

At West Heanton, we recognise how important visits are to the wellbeing, happiness and quality of life of the people who live with us or use our services. We aim to support safe, meaningful and respectful visiting while protecting people's dignity, privacy, choice and safety.

This policy explains our general approach to visiting and the expectations we ask visitors to follow when coming to West Heanton. It applies to relatives, friends, representatives, professionals, contractors and other visitors.

Our Visiting Principles

- We welcome and encourage visits as part of normal life and person-centred care.
- People are supported to maintain relationships with family, friends and others who are important to them.
- Visits should take place in a way that respects each person's wishes, privacy, dignity and wellbeing.
- Reasonable steps are taken to keep people, visitors and our team safe.
- Any temporary visiting changes will be proportionate, explained clearly and kept under review.

We aim to be flexible and welcoming, while recognising that care needs, infection prevention, safeguarding, privacy and site safety may occasionally affect how visits are arranged.

Arranging a Visit

Visitors are welcome to come when they wish. We do not want visiting to feel overly formal or restricted; however, each client has the right to choose whether they would like to receive visitors at any particular time.

- Visitors may wish to call ahead to check that the client is happy to receive them and is still at West Heanton, as clients may be out on trips, appointments or other activities.
- Calling ahead is helpful if travelling a long distance, visiting as a larger group, visiting for the first time, or arriving at a busy time of day.
- Lunchtime, usually between 12:30pm and 2:00pm, and teatime, usually between 5:00pm and 6:00pm, can be particularly busy, so advance notice during these times is appreciated.
- People may choose whether they wish to receive visitors and may ask for a visit to be changed or ended.
- All visitors should sign in on arrival and sign out when departing, using the paper or digital visitor register in reception. This forms part of our fire safety procedures.
- Professional visitors, contractors and others attending for work-related reasons may be asked to provide identification and sign the relevant registers for the work they are completing, including safety arrangements such as hot works where applicable.
- Where a person is receiving personal care, clinical support, meals or rest, visitors may be asked to wait briefly or return at a more suitable time.

We will always try to support visiting in a way that balances individual choice with the needs of others living in or using the service.

During Your Visit

We ask all visitors to behave respectfully towards people using our services, our team, other visitors and the wider environment. Visitors should help us maintain a calm, safe and homely atmosphere.

- Please respect privacy and dignity, including the privacy of other people living at or visiting West Heanton.
- Please do not enter private rooms, team areas, kitchens, medication areas or restricted parts of the site unless invited or accompanied by our team.
- Please follow guidance from our team about health and safety, fire safety, infection prevention and site access.
- Please avoid taking photographs, videos or recordings of other people without clear permission.
- Please speak with our team if you have any concerns during your visit.

Infection Prevention and Illness

To help protect people who may be more vulnerable to infection, we ask visitors not to attend if they are unwell or have symptoms of an infectious illness.

- Please do not visit if you have symptoms such as fever, diarrhoea, vomiting, a new cough, flu-like symptoms, unexplained rash or any illness that may spread to others.
- Please follow any hand hygiene, personal protective equipment or infection prevention guidance provided by our team.
- If there is an outbreak or increased infection risk, visiting arrangements may be temporarily adjusted.
- Where visiting is temporarily affected, we will support contact in other ways wherever possible.

Any visiting changes made for infection prevention reasons will be based on current risks, relevant guidance and the needs of the people using the service.

Children, Pets, Food and Gifts

Children and pets are welcome at West Heanton and are enjoyed by many people here. They can bring a great deal of happiness, conversation and comfort, and are an important part of family life.

- Children remain the responsibility of the adult accompanying them at all times.
- Pets must be supervised and safe around people at all times.
- Please be mindful that some people living at West Heanton may have dementia or other conditions that affect how they communicate or respond. At times, a person may act or speak in a way that seems unexpected or inappropriate, so visitors should remain calm, respectful and seek support from our team if needed.
- Please speak with our team before bringing food, drink, gifts, flowers or other items, especially where allergies, choking risks, dietary needs, medication, infection control or safety may be relevant.
- The site is smoke free except for the designated outdoor smoking area. This is important for health reasons and, most importantly, fire safety. Alcohol may be used appropriately by clients and their families; if visitors are unsure, they should speak with a member of our team.

Safety, Safeguarding and Confidentiality

- Visitors must not behave in a way that causes distress, intimidation, discrimination, abuse or risk to others.
- Any safeguarding concern will be taken seriously and managed in line with our safeguarding responsibilities.
- Visitors should not access confidential information, care records or personal belongings unless authorised by the person concerned or their representative where appropriate.
- Our team may intervene, ask a visitor to leave, or restrict future visits if behaviour presents a risk to safety, dignity or wellbeing.

Where concerns arise, we will aim to resolve them sensitively and proportionately, while prioritising the rights and safety of people using our services.

When Visiting Arrangements May Change

There may be occasions when visiting arrangements need to change temporarily. This may happen to protect people's safety, privacy or wellbeing, or to respond to operational or public health issues.

- An infectious illness or outbreak
- Severe weather, transport disruption or site safety concerns
- Emergency repairs, maintenance work or environmental risks
- A person's request for privacy, rest or limited contact
- Safeguarding, behavioural or safety concerns
- Professional advice from health, care or public health partners

If visiting arrangements need to change, we will explain the reason where appropriate, keep restrictions as limited as possible and review them regularly.

Supporting Contact When Visits Are Difficult

If someone is unable to visit in person, or if visiting is temporarily affected, we will support people to stay in touch wherever possible.

- Telephone calls
- Video calls where available and appropriate
- Messages, letters, cards or photographs
- Updates through agreed contacts, subject to consent and confidentiality
- Alternative visiting arrangements where safe and suitable

We will take account of each person's communication needs, preferences and consent when supporting contact with others.

End-of-Life, Essential and Compassionate Visiting

We will make every reasonable effort to support visiting in circumstances where contact is especially important, including end-of-life care, significant distress, changes in health, or where a visitor provides essential support to the person's wellbeing or communication.

Access, Parking and the Site Environment

West Heanton is located in a rural setting. Visitors should take care when travelling to and moving around the site, particularly during poor weather, busy periods, deliveries or larger events.

- Please park only in suitable areas and avoid blocking access for emergency vehicles, our team, residents, neighbours or service vehicles.
- Please drive slowly and carefully on site.
- Please follow any signs, guidance from our team or access arrangements in place.
- We have ramp access, a step-free environment and disabled-accessible toilet facilities. Visitors are welcome to call ahead with any information they would like to share that may help us support their visit.

Some areas of the site may not be suitable for visitors unless accompanied by our team. This helps protect visitors, people using the service and the smooth running of the home and wider site.

Concerns, Feedback and Questions

We encourage visitors to speak with a member of our team if they have any questions or concerns before, during or after a visit. We will listen, respond respectfully and try to resolve concerns as early as possible.

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, it can be raised through our complaints process. Information about how to make a complaint is available from the service.

Feedback from visitors helps us improve the experience of people using our services and those important to them.

Review

This visiting policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, guidance, service arrangements or learning from feedback or incidents.