



Residents' and relatives' experiences of returning to visiting Leeds Care homes

Seacroft Green

July-August 2021

Introduction

Since July 2020, there has been a series of changes in [government guidance on care home visiting during the Covid-19 pandemic](#) which has meant that care homes have gradually been able to welcome families back in to visit their loved ones.

Healthwatch Leeds in partnership with Leeds City Council wanted to find out about residents' and relatives' experience of visiting in care homes as part of our work as a city to enable meaningful visiting across Leeds.

We contacted individual care homes and asked them to post out survey packs to named contacts of all residents. The packs contained surveys for both residents and relatives, and we asked relatives to help residents to complete the survey where appropriate. We provided a freepost envelope so that people could return the completed surveys directly to Healthwatch Leeds.

The survey was also available to complete online via a link that was shared widely with both individual care homes and with the general public via social media and various ebulletins and newsletters.

For each care home that took part, we have produced an individualised report from the surveys that were completed about their care home including a summary of the data for each question.

Since this was an anonymous survey, some of the answers to the questions may have been blanked out so as not to reveal any information that might identify the respondents.

Our Findings

- The survey was completed by 8 relatives/friends. No residents completed the survey.
- The satisfaction from relatives and residents was fairly evenly spread with respondents saying that given that care homes have to follow government guidance on visiting, they would rate their experience of seeing their family or friends as excellent (1 response), very good (3 responses), average (3 responses) or poor (1 response).

- Only 25% of the relatives said they understood the role of essential care giver. Three said they didn't, and another three said they weren't sure. The majority (63%) said that they either didn't know whether or not the home was enabling this role, or that the home wasn't enabling the role.
- Only two out of a total of 8 relatives said that they were aware that they could take their loved one out to low risk outdoor places. Two relatives said the care home wasn't enabling this and four said they didn't know what the situation was.
- Only two relatives (25%) were aware that there were alternative visiting options (e.g. screened and outdoor visits). One person said, *"This has never been offered to our wider family"*.
- The majority of relatives reported that they could visit relatives once a week (4 responses) or once a fortnight (2 responses). Only one respondent said they could visit as often as they wanted. There was a mix of responses as to how long they could stay for, varying from 25-35 minutes to "there is no time limit." One person mentioned, *"They never push us for time, and we can stay longer than the 20 minutes advertised"*.
- Nearly all of the relatives who responded were aware that visits could be booked during the day in the week and at the weekend. All relatives said that visits either couldn't be booked on evenings or that they didn't know.
- The majority of relatives (63%) said they hadn't seen a copy of the individualised risk assessment/visiting plan for their loved one.
- Of the two relatives who said their loved one had mental capacity to make decisions around visiting, one said that they hadn't and one said they didn't know whether or not they had had their needs and wishes considered in the development of a risk assessment or visiting plan. For residents who didn't have capacity, only one out of five relatives said that a family member was involved in developing the risk assessment/visiting plan to express their wishes and needs on their behalf.
- Only 38% relatives responding to the survey, felt that the visiting options available met their needs. Reasons given for visits not

meeting their needs were lack of evening visits, the wish for more regular visiting, and lack of outdoor visits or awareness that they could take their loved one out of the home. One person commented, *“My different family members are told by different people different things, some say we can only visit once a fortnight each, whereas others were letting us go once every week. We have never been told we can take our relative out or arrange for other family members to see them outside.”*

- There were comments in the survey praising the “welcoming” and “professional” staff who had “done their best”. One person complimented the activities on offer and the “top class” food.
- In terms of visiting, people said that they felt visits were safe and that they were allowed to visit in their loved one’s room which meant that they had privacy. Another person said:

“There doesn't seem to be times limits at mealtimes, they also offer me food.”

- A couple of relatives said they would like to visit more often than once a week and be able to take their loved one outside. There were also concerns about the impending winter and the impact of any further restrictions.

“I would like to be allowed to visit my relative more often than once a week, and for sure my relative would agree with me on this.”

“I sincerely hope that with the adverse winter, the care home doesn't revert to not allowing visitors or limiting visits further. That would make my relative's life miserable....”

- There were several comments relating to communication with relatives. One person said that the phone was never answered, particularly in the evening which made it difficult to talk to loved ones. Another person said that they would appreciate more regular updates about their loved one:

“Some kind of status report on how my relative is doing would be welcome from time to time”

Our recommendations

1. Communicate a reminder to all relatives the message that all residents can nominate an 'essential care giver' and clearly explain what this is. We know that this term can be confusing for both relatives and staff. Because of this, we've created this simple wording to try and help clarify the role. Feel free to use it in your communications to families.

"All residents (or their families/POA if they don't have mental capacity to make that decision) can now choose one person to be included in their five named visitors as an 'essential care giver'. This key visitor should be someone who they feel is "key" to their wellbeing (physical or emotional), and who helps them feel "happier and well".

The key visitor will be able to visit them more often, flexibly and for longer periods, as well as being able to continue visiting even when there is an outbreak, or the resident is in isolation (e.g. following discharge from hospital).

In the government guidance, they call this key visitor an 'essential care giver' but this doesn't mean that they have to provide any type of personal or practical care (although this may be agreed in discussion with the care home).

Because more frequent and flexible visiting carries more risk, the key visitor will need to agree to have the same testing as care home staff (one PCR test and two lateral flow tests a week) and follow the same infection control procedures as them."

2. In Leeds, there is generally a low awareness amongst relatives that ALL care home residents can now nominate an essential care giver. Consider helping to raise awareness of the role by including information about it on your website.
3. Make sure that residents' needs and wishes are routinely and consistently taken into consideration when drawing up individual risk assessments or visiting care plans. Where residents don't have mental capacity to be involved in these decisions, make sure families are involved in these discussions.
4. Ensure that copies of residents' individualised risk assessments/visiting plans are routinely shared with relatives.

5. Send a reminder to make sure that all relatives are aware that they can take their loved one on trips out of the care home, as awareness is currently low.
6. Consider ways of enabling residents to have longer visits. Some questions to consider (taken from the Relatives and Residents Association factsheet '*Visiting and the Law*' <https://www.relres.org/visiting-guide-providers/>):
 - Is your policy based on individual risk assessments for the residents, that takes into account individual needs? individual assessments are needed to consider the impact of a 30-60-minute visit for each resident, including whether such timed visits are appropriate for them and meet their wellbeing needs.
 - Are you allowing visitors to take tests at home and bring proof of negativity on their visit (as permitted now in the Government guidance)? This would reduce your admin burden for 'processing' visitors on arrival.

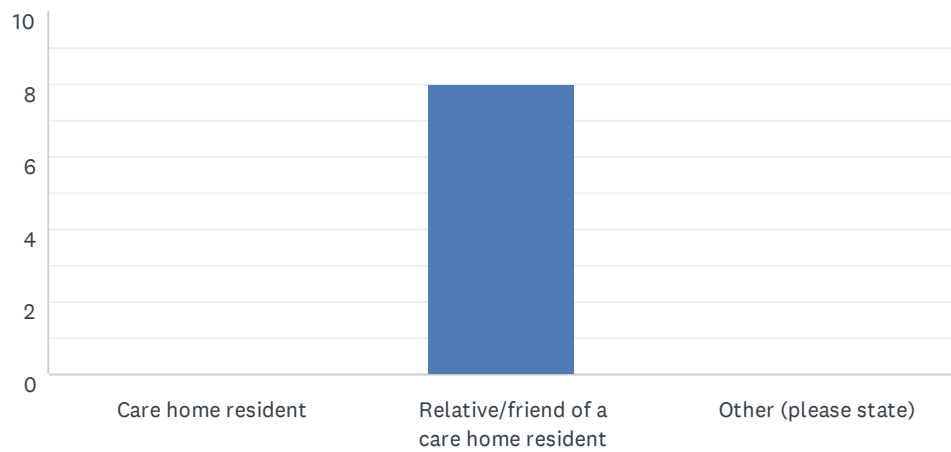
Next Steps

The report will be shared with the care home, and we have asked them to share it with residents and their relatives or friends. It will also be shared with Leeds City Council and be publicly available on the Healthwatch Leeds website.

We will agree with the care home, the next steps to be taken in response to our recommendations and work with them to ensure any agreed actions are followed through and implemented. We will undertake any follow up work required to ensure there are real changes made to the service so that it is a good experience for everyone.

Q2 Are you a...

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

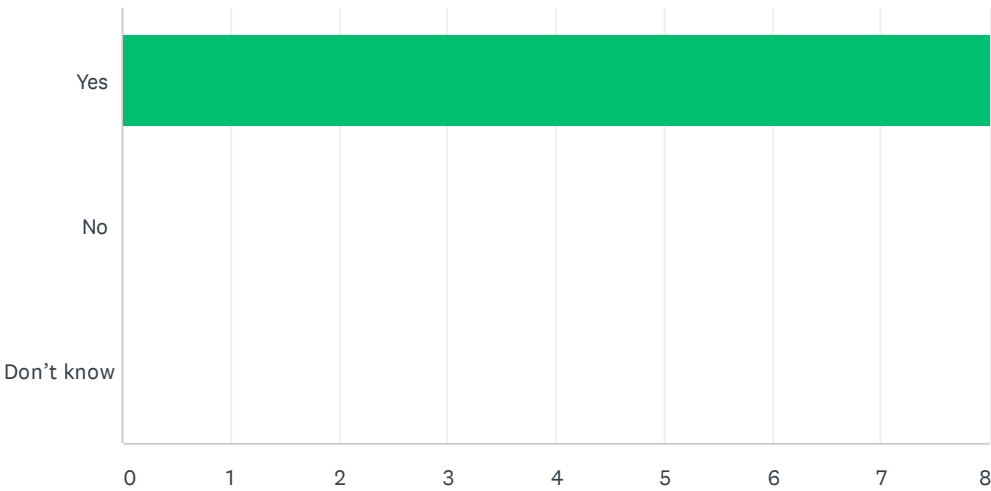


ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Care home resident		0%	0
Relative/friend of a care home resident		100%	8
Other (please state)		0%	0
TOTAL			8

#	OTHER (PLEASE STATE)	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q3 Is your care home enabling your loved one to have nominated visitors who can visit indoors?

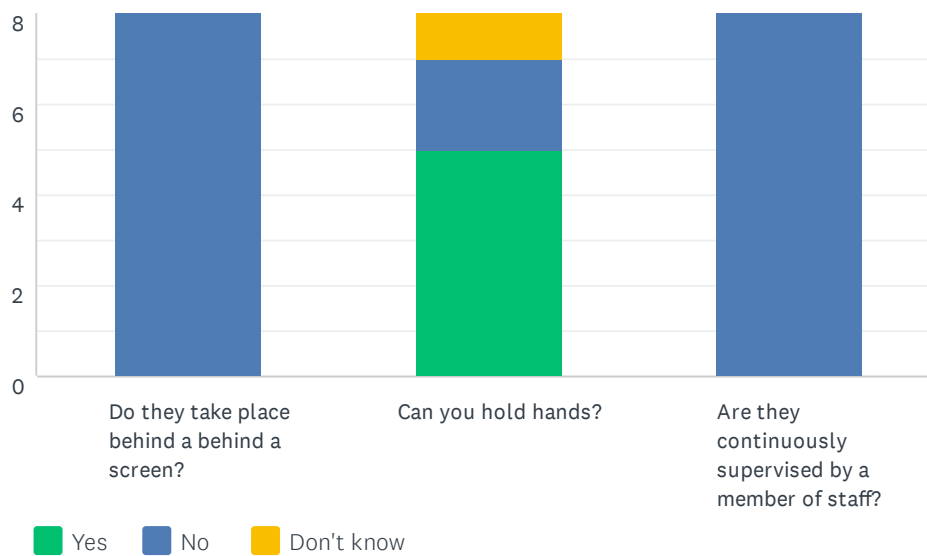
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		100%	8
No		0%	0
Don't know		0%	0
TOTAL			8

Q4 If yes to Q3, please tell us more about the indoor visits:

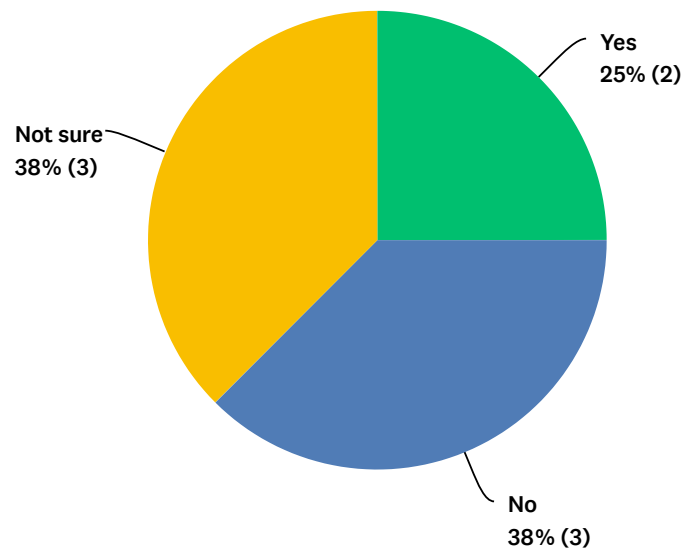
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Do they take place behind a screen?	0% 0	100% 8	0% 0	8	2.00
Can you hold hands?	63% 5	25% 2	13% 1	8	1.50
Are they continuously supervised by a member of staff?	0% 0	100% 8	0% 0	8	2.00

Q5 Do you understand the role of 'essential care giver' (as outlined in the government guidance on care home visiting)?

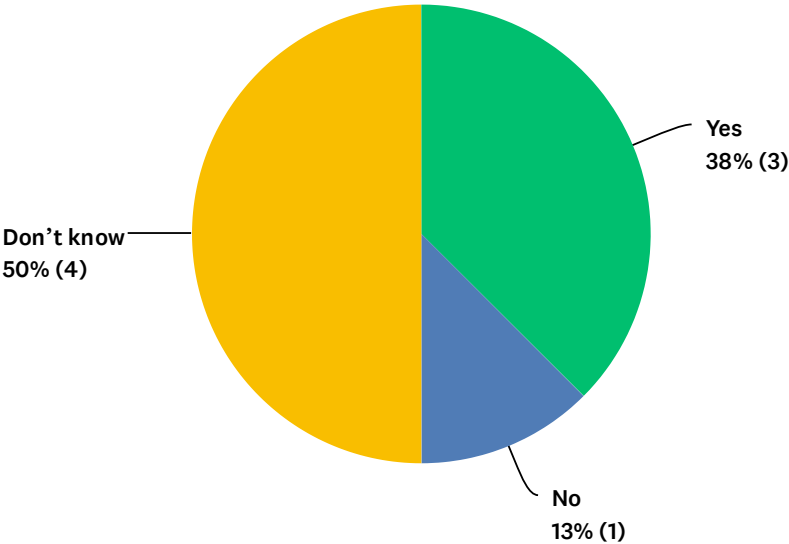
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	25%	2
No	38%	3
Not sure	38%	3
TOTAL		8

Q6 Is your care home enabling the use of ‘essential care givers’, nominated by residents, where it is felt that their emotional and practical support is central to a resident’s health and wellbeing?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

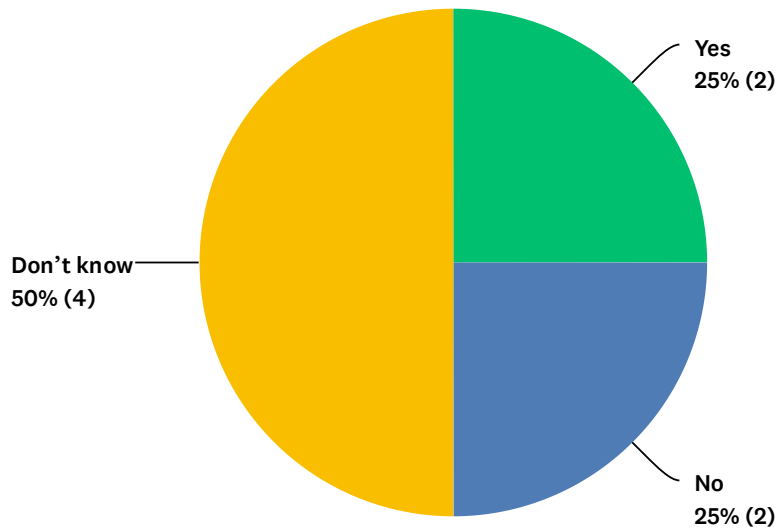


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	38%	3
No	13%	1
Don't know	50%	4
TOTAL		8

#	PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT THAT HERE	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q7 Does the care home enable nominated family members to take loved ones out of the care home to lower risk outdoor places e.g. your garden or a local park?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

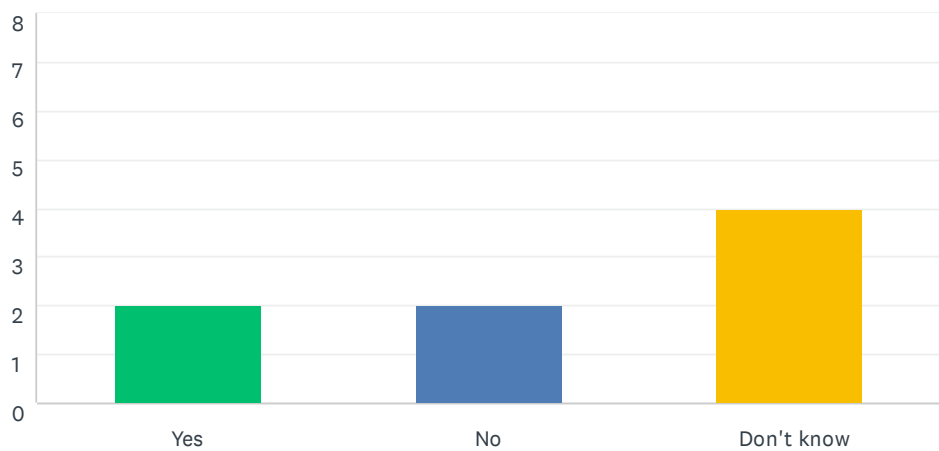


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	25%	2
No	25%	2
Don't know	50%	4
TOTAL		8

#	PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT THAT HERE	DATE
1	This has never been offered to us when we visit our relative.	9/21/2021 9:35 AM

Q8 Are other visiting options (eg. screened or outdoor visits) available for other friends and family members who aren't nominated visitors?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

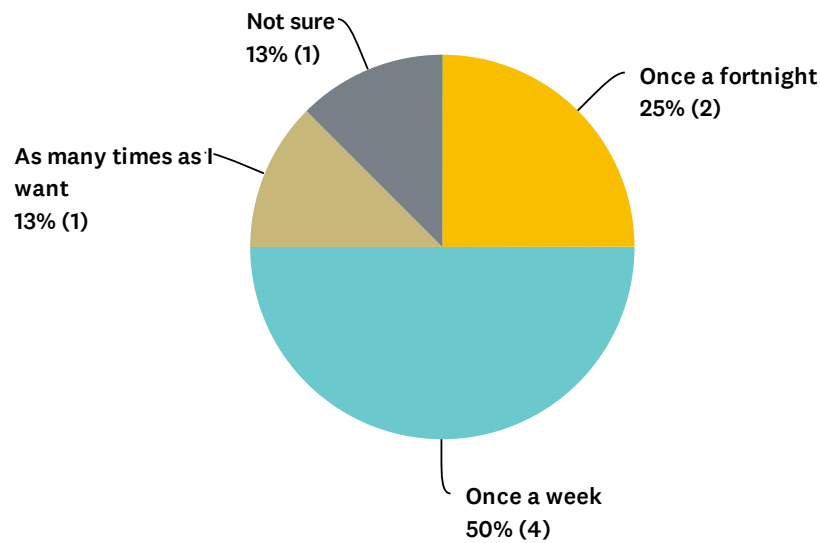


ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		25%	2
No		25%	2
Don't know		50%	4
TOTAL			8

#	PLEASE TELL US MORE ABOUT THAT HERE	DATE
1	This has never been offered to our wider family.	9/21/2021 9:35 AM
2	Unrestricted number of visitors	8/26/2021 4:53 PM

Q9 How often are you able to have an indoor visit?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

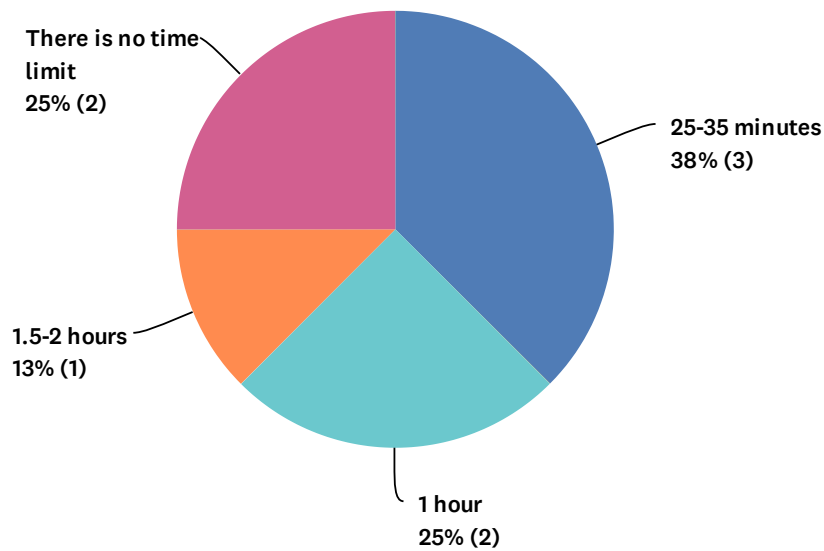


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Once a month	0%	0
Once every three weeks	0%	0
Once a fortnight	25%	2
Once a week	50%	4
Twice a week	0%	0
Three times a week	0%	0
Four times a week or more	0%	0
As many times as I want	13%	1
It varies depending on availability	0%	0
Not sure	13%	1
Not applicable	0%	0
Other (please specify)	0%	0
TOTAL		8

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Q10 If your care home is offering indoor visits, how long can you usually visit for?

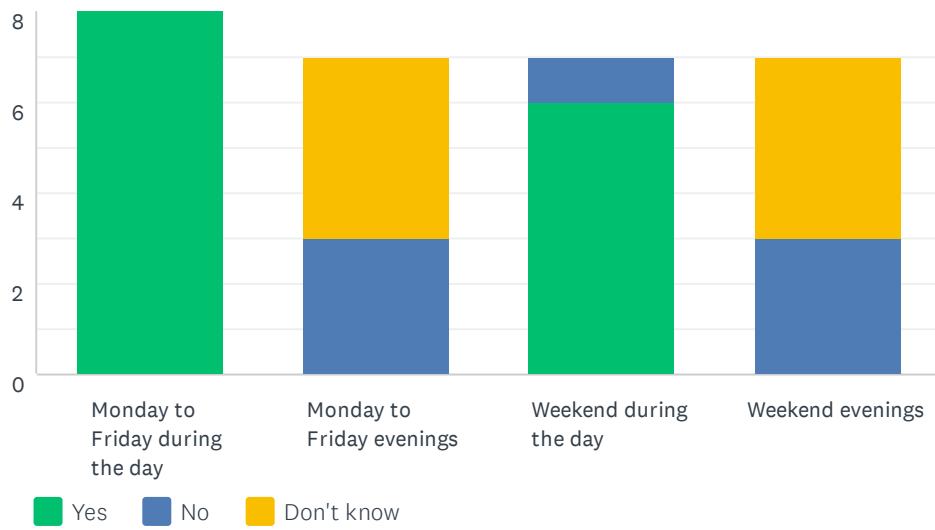
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
15-20 minutes	0%	0
25-35 minutes	38%	3
40-50 minutes	0%	0
1 hour	25%	2
1.5-2 hours	13%	1
more than 2 hours	0%	0
There is no time limit	25%	2
Not sure	0%	0
TOTAL		8

Q11 Is it possible to book visits at the following times?

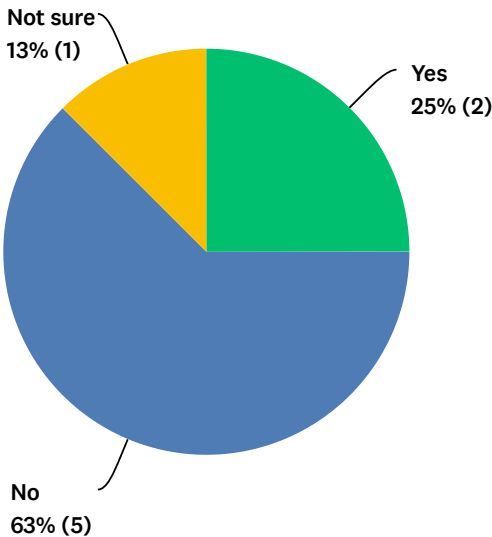
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
Monday to Friday during the day	100% 8	0% 0	0% 0	8
Monday to Friday evenings	0% 0	43% 3	57% 4	7
Weekend during the day	86% 6	14% 1	0% 0	7
Weekend evenings	0% 0	43% 3	57% 4	7

Q12 Have you seen a copy of the individualised risk assessment or visiting plan that the care home has done around visiting?

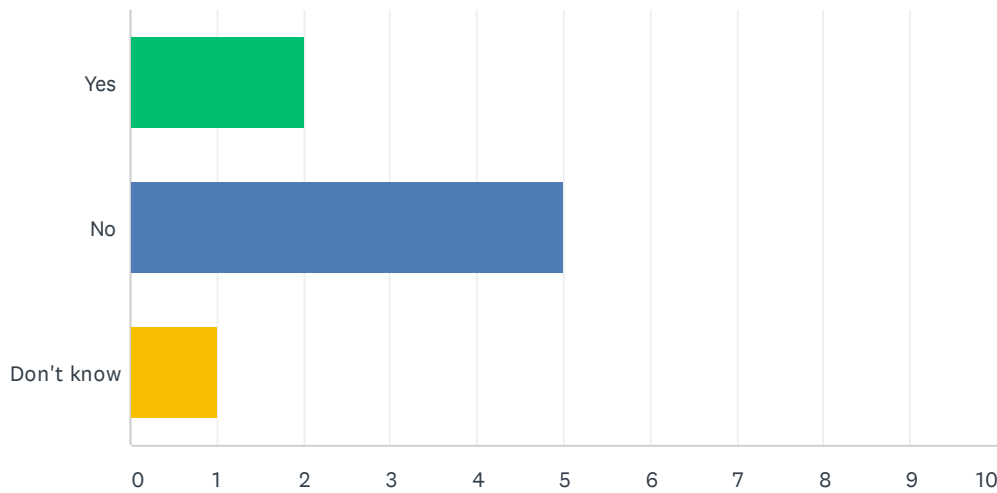
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	25%	2
No	63%	5
Not sure	13%	1
TOTAL		8

Q13 Does your loved one have mental capacity to be involved in decisions around visiting?

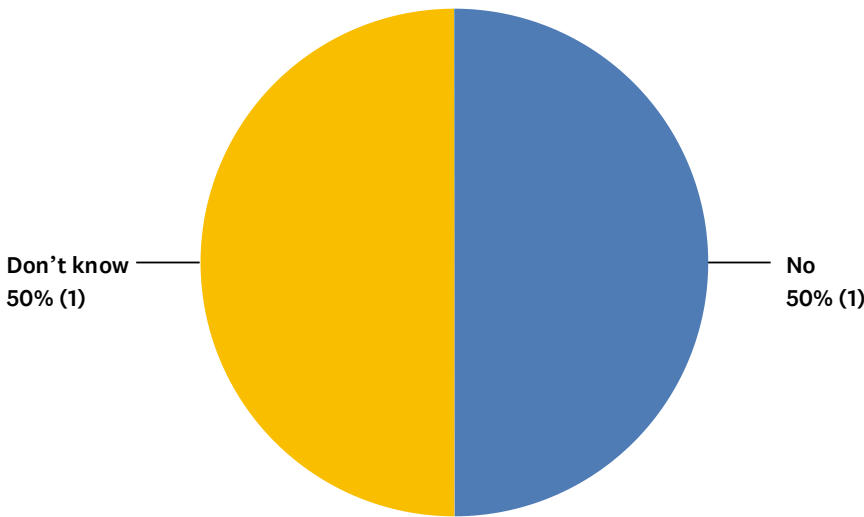
Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	25%	2
No	63%	5
Don't know	13%	1
TOTAL		8

Q14 If they DO have capacity, was your loved one involved in the development of a risk assessment or visiting plan and their needs and wishes considered?

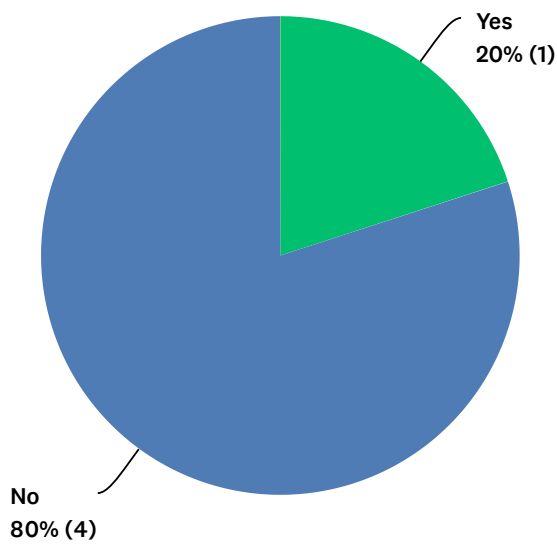
Answered: 2 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	0%	0
No	50%	1
Don't know	50%	1
TOTAL		2

Q15 If they DON'T have capacity, were you or another family member involved in developing the risk assessment/visiting plan to express their needs and wishes on their behalf?

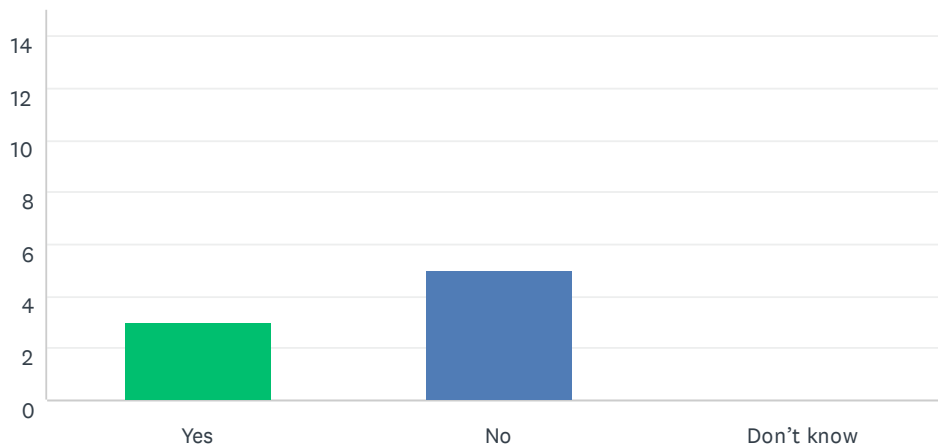
Answered: 5 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	20%	1
No	80%	4
Don't know	0%	0
TOTAL		5

Q16 Do you feel that the current visiting options made available to you meet your / your loved one's needs?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0

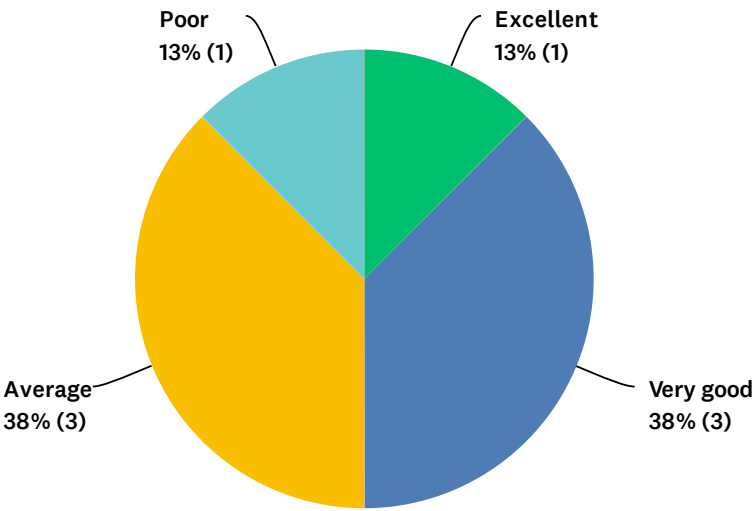


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	38%	3
No	63%	5
Don't know	0%	0
TOTAL		8

#	TELL US MORE ABOUT WHY YOU CHOSE YOUR ANSWER HERE	DATE
1	We are only allowed to visit tues to fri with a pre arranged appointment and my different family members are told by different people different things, some say we can only visit once a fortnight each whereas others were letting us go once every week. We have never been told we can take our relative out or arrange for other family members to see them outside. There is no evening or weekend visiting so we won't be able to take our school aged children to visit we have been told we can't see our relative on their birthday which falls on a weekend. We can only book in advance to go and can only have a time between 11 and 3 but sometimes we can only have whatever time is left. Our relative's health conditions mean it is imperative for them to have regular visits. They have really deteriorated in lockdown and we didn't see them for months. It is essential for us and them to remain in contact and be able to be tactile. Our relative needs human contact and familiar people around.	9/21/2021 9:42 AM
2	It's a lot better than it was. Previously allowed to visit my relative once every fortnight.	9/21/2021 9:32 AM
3	Evening visits would be a useful option for some of our family members that work.	9/8/2021 11:24 AM
4	I feel more regular visits are essential for the mental wellbeing of my relative.	8/31/2021 9:55 AM

Q17 Given that care homes have to follow government guidance on visiting, how would you rate your experience of seeing your family or friends in the care home?

Answered: 8 Skipped: 0



	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	VERY POOR	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	13%	38%	38%	13%	0%	8	2.50
	1	3	3	1	0		

Q18 Please use this space to tell us what works well in relation to the way your care home has organised and enabled visits.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 2

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Been firm but fair during the whole of the pandemic bringing about easements as thy have been allowed. Very satisfied.	9/21/2021 9:44 AM
2	They never push us for time and we can stay longer than the 20 minutes advertised. They allow us to go in our relative's room so we have privacy.	9/21/2021 9:42 AM
3	There doesn't seem to be time limits at meal times, they also offer me food.	9/21/2021 9:32 AM
4	They have good safe procedures.	9/8/2021 11:24 AM
5	We feel safe regarding the PCR testing	8/31/2021 9:55 AM
6	Now unsupervised. Currently my availability is the major restriction on me visiting	8/26/2021 4:55 PM

Q19 Tell us about any ways that you feel the care home could improve visiting (whilst obviously still following the current government guidance).

Answered: 5 Skipped: 3

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Allow weekend visits. Allow evening visits. Arrange for us to be able to take our relative outside. Ensure everyone is fully Covid vaccinated. Allow us to go every week or more often if possible.	9/21/2021 9:42 AM
2	I would like to be able to visit my relative more than once a week but that's my only criticism.	9/21/2021 9:32 AM
3	No idea, believe there has been 5 managers in less than 2 years.	9/8/2021 12:04 PM
4	Communication between family staff management is very poor!	9/8/2021 11:24 AM
5	Offer more frequent visits. Also, the process of trying to book a visit is always confusing and a challenge. It would be good if this could be made easier, I always feel that I am an inconvenience.	8/31/2021 9:55 AM

Q20 Finally, please tell us about anything else generally you think the care home does well or any suggestions or ideas for making improvements.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 4

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	They have had a horrendous time due to the nature of their client group and poor Gov direction. They have done the best they can.	9/21/2021 9:44 AM
2	I sincerely hope that with the adverse winter, the care home doesn't revert to not allowing visitors or limiting visits further. That would make my relative's life miserable. Obviously not imposing further limitations or visits may increase the risk of spreading infection. but this risk must be weighted against the misery for residents that further limitations would bring. Indeed I would like to be allowed to visit my relative more often than once a week, and for sure my relative would agree with me on this.	9/21/2021 9:32 AM
3	Food is top class and activities they really do try so hard. The telephone calls we make are never answered! And evening calls to speak to our loved one is never possible because the community mobile never gets answered and evening calls to the nurses phone never gets answered. It's needs reviewing and updating. No one takes responsibility for charging the community phone. They also need a person in charge from management to oversee the evening staff are managed correctly.	9/8/2021 11:24 AM
4	Care staff appear professional and welcoming, however some kind of status report on how my relative is doing would be welcome from time to time. The home is clean and well presented. It would be good to have more activities for the residents.	8/31/2021 9:55 AM