

Reconnecting Safely: Extended households options and Supported Living

From the 3rd July individuals living in shared houses have had a right to join up with one other household to increase their social circle.

For people living in shared supported living this means having the option to consider setting up a regular visit with a close family member or friend, either at their home, or in your own home.

You can find the guidance from Welsh government that explains more about this by clicking on this link: <https://gov.wales/guidance-extended-households-coronavirus>.

This is really positive, as it gives us another way of seeing people who matter to us all. However, just because it is now a new option, that doesn't mean that it will be what all of us choose to do. That may be because for some people the idea that the people they live with are visiting other people in a different home could be concerning. For example, if a tenant you lived with may be more likely to get very sick if they caught COVID19.

Being a tenant in a shared house means we all need to try and work together to make sure we can start re-doing the things that matter most to us, including seeing the people we love, but in a way that helps us to care for each other and respect the people we live with and their family and friends.

So, that is why it's important to think about all of the ways we can get together, including outside visits, as well as the new extended households, so we can work out what is the best option for everyone and try to be as fair as we possibly can. To do this, we need to keep doing what we have always done well – working together.

We need to have really good conversations where we all listen to everyone's voice and wishes, and respecting that we may be able to have some things our own way, but some things may not be possible for a while.

To help us to do this, we are encouraging all people who live in shared supported living and their families to:

- Be supported to come together and discuss how they want to reconnect including the option of forming extended households, but also looking at outside visits and online opportunities too.
- To think about how any decision about reconnecting will affect the other people that live in the household, and to listen to any concerns or worries that they might have. If housemates have medical conditions that mean that they should 'shield', then these people will need to be protected from risks that

could cause them to catch COVID19. So some options may not be possible in the way a tenant or family may ideally like.

- If people want to form extended households with other people, we are encouraging people living together to have a shared and honest conversation, so we can all make a plan that creates the right balance for people to see family or friends and for everybody to stay well.

If people lack capacity to make these decisions for themselves, we will continue to support people to have the right people around them so we can all make a best interest decision. These will involve the views and interests of housemates, extended family and if necessary, other relevant professionals.

To help support this to happen we are calling on

- **Support Organisations** to positively help people to explore their rights to meeting people, while enabling other people they live with to express any concerns or worries that they may have. This includes looking at all options of reconnecting in a person centred way. To openly engage honestly with people, their families, commissioners and care managers in best interest processes, so we can find innovative ways of helping people enjoy their rights while duly managing any risk concerns that people may have.
- **Service Commissioners** to support the rights based process for people and families to explore reconnecting. To support providers to be able to resource these best interest processes, which may be complex, enabling the involvement of individuals, the people they live with and extended family to express their wishes and achieve workable solutions.
- **People and Family members** to be sensitive to the needs and wishes of other people when considering how they might like to reconnect with their loved ones. To show understanding that people may need time to think about what is in their best interest, and to support us in having these wider conversations to identify person centred solutions that support the whole household if needed.
- **Regulatory organisations** such as Public Health Wales to be creative and flexible about issues such as COVID testing and PPE in response to proposals from supported households focused on getting the best balance of independence and safety for the people we support and their extended families.

We are very proud of how supported living has enabled people needing support to continue to enjoy their lives while staying safe over the period of lockdown. This success is built on the long standing partnership and cooperation between the people we support, their family and friends and dedicated staff.

We want to keep making use of that positive partnership working to come together to find the best ways for everyone to reconnect, so we can keep in touch with those that matter and also continue to explore accessing our communities again, while still feeling like we can do it in a way that makes us feel safe to do so.

We think that with this same partnership and cooperation extended households can be another positive opportunity in returning to a more normal life for us all.

We have produced a summary document with the key points discussed here, for use by people, providers and families in having these conversations. All Wales People First are also working on a toolkit to help people listen better to people with learning disabilities and respect their wishes.