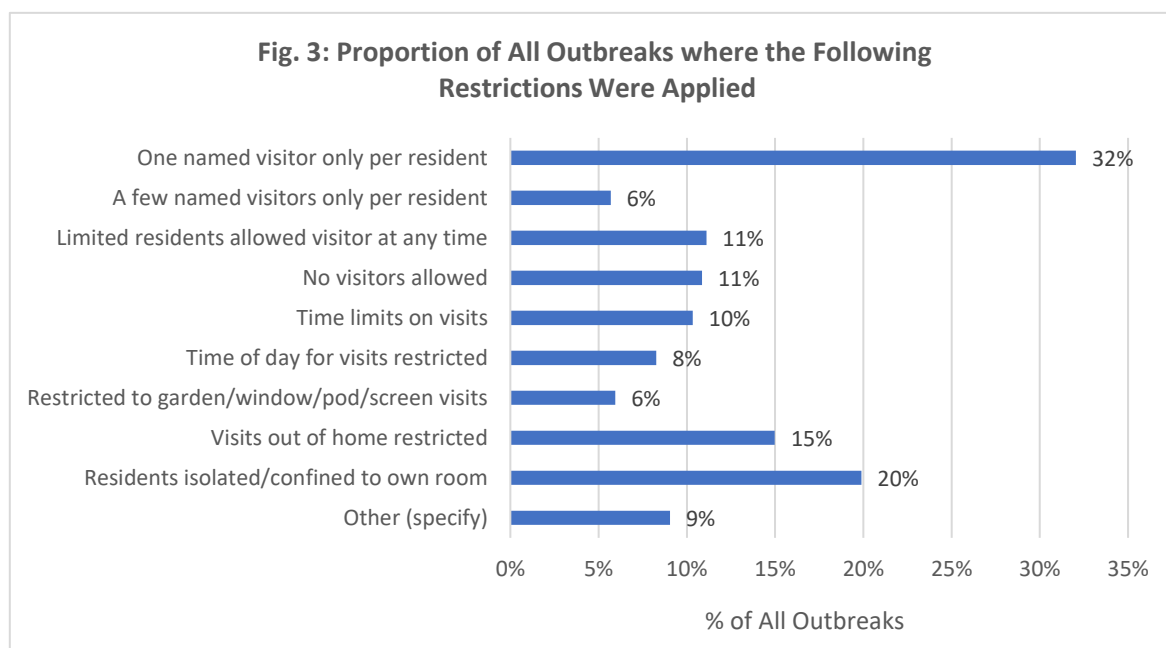
**Q7: “Which of the following additional restrictions were applied by the care setting during the outbreak? (Please tick all that apply)”**

- *Only one named visitor allowed to visit throughout the whole outbreak (rather than a different person each visit)*
- *Only a few named visitors allowed to visit during the whole outbreak*
- *Restriction on number of residents allowed a visitor at any one time (e.g. to reduce footfall in the home)*
- *No visitors at all were allowed during outbreak*
- *Time limits were imposed on visits*
- *Visits were only allowed at certain times of day*
- *Visits were restricted to gardens, windows, pods or screens*
- *Visits out of the care home were not allowed or were limited*
- *Residents were isolated or confined to their own rooms during outbreak*
- *Other restrictions not listed above were also applied (please specify below) \**
- *Don't know*

\* Note: 40 responders selected the option ‘other restrictions not listed’ but of these, only 12 had not also selected any of the other options. For these 12, to check whether they actually met the criteria of ‘additional restrictions were applied’, responses were assessed and re-assigned to ‘involves one of the other listed restrictions’ or ‘specified restrictions fall within guidance’ (**Appendix B**). Of these, 5 were re-assigned as ‘fall within guidance’. These 5 cases were therefore not counted in the total for ‘additional restrictions applied’ and instead were re-assigned to the group that responded ‘no additional restrictions applied’ in Q6. This adjustment is already incorporated into the reporting of data for Q6 (in Fig. 2 above).

The frequency with which each of these options was selected in the 234 responses to Q7 is summarised in **Appendix C**. The frequency of each restriction was converted to a percentage occurrence of each restriction as a proportion of *all the outbreaks* reported in the survey (387

outbreaks) in order to give an indication of the overall frequency of these restrictions during outbreaks. These results are shown in **Fig. 3:**



- The most common additional restriction applied was **‘only one named visitor allowed’** which was reported in **32% (1 in 3)** of all outbreaks.
- Residents were **not permitted any visitors at all** in **11% (around 1 in 9)** of outbreaks
- **Visits out of the home** were restricted in **15% (around 1 in 7)** of all outbreaks
- **Residents were isolated or confined** to their own room in **20% (1 in 5)** of all outbreaks reported \*

\* **Note:** our survey did not ask whether the responder’s loved one had tested positive for Covid so these results must be considered in light of the fact that some of these residents may have been Covid+ when isolated, which falls within guidance.

As stated earlier in this report, government guidance was updated in July 2022 to clarify the guidance meant ‘one visitor at a time’, with no limit on number of different visitors. As our survey looked at outbreaks dating from 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 2022, it is possible that the high proportion applying the ‘only one named visitor’ restriction may arise mainly from the earlier months when there may still have been some confusion around the changes to guidance made.

To assess how far the figures detailed above could be explained by initial delay in uptake of new guidance in the earlier months, we looked at how the frequency of the following restrictions varied by month, to see if this changed over the course of the time being surveyed:

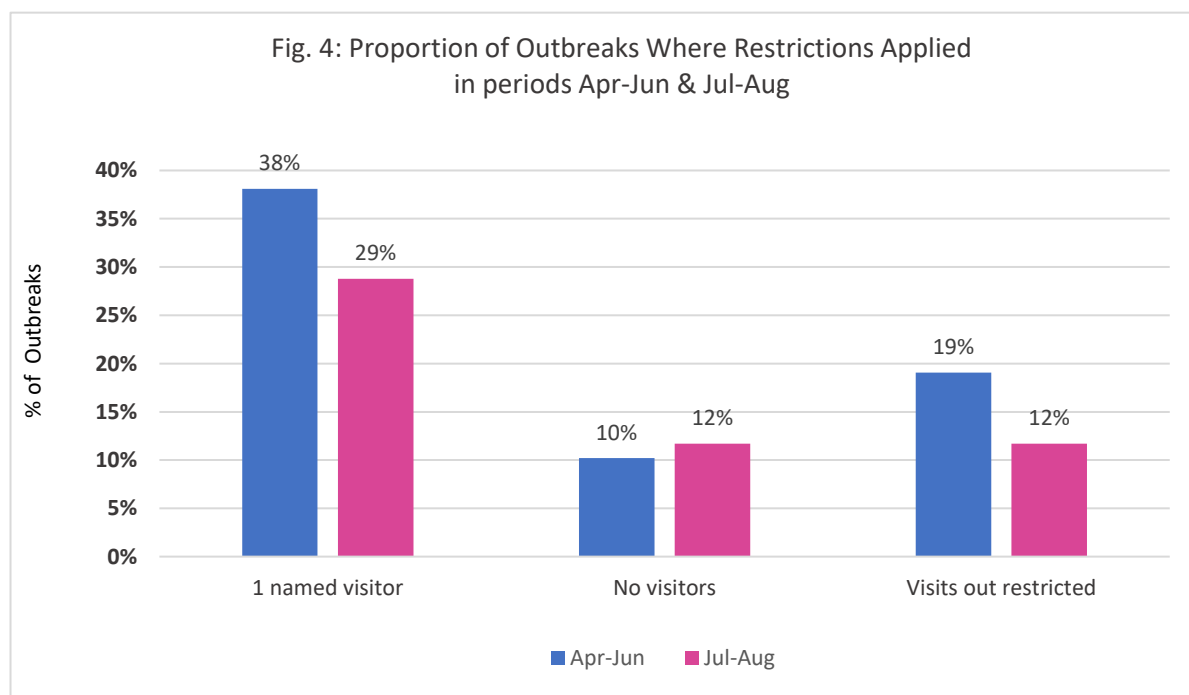
- Only one named visitor per resident during outbreak
- No visitors at all during outbreak
- Visits out of home not allowed/limited during outbreak

The results month by month are detailed in **Appendix D** and summarised in **Table 3**:

	<b>% Of total outbreaks where restriction was applied:</b>					
	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>
<b>One named visitor only</b>	40 %	36 %	38 %	33 %	25 %	26 %
<b>No visitors allowed</b>	13 %	13 %	5 %	10 %	20 %	5 %
<b>Visits out of home restricted</b>	17 %	16 %	24 %	10 %	15 %	11 %

**Table 3: Proportion of outbreaks where each restriction was applied, by month in which the outbreak began**

A comparison of the periods Apr-Jun (before guidance was clarified) and Jul-Aug (after guidance was clarified) is shown in **Fig. 4**:



These data show that although the proportion of outbreaks applying ‘one named visitor only’ did decrease between the period Apr-Jun and Jul-Sep, the frequency of this restriction remained significant even in the later period, still being applied in 29% (almost 1 in 3) of outbreaks reported in the months Jul-Sep.

Similarly, restrictions on visits out of the care home fell between the period Apr-Jun and Jul-Sep, but this restriction was still being reported in 12% (around 1 in 8) of outbreaks in the months Jul-Sep.

The proportion of outbreaks where no visitors were allowed at all actually increased slightly in the later period, with this rule in place in 12% (around 1 in 8) of reported outbreaks in Jul-Sep.



These data show that the additional outbreak restrictions reported in our survey cannot be attributed simply to an initial delay in uptake of new guidance, as these restrictions were still being reported at a significant level in the period Jul-Sep.

## WHAT REASONS WERE GIVEN FOR THE ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS?

The 234 responders who had indicated that ‘additional’ restrictions applied in Q7, were asked to answer the following question:

**Q8: “Did the care setting mention they were following rules, advice or guidance from any of the following organisations when applying these restrictions? (Please tick all that apply)”**

- *Public Health Team / Public Health England / PHE*
- *UK Health Security Agency / UKHSA*
- *Director of Public Health*
- *Local Health Protection Team*
- *Infection Control Team*
- *Local Authority / Council*
- *Social Care Team / Director of Social Care*
- *Head Office of Care Home*
- *Following Government guidance*
- *Other organisation not listed above (please specify below)*
- *They did not mention reasons / I did not ask*
- *Don't know*

The aim of Q8 was to assess how often care homes stated that the additional restrictions were being applied on the advice of local Public Health or Local Authority teams, who between them have a role in advising their local care homes during outbreak management.

In practice, there is a lot of different terminology used by care homes when referring to these external organisations; this may reflect differences in local terminology and/or local procedures in different local authority areas, as well as changes in organisational structure in recent years (e.g., Public Health England being replaced by UKHSA). To reflect this, we included several different terms in the options to cover the different terminology in use.

In order to examine the role of these organisations, we looked at the outbreaks where each of the following three restrictions were reported:

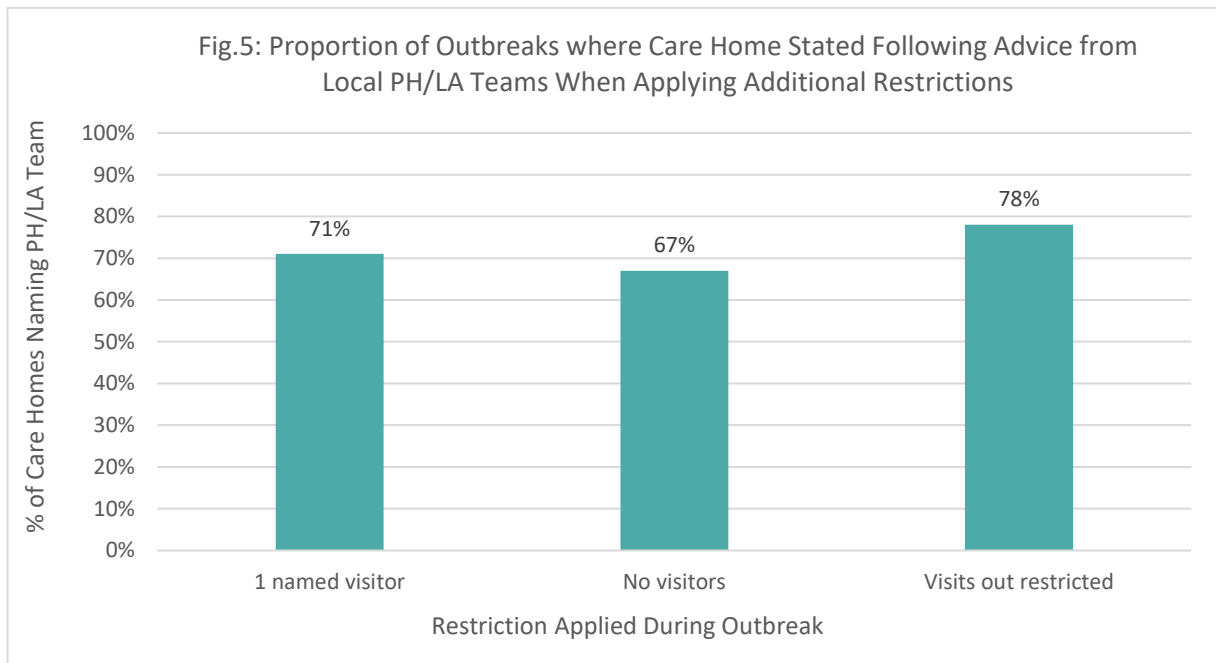
- One named visitor only;
- No visitors at all
- Visits out not allowed/limited

For outbreaks where each of these restrictions were applied, we looked at the proportion where the responder indicated the care home mentioned they were following advice from local Public Health or Local Authority teams, this being defined as one or more of the following options being selected in Q8:

- *Public Health Team / Public Health England / PHE*
- *UK Health Security Agency / UKHSA*
- *Director of Public Health*
- *Local Health Protection Team*

- *Infection Control Team*
- *Local Authority / Council*
- *Social Care Team / Director of Social Care*

The proportion of responses indicating the care home stated they were following advice of local Public Health/Local Authority Teams, for each of the three restrictions, is summarised in **Fig. 5:**



These results show a high proportion of the care homes stated they were applying additional restrictions on advice of Local Public Health and/or Local Authority teams. (For more detailed overview of month-by-month breakdown of these data, see **Appendix D**).

**Additional information in relation to visiting restrictions during outbreaks**

Responders were invited at the end of the survey to leave any further comments relating to visiting restrictions in a free-text box. They also had the opportunity to leave free text responses in the ‘other restrictions applied – please specify’ field of Q7. Some of the responses that relate specifically to restrictions during outbreaks and the impact these had are highlighted below.

**Restrictions on numbers of visits / number of different visitors:**

*“They did not allow the one visitor to every resident rule said it was ECG only, yet hadn’t given anybody ECG”*

*“Still working on essential caregiver role which is ridiculous. They blame xxxx council who have been heavy handed in this pandemic”.*

*"Only allowing one named person to visit, which was me, put a huge strain on me as I work full time".*

*"At first it was no visitors other than essential care. I spoke directly to the manager to ask why if both myself and my mum were negative, why couldn't I see her in the garden? Only then were the rules reviewed. It makes no sense to deprive healthy people of fresh air".*

*"As mentioned residents were limited to one person visiting per day. So when my immobile dad when to see my mum, with my brother assisting him, they did not allow my dad to be dropped off in reception by my brother for him to be given a wheelchair and taken to my mums room by a carer from the home as this was seen as two people visiting".*

*"We've had a Number of shut downs through out the year latest started in July... No alternative visiting was allowed, I've questioned this on number of times and even called head office which I'm still waiting on response...It's our loved ones that are affected . My family is lucky to have access to iPad but the others don't and when family have called to check on loved ones, there's no system no answer phone or extension to use".*

*"No consistency. Another visitor was allowed in because he had a covid passport".*

*"My mum is on the ground floor where no one had tested positive. One named visitor ... was allowed - the same person throughout- even though I challenged this....I pointed out that the one named visitor was not the current government guidance but was told they were following the rules from public health. The staff in the home thought the restrictions made no sense but the manager and deputy don't seem to challenge anything and just accept what they are told to do".*

#### **Restrictions to timing or location of visits:**

*"An appointment has to be made and this meant sometimes I couldn't visit"*

*"There are still restrictions as of sept 20th have to meet my parent in a shed outside we have to wear a mask, gloves and apron, we are not allowed inside the home and if anyone else has booked the shed that we are not allowed to visit"*

*"Only able to visit in Mums room. If she was sat in the lounge enjoying the time with other residents I would have to drag her back to her room if I wanted to spend time with her. Even though several different residents walk in and out of her room almost every half an hour!"*

*"My care home still appears to have a pod for visits although I am allowed in as I am a ECG (even though that doesn't exist anymore). Basically, the manager does not want things to go back to normal".*

*"Mums home has 2 floors. Upstairs no visits downstairs could have visitors. Staff worked between the 2 floors".*

*"Based on how these restrictions affected dad, ie- only in his room and time limited I was told to one hour!! Just caused further upset and extreme anxiety! Its impossible for a dementia patient to understand restrictions and by the time you have settled into the visit .. time up is*

*called!! .....they are not prisoners! Yet being treated like one! Time is everything when dealing with dementia! Restrictions on time shouldn't apply at all to a visit.*

*"Doing [during] outbreak I wasn't applied [allowed] in to home but I refused to let them stop me seeing my brother so he came outside to a bench. I am his only visitor and it was totally ridiculous as he wasn't positive"*

*"The home was adamant that they were sticking to covid restrictions which meant appointment only in their hub no relatives allowed in the home.... My sister contacted the CQC who in turn got in touch with the home and suddenly they relaxed visiting and we are now allowed back in the home. This was July 2022".*

### **Restrictions to visits out / residents isolated in rooms:**

*"... the unit that was affected involved all residents isolated in their room irrespective of testing negative and not allowed out of home."*

*"Not allowing Dad to go out had a negative impact on his mental health. If this doesn't change, this winter will be hard as more outbreaks are inevitable".*

*"I would like to talk about my brother being restricted to his room and not being permitted to go outside during a coronavirus out breaks. Alongside having one daily visitor, residents must not be prevented from leaving their room or care home".*

*"I'm angry that my son is kept like a prison again because a few staff had Covid. The rest of the staff could carry on with their lives but my son spent another 10 days stuck indoors affecting his mental health yet again... My son has lost so much weight through Covid times through anxiety. I'm so so angry that they continue to be treated so differently to the rest of the UK"*

*"Was told we couldn't take mum out because she could be a risk to the general public even though she didn't have covid"*

### **Impact of poor communication during outbreaks:**

*"When I challenged the care home they immediately said I could visit when I wanted to as could my sister but they didn't make this available without asking so I guess other residents' loved ones probably stayed away".*

*"There was very little advice given by the care home on who could visit. I asked them to publish the latest government advice that allowed every resident at least one visitor even during outbreaks, but they failed to do so. They still referred to 'essential carers' even though this term had been superseded. Some relatives and friends thought there was a blanket restriction on visiting".*

*"No telephone calls were allowed [during outbreak] as they couldn't disinfect the phone!"*

*"We are told that once they have two or more positive tests they lock down. We are never told whether its staff or residents that have tested positive. I believe that on some occasions it*

*could be staff testing positive, they are then at home but the impact is on all the residents and their families/friends etc”.*

*“Now out of outbreak but wasn't communicated to us, we had to find out”*

*“They don't know the current legislation - I have pointed out the changes - they are finding out and getting back to me!!!”*

*“Ignored requests to follow govt guidelines, CQC were not helpful , ignored LA guidance when it was reviewed and changed in line with govt guidance”*

## SECTION 2

### VISITING RESTRICTIONS APPLIED IN CARE SETTINGS OUTSIDE OF KNOWN OUTBREAK SITUATIONS

291 responders were directed to pathway 2 of the survey (this may have occurred at various points of the survey depending on individual response's; see **Appendix A** for the various routes into 'pathway 2'). These 291 included:

- 202 who had reported there was no outbreak since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 2022
- 68 did not know if there was an outbreak since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 2022
- 8 who had reported there was an outbreak since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr but they were not sure whether any restrictions were applied specifically during the outbreak
- 13 who had reported there was an outbreak since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr but they weren't sure whether any *additional* restrictions were applied in response to the outbreak, other than the 'one at a time' rule

The purpose of pathway 2 was to collect more general data on visiting restrictions in cases where there was either no known outbreak since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 2022 OR there was a known outbreak but the responder was unsure what restrictions were applied specifically in response to the outbreak.

We cannot rule out that some of these restrictions may actually have been applied in response to an outbreak, but the responder was just not aware of this. Therefore, care must be taken in interpreting all of these restrictions as having definitely occurred 'outside of an outbreak'. However, given the specific responders that were filtered into pathway 2 (see bullet points above) any restrictions reported here could be said to have been applied '*outside of a known outbreak response*'.

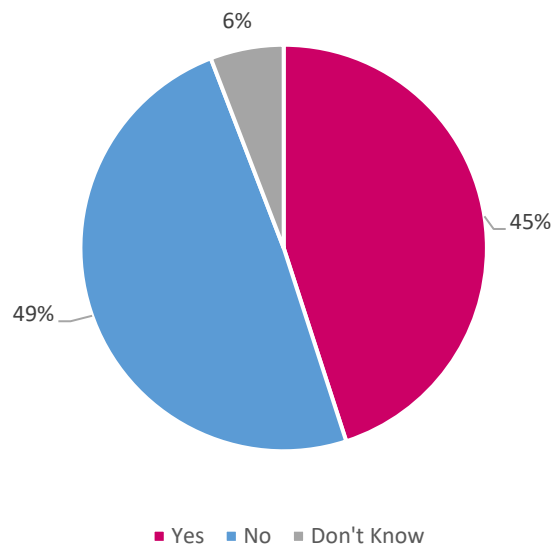
The 291 responders on Pathway 2 were asked the following question:

**Q9: “Since 1st April 2022, have there been any visiting restrictions in place, at any time, at your loved one's care setting? (whether or not due to an outbreak)”**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Of these 291 responders, 45% (131) reported there had been some visiting restrictions in place at some point since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 2022 (**Fig. 6**).

Fig. 6: Proportion of Pathway 2 Responders Reporting Any Visiting Restrictions since 1st Apr 2022

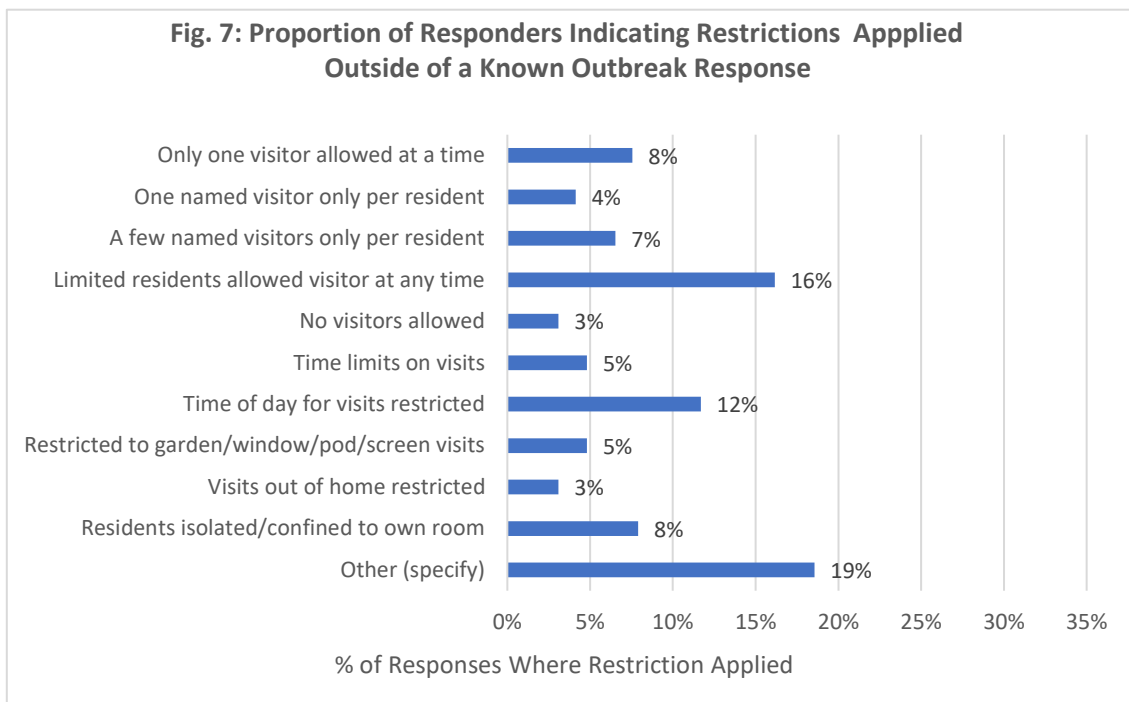


The 131 responders who said some restrictions were applied were then asked the following question:

**Q10: “Which of the following visiting restrictions have been in place at any point since 1st April 2022? (Please tick all that apply)”**

- Only one visitor allowed at a time per resident
- Each resident restricted to one named visitor only
- Each resident limited to a few named visitors only
- Restriction on number of residents allowed a visitor at any one time (e.g. to reduce footfall in the home)
- No visitors allowed at all
- Time limit imposed on visits
- Visits only allowed at certain times of day
- Visits restricted to gardens, windows, pods or screens
- Visits out of the care home not allowed or were limited
- Residents isolated or confined to their own rooms
- Other restrictions not listed above were applied (please specify below)
- Don't know

The frequency of each response is detailed in **Appendix E** and the data are presented as a proportion of all the responders for Pathway 2 (291) in **Fig. 7** below, to give an indication of how widespread each of these restrictions are in general, outside of a known outbreak response:



The results from pathway 2 compared to pathway 1 suggest visiting restrictions overall were less common outside of a known outbreak response in the period Apr-Sep. This would be anticipated, as all government restrictions (outside of outbreaks) were lifted at the end of March.

However, while restrictions were less frequent, our results show there were still significant proportions of care homes applying visiting restrictions during this period even outside of a known outbreak response. Notably in pathway 2 of our survey, responders reported that at some point since 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 2022 the following restrictions had applied:

- **16% of responders (around 1 in 6)** said the care setting **limited the number of residents allowed visitors** in the home at any one time
- **12% (around 1 in 8)** **limited the times of day** visits were allowed
- **11% (1 in 9)** restricted residents to either **one or a few named visitors**
- **5% (1 in 20)** **restricted location of visits to gardens/windows/pods/screens**
- **3% (1 in 33)** had a **'no visitors at all'** rule in place at some point since Apr

54 responders selected 'other restrictions not listed' were applied and were asked to specify these. These individual responses are listed in **Appendix F** and were assigned to one or more themes (see Appendix F). The analysis of these responses shows us that the most common 'other' restrictions applied were:

- PPE/Testing required for visits: 27 cases (9% of all responses)
- Booking/appointments required for visits: 21 cases (7% of all responses)

## **Additional information in relation to general visiting restrictions**

Responders were invited at the end of the survey to leave any further comments relating to visiting restrictions in a free-text box. Some of the responses made relating to more general restrictions (outside of known outbreak responses) are highlighted below, to illustrate different aspects of how restrictions affect residents and their loved ones:

### **Restrictions on visits into the home:**

*“Despite the government lifting restrictions the home continued to impose time restrictions, limiting the number of people visiting and LFT and face masks”.*

*“No children under 12, unless outside. Visits restricted to 3 people in residents room or in a booked lounge”.*

*“I have only been allowed to visit in the last week, in two years, in a garden, 2 meters apart, masks still required, negative LFT test, and up until last month ppe to be worn”.*

*“Was told that only one visitor at any one time in the care home. Visits were assigned to an hour. So if I wanted to visit my mum at 10am and another resident had a visit at that time I could not visit”.*

*“We have to book a visiting slot. One visitor per visitor slot. Only very recently has my dad been allowed two visits a day but at different times”.*

*“My loved one is completely immobile and cannot communicate and is most often deeply asleep throughout my set-time visits, these are still limited in duration to two-hours by the home. The home are, evidently, not concerned about this obvious lack of engagement, or the fact my loved one has no opportunity to benefit from visits, nor concerned for well-being and the right to family life...The home will not let me visit at another time of day. They do not keep me informed or discuss anything about my loved one's care with me, they have effectively made me redundant in my relative's care and life. Obviously I cannot give quality time, comfort, support, or some refreshment to my loved one while our visits are spent this way. I am still forced to leave after our allotted time together and so I never even see my loved one being given meals or drinks now. It is all really worrying and I am totally powerless. For us the situation is still oppressively restrictive, systematically controlling and prison-like”.*

*“Pre covid I could take my dog into the home but dogs are not allowed in now”.*

*“They won't allow dogs to visit anymore which makes no sense”*

*“We have asked if we could bring a family dog into the home and refused with covid being a reason”.*

*“Only allowed to visit on a day they choose and only allowed 2 hours & 20 minutes phone call per week so cruel”*

*“Mum could pick dad up we could put him in the car take dad out for a pub meal but at the home the rule was one named visitor. I just don't get the rules one little bit. At the home...we could see dad through an opened window as dad's room is on ground floor”.*



*"The amount of visitors at our care home has plummeted since COVID. I used to feel part of the care team and there was a warm, fun, friendly atmosphere. Now I feel as though I should be grateful I can visit".*

**Booking required / times of day restricted:**

*"Hours of visiting are still restricted 9.30 to 11.30 2.30 to 4:30 and 6:30 to 8:30"*

*"We still have to make appointments to visit my dad, limited to 1 hour at a time".*

*"NH visiting hours 10am to 5pm. Visiting out of these times allowed only with named designated visitor. Visits need to be booked during the week".*

*"Currently still required to phone to ok visits"*

*"You can only visit in an afternoon, and you can only sit in your relatives bedroom or in the garden if it is nice".*

*"Outside of outbreaks, some care staff are affronted if I just turn up. The same care staff are hostile to me on the phone & in person. Quite honestly they make it difficult - I live 150 miles away & have often made the trip only to be told the home is closed".*

*"The care home still operates an appointment system where each visit into the home is for half an hour....With a limited number of appointments in a week - and 50+ bedrooms, visiting is very restrictive".*

*"Still only 5 named visitors. Booking system. Limited to 1 hour"*

*"...the home still requires a telephone call ahead of visiting so no one can turn up unannounced....Moving into the winter months it is concerning as if outbreaks in the home happen the home do not follow guidance set. ....Family members who have challenged the homes restrictions have been bypassed by management who have selectively dealt with more compliant family members".*

**Restrictions to visits out / residents isolated in rooms:**

*"The home has said if there is an outbreak we will not be permitted to take them out have said it comes from the local public health".*

*"My mother moved from a virus free home to another in the council's care in February and though tested negative was confined to her room for 10/14 days With restricted visits only me for absolutely no reason"*

*"...my Mum had to isolate back in the care home after 12 days in hospital - ... She had a negative PCR test on discharge. I was told isolation was for 10 days 'due to Covid in the hospital'.... They let her out of her room after 8 days. We were not allowed to visit her during isolation period- only window visits. .... She can't see at all well, only had tv for company while in isolation. She was tearful when i spoke to her on the phone".*

*"The isolation of my mum led to her becoming immobile".*

## **Impact of poor communication / power imbalance for relatives & residents:**

*"They seem to make their own rules at this particular home. I do not feel comfortable reporting to cqc as worried about backlash inside the home."*

*"Visiting restrictions not well communicated to residents or their families".*

*"Since I kicked up a royal stink about visiting restrictions, reported to CCG, CQC, public health, local media... there have miraculously been no visiting restrictions just a volatile atmosphere"*

*"Over a year ago we requested an up to date guidance from the home as visiting guidance was from 2020 (the beginning of lockdown). This was requested on numerous occasions as the visiting rules were in relation to the full national lockdown. This has never been received so I assume the care home have not updated this throughout the course of the past 2 years despite government guidance changing a number of times during this period. This is a council funded care home in xxxx with quite possibly the least caring attitude towards its residents".*

*"We can visit without an appointment. But never get to have any discussions with carers / staff... We get escorted to and from his room and then just left. I want to be part of dads care plan. I feel excluded as dad is not able to talk to me about his care".*

*"We were told it was the managers decision on restrictions imposed, even though complaints were made to head office".*

*"My mother has never had corona virus nor have I. Both fully vaccinated. Visits in bedrooms only so my mother had to be moved from her chair to wheelchair and to her room when I visited. Causing her a lot of discomfort due to fragile skin etc... After advice from (xx) from residence rights I asked for information by email and have now been barred from communicating in any way with The xxxx care Home. Or them communicating with me (despite government guidelines stating we can choose how we communicate with the care). Resulting in not seeing my mother since 8/9/2022 and no updates on her health or if the home is still in Covid outbreak etc....don't what to do now I am desperate".*

*"I have not been pro-actively kept informed of restrictions or the lifting of them, I only receive information when I make an enquiry about it".*

*"As a result of being barred from communicating with xxxx Care Home xxx by management of (xxxx) I now have no contact with my mother and have not seen her since 8/9/22 we have contacted xxxx ASC they say not their problem and mum dies [does].. have a social worker"*

*"It seems visiting restrictions can be applied at will by the care home. Very difficult to challenge this as a carer of a resident".*

## SUMMARY & DISCUSSION

At the end of March, all government-advised restrictions on visiting within care settings in England were lifted, with the exception of infection prevention and control measures during an active outbreak. In the event of an outbreak, the guidance states that residents should be able to have one visitor at a time inside the care home, and this visitor does not need to be the same person throughout the outbreak.

However, the results of our survey show that for outbreaks reported between Apr-Sep 2022, additional restrictions (aside from the 'one at a time' rule stipulated in government guidance) were widely applied, being reported in 60% of outbreaks. Specifically:

- **Residents were limited to 'one named visitor only' in 32% (1 in 3) outbreaks**
- **Residents were not permitted any visitors at all in 11% (1 in 9) of outbreaks**
- **Visits out of the home were not allowed or were limited in 15% (1 in 7) outbreaks**
- **Residents were isolated or confined to their rooms in 20% (1 in 5) of outbreaks**

Comparison of data for the period Apr-Jun and Jul-Sep showed that the proportion of providers applying additional restrictions remains high even in the more recent months, so these additional restrictions cannot be explained by an initial delay in care providers adopting updated guidance.

Our data show that in a high proportion of cases, care providers are informing relatives that they are applying the additional restrictions on the advice of local Public Health and/or Local Authority teams (for example 70% of care homes applying the 'one named visitor only' rule said they were following local Public Health or Local Authority). Therefore, it is vital that these organisations act to ensure they are fully and effectively communicating the importance of following current government guidance to care providers in their local areas.

Our survey also shows that between Apr-Sep 2022, a concerning number of care providers were applying visiting restrictions outside of outbreak situations, even though all government restrictions were lifted at the end of Mar 2022. Amongst the most common restrictions applied outside of outbreaks were; limits to the number of residents allowed visitors at any time, restrictions to the time of day visits were allowed, the number of total visitors allowed and visits being by appointment only. This highlights the need for tighter regulation by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to ensure that a culture of over-restrictive practice does not become embedded as the norm in care settings.

The respondents of this survey are, on the whole, likely to be relatively well informed about current government visiting restrictions, as this group will largely be made up of relatives that have engaged with the Rights for Residents campaign or Relatives and Residents Association Charity (both of which provide ongoing and up-to-date information regarding visiting guidance). Therefore, the levels of visiting restrictions within the wider population of care home residents may be even higher than that reported here, with relatives in general likely to be less well informed than our survey group and therefore less empowered to challenge overly harsh restrictions when they occur.

It is of huge concern that despite changes to government guidance, so many care home residents are still having access to loved ones restricted. The detrimental and often severe effects of isolation from loved ones on the physical and mental health of residents has been

well documented in research studies and in media reports (see Appendix G: References). We continue to hear from relatives about the harm and distress that excessive restrictions are causing, and many of the individual survey responses we received, quoted in this report, also clearly highlight this.

Excessively limiting contact between residents and their loved ones denies vulnerable care home residents the same rights as those in wider society; for example, the right to private and family life in Article 8 of the Human Rights Act (which includes wellbeing and autonomy). Another huge concern is the significant safeguarding risks that can arise if relatives/friends have restricted access to loved ones living in care settings, since they often act as the 'eyes and ears on the ground' on a daily basis. This is of particular concern during a time of ongoing unprecedented staff shortages, when services are so stretched. Some of the observations from our survey highlight this:

- *“Care has drastically reduced and is at a bare minimum. Residents who are less mobile are often put to bed straight after lunch. Staff morale is very low”.*
- *“We were told initially that we would have to make an appointment to see Mum. When I asked why I was told it was so the carers would know. I presume to make sure Mum was up and dressed?”*
- *“I sometimes notice when I visit Mum at a time I've made an appointment for that many other residents are not up and out of bed. I am concerned that the home is using the excuse of still needing to book appointments to visit relatives so that they only get those up that they need to. I understand there is a problem regarding being short staffed”.*
- *“We had to ring beforehand, be escorted to and from residents room, not allowed to assist at meal times, despite not enough staff to help with feeding = massive weight loss, malnutrition”*
- *“I have raised safeguarding for my dad and as soon as it was sent to them I was emailed that I am banned from visiting my Dad”.*

## **What needs to happen?**

While the government guidance relating to care home visiting is not statutory, care providers, Local Authorities and local Public Health teams, as well as the Care Quality Commission, have an important role and statutory responsibilities in ensuring that all aspects of residents' health and wellbeing are protected, and their rights respected.

We therefore call on all of these organisations to act on our findings and work together to prevent a culture of overly-restrictive practices becoming the norm. Failing to do so is not only a neglect of legal duties but also allows the huge harm and distress that is caused by social isolation to continue.

## **Acknowledgements**

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- Helen Wildbore, Director, Relatives & Residents Association: input on survey design and review of reports
- Nicky Sharma, Policy and Research Officer, Relatives & Residents Association: review of reports

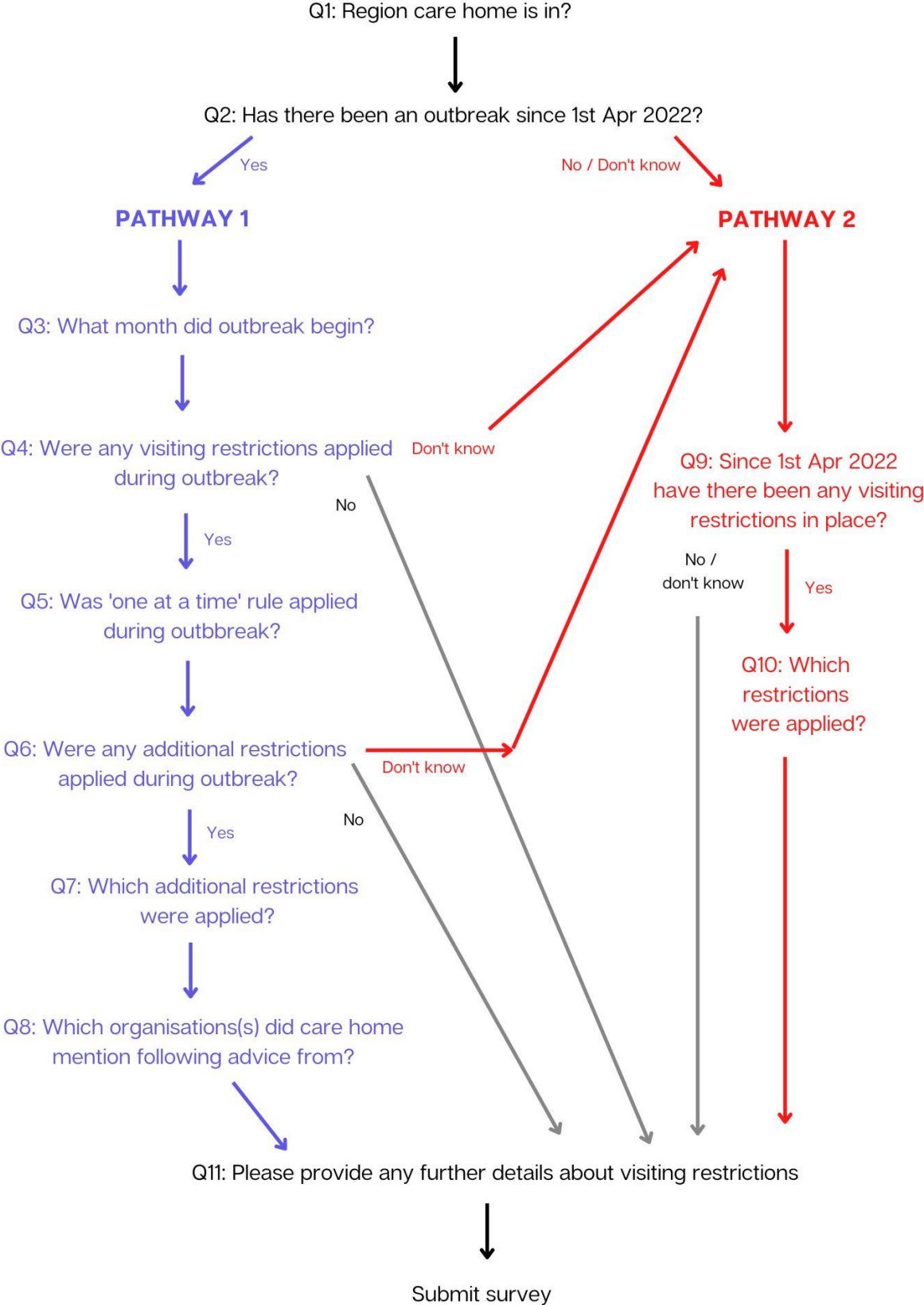
We would also like to thank all those who responded to our survey and took the time to share their loved one's stories with us.

## **Full & Summary Survey Reports**

A copy of this survey report along with a summary report can be found at:

<http://www.relres.org/survey-isolation/>

**Appendix A: Overview of survey design, showing 'Pathway 1' and 'Pathway 2'**



**Appendix B: Re-assigning the 12 responses where only ‘other’ restrictions was the only option selected:**

Response given for ‘specify other restriction’	Re-assigned to another listed restriction	Falls within guidance
Apron mask and gloves but not for staff		X
One visitor each day only unless from the same household then only two people. No other visitors allowed at other times in that day.	X	
For residents living in the dementia area "One person at a time in a residents bedroom or in the designated visiting lounge or garden"		X
Only 1 person PER DAY	X	
Only two family members on a visit		X
Testing reintroduced		X
Only essential carers allowed	X	
No visiting in resident room during outbreak only in downstairs activity room*	X	
Visits only allowed in rooms, not communal areas. Awkward when my mum, a dementia patient, wanted to stay in the lounge. I had to abandon my visit several times because she wouldn't see me in her room *		X
Only the unit affected had visiting restrictions - no visitors	X	
booking visits to avoid high footfall, restrictions relating to where visits took place	X	
Garden visits with proof of a negative result	X	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>

\* No visiting in residents’ room was classed as a restriction that falls outside of the guidance as this would not involve any additional mixing and so could not be considered to fall within reasonable infection control measures. Visits not allowed within communal areas was assigned as ‘within guidance’ as this may have been a reasonable infection control measure given the individual nature of communal space in that home.

## Appendix C: Frequency with which each additional restriction was reported in Q7 of survey:

(Note: responders could select multiple options for this question)

Restriction	No. of Responders Selecting option	% Of ALL Outbreaks Reported (387)
Only one named visitor allowed to visit throughout whole outbreak	124	32%
Only a few named visitors allowed to visit during the whole outbreak	22	6%
Restriction on number of residents allowed a visitor at any one time (e.g. to reduce footfall in the home)	43	11%
No visitors at all were allowed during outbreak	42	11%
Time limits were imposed on visits	40	10%
Visits were only allowed at certain times of day	32	8%
Visits were restricted to gardens, windows, pods or screens	23	6%
Visits out of the care home were not allowed or were limited	58	15%
Residents were isolated or confined to their own rooms during outbreak	77	20%
Other restrictions not listed above were also applied (please specify below)	35	9%



## Appendix D: Month by Month Breakdown of Restrictions Applied During Outbreaks, including:

- a) Number and % of total outbreaks where the restriction was applied
- b) Number and % of these cases where the care home said they were following guidance from local Public Health teams (PH) or Local Authority (LA)

### One named visitor only:

	Number of outbreaks reported in survey	Number reporting '1 named visitor only' during outbreak	% reporting '1 named visitor' applied	Proportion where PH/LA mentioned	% Where PH/LA mentioned
<b>Apr</b>	47	19	<b>40 %</b>	14/19	<b>74 %</b>
<b>May</b>	45	16	<b>36 %</b>	9/16	<b>56 %</b>
<b>Jun</b>	55	21	<b>38 %</b>	16/21	<b>76 %</b>
<b>Jul</b>	87	29	<b>33 %</b>	22/29	<b>76 %</b>
<b>Aug</b>	61	15	<b>25 %</b>	13/15	<b>87 %</b>
<b>Sep</b>	57	15	<b>26 %</b>	8/15	<b>53 %</b>
<b>Month Unknown</b>	35	9	<b>26 %</b>	6/9	<b>67 %</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>387</b>	124	<b>32 %</b>	88	<b>71 %</b>

### No visitors at all:

	Number of outbreaks reported in survey	Number reporting 'no visitors' during outbreak	% Reporting no visitors allowed	Proportion where PH/LA mentioned	% Where PH/LA mentioned
<b>Apr</b>	47	6	<b>13 %</b>	4/6	<b>67 %</b>
<b>May</b>	45	6	<b>13 %</b>	5/6	<b>83 %</b>
<b>Jun</b>	55	3	<b>5 %</b>	3/3	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Jul</b>	87	9	<b>10 %</b>	7/9	<b>78 %</b>
<b>Aug</b>	61	12	<b>20 %</b>	7/12	<b>58 %</b>
<b>Sep</b>	57	3	<b>5 %</b>	1/3	<b>33 %</b>
<b>Month Unknown</b>	35	3	<b>9 %</b>	1/3	<b>33 %</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>387</b>	42	<b>11 %</b>	28/42	<b>67 %</b>

**Visits out of home restricted:**

	Number of outbreaks reported in survey	Number reporting 'visits out restricted'	% Reporting visits out restricted	Number where PH/LA mentioned	% Where PH/LA mentioned
Apr	47	8	17 %	8/8	100 %
May	45	7	16 %	4/7	57 %
Jun	55	13	24 %	11/13	85 %
Jul	87	9	10 %	7/9	78 %
Aug	61	9	15 %	6/9	67 %
Sep	57	6	11 %	5/6	83 %
Month Unknown	35	6	17 %	4/6	67 %
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>15 %</b>	<b>45/58</b>	<b>78 %</b>

**Appendix E: Frequency with which each restriction was reported in Q10 of survey (pathway 2)**

<b>Restriction</b>	<b>No. of Responders Selecting option</b>	<b>% Of All Responses (291)</b>
Only one visitor allowed at a time	22	8%
Only one named visitor allowed to visit throughout whole outbreak	12	4%
Only a few named visitors allowed to visit during the whole outbreak	19	7%
Restriction on number of residents allowed a visitor at any one time (e.g. to reduce footfall in the home)	47	16%
No visitors at all were allowed during outbreak	9	3%
Time limits were imposed on visits	14	5%
Visits were only allowed at certain times of day	34	12%
Visits were restricted to gardens, windows, pods or screens	14	5%
Visits out of the care home were not allowed or were limited	9	3%
Residents were isolated or confined to their own rooms during outbreak	23	8%
Other restrictions not listed above were also applied (please specify below)	54	19%

**Appendix F: Additional details given in Q10 (pathway 2) when the 54 who selected ‘other restrictions not listed’ were asked to specify what these were. The 54 responses were assigned to ‘themes’ as per the table below:**

	Further details provided	Theme of restriction specified						
		Number of visitors	ECG mentioned	Location of visits	Timing or frequency of Visits	Booking required	PPE/ Testing	Other
1	Appointments needed, escorted in and out of building, not allowed in communal areas			X		X		
2	Pre-booked visits only, with very limited slots per day.	X				X		
3	Visits have to be booked in advance.					X		
4	Limited to 2 visitors at any one time. Visits needed to be pre-booked. LFT tests before visits. No children.	X				X	X	X
5	Wearing masks						X	
6	Booking system in place so numbers limited	X				X		
7	Limited access to garden area. Not allowed to visit in garden when another visit taking place even though distance between was huge.	X						
8	Initially, only one named visitor allowed but after complaining this was changed to one at a time.	X						
9	Visitors not allowed in communal areas and lft testing required			X			X	
10	Not allowed door entry code nor are residents who have full capacity							X
11	Have to visit by appointment					X		
12	Face masks to be worn in communal areas, hand washing in entry and exit						X	
13	Visit only in designated area, cannot mingle and sit with mum in setting with everyone else. Been told it will change back to that eventually.			X				
14	Face masks						X	

	Further details provided	Theme of restriction specified						
		Number of visitors	ECG mentioned	Location of visits	Timing or frequency of Visits	Booking required	PPE/ Testing	Other
15	Wear a face mask						X	
16	Advised to not visit ONLY not stopped during d and v outbreak							X
17	Have to make an appointment for every visit.					X		
18	LFT test before visit until 20th Sept						X	
19	Visitors not allowed to sit in lounge with residents, only in bedrooms.			X				
20	All visits have to be pre booked still, and testing has only just stopped, visits only allowed in the visitors room, your not allowed in the home yet.			X		X	X	
21	Booking before a visit					X		
22	LFT & Mask						X	
23	Appointments and time slots still applied until recently. Home is still maintaining a written schedule for those who still wish to give notice, but I don't book, just turn up and am able to visit no problem now.					X		
24	Visit in room only			X				
25	Visitors only by appointment, in a side room, and can only use side entrance. Also have to provide evidence of a negative Covid test			X		X	X	
26	Appointments have to be made to visit Mum. Still the case as of 20/9/22					X		
27	Face coverings still to be worn in public parts of the home, but can take off in the bedroom.						X	
28	Restriction on visiting during meal times. Protected meal times, no visitors allowed between 12.30 to 1.30 or 4.30 to 5.30pm				X			
29	Not allowed to give loved one meals anymore despite being the essential caregiver.		X					X

	Further details provided	Theme of restriction specified						
		Number of visitors	ECG mentioned	Location of visits	Timing or frequency of Visits	Booking required	PPE/ Testing	Other
30	Appointment only					X		
31	Mask wearing Until August only allowed visits in mums room or outside. Now OK.			X			X	
32	We have to wear a mask in communal areas. This is the only restriction						X	
33	Visits to be taken in residents room as a default. Can be taken in conservatory or outside. This could normal as my Grandma only arrived at the care home in Feb 2020. Masks to be worn when moving around. Mealtimes to be kept restricted to no visits. This wasn't the case when she arrived.			X	X		X	
34	Appointments have to made and if another resident has a visitor at that time, I can't visit.	X				X		
35	Pre booked visiting only					X		
36	Wear masks, take temperature and fill and sign a form to say we do not have covid.						X	
37	Visits have only been allowed in bedroom, havent been allowed to visit any other area of the hone			X				
38	Have to ring to book a time slot for visiting, face masks required, no visitors if there is a covid outbreak within the home	X				X	X	
39	Booked visits (still) and lateral flow tests (stopped now)					X	X	
40	five named people allowed in mum's room, all other visitors outside or in a sort of ante room	X		X				
41	Booking time slots fitting in with limited amounts of visitors	X				X		
42	Continue to demand visitors and staff wear masks.						X	
43	- all staff, and all visitors have to wear masks outside mum's room						X	
44	We are Not allowed in lounge where all residents sit			X				

	Further details provided	Theme of restriction specified						
		Number of visitors	ECG mentioned	Location of visits	Timing or frequency of Visits	Booking required	PPE/ Testing	Other
45	PPE must be worn and visit by appointment only					X	X	
46	All visitors had to take a Covid test before visiting						X	
47	Masks to be worn - even outdoors!						X	
48	Covid test prior, all visits have to be booked in advance and there are very few appointment times for visits	X			X	X	X	
49	Visiting can only take place in her room or outside by appointment. Masks to be worn in communal areas. No visiting in communal areas.			X		X	X	
50	Still have to wear masks, which is not good for the resident as they have difficulty recognising anyone.						X	
51	Masks						X	
52	Children not allowed to visit							X
53	Only allowed to visit on a day they choose and only allowed 2 hours & 20 minutes phone call per week so cruel				X			
54	Mandatory face masks						X	
	<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5</b>
	<b>% Of All Responses (291)</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2%</b>

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