Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19: Visiting people in a mental health, learning disability and autism inpatient setting

We appreciate the challenges that the pandemic has created for staff in inpatient settings over the last four months. We would also like to express our gratitude for the work and effort that you have expended in trying to ensure that your services continue to function and provide best care for people whilst also maintaining safety for all in light of the restriction and guidance. Throughout, our guidance has emphasised the importance of making the reasonable adjustments needed to ensure people can remain in contact with their loved ones.

Many settings have made significant adaptations to ensure that visiting for all, including children and young people, and particularly those with a learning disability, autism or both has been maintained in creative ways during this time, including utilising digital options to support this.

We are writing now to ensure that all providers are allowing families to visit their loved ones unless a risk assessment has been carried out for the individuals which demonstrates that there are clear reasons specific to their individual circumstances.
as to why it would not be safe to do so. We are clear that providers MUST take all steps possible to enable safe regular visits.

If you are experiencing specific challenges or difficulties in enabling this, please contact your contract manager immediately to discuss this and come to an agreed plan to progress this as a matter of urgency.

Kind regards,

Ray James, CBE
National Director for Learning Disability and Autism
NHS England and NHS Improvement

Claire Murdoch, CBE
National Director for Mental Health
NHS England and NHS Improvement