

Stronger visiting rights for people in health and care settings

18.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

The government will better protect and strengthen the visiting rights for people in health and care settings, following a review of Regulation 9a.

- Better protections for people's visitation rights in health and care settings
- Government to drive cultural change across the system
- Ministers considering bringing forward legislation as part of wider reforms

Patients and residents in care homes, hospitals and hospices will no longer be cut off from their loved ones unless in exceptional circumstances, under a government drive to strengthen visiting rights and end blanket bans.

Families and friends play a vital role in care, wellbeing and dignity - yet too many people have still faced unnecessary barriers to visiting, including being excluded from key decisions about their care.

Health and care providers are required to make sure those in health and care settings can see their families and loved ones, but a government review has revealed that many people continue to face barriers in visitation.

Particular concerns were raised about blanket restrictions and family members being denied access to vulnerable patients, as well as residents and families being cut out of decisions around care or visitation.

In recognition of these issues, and as part of a push to deliver cultural change and compliance across all health and care settings, the government will distribute comprehensive guidance and resources to make visitation rights clear.

To make sure people's rights are being protected, the government will work closely with the CQC to monitor compliance and intervene where necessary.

Minister of State for Care, Stephen Kinnock said:

No one should be separated from their loved ones unnecessarily. Contact with family and friends should not be seen as a luxury but a basic part of good care.

This system must work for residents, patients and their loved ones and we are ensuring it does. These changes will protect patients and residents, give families a stronger voice, and help make sure care is more compassionate, open and humane.

Meaningful contact with loved ones is a fundamental aspect of high-quality, person-centred care and mitigates the impact of isolation of individuals in health and care settings.

Resources that health and care settings will receive include:

- an explainer sheet or poster for people that details their visiting 'rights' under Regulation 9A and routes to complain if they feel these are not being followed

- draft advice for care homes, hospitals, and hospice providers to use to explain any necessary restrictions to residents, patients, and family members
- a public-facing decision-making process map which sets out important considerations for providers when making decisions about restrictions.

These will be co-produced with people who have experience of the system so they reflect the real needs, and we will work closely with the CQC to make sure visiting is a core part of its reform and improvement programme.

Ministers are exploring bringing forward proposals for legislating visiting rights as part of wider reform work. This would further strengthen the framework around visiting rights - embedding a culture of open visiting and reinforcing the right to be supported by loved ones in setting across health and social care.

Care Right's UK CEO, Helen Wildbore said:

We should all be able to have the support of our closest friends or family when we need them. We continually support older people who have access to their trusted loved ones restricted, limiting vital practical support they offer, and causing serious detriment to wellbeing and dignity.

We welcome the news that ministers are exploring legislative change to promote the importance of family and carers as equal partners in care. The legal right to a Care Supporter would ensure everyone has access to their trusted loved one when they most need support.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/stronger-visiting-rights-for-people-in-health-and-care-settings>