

Ray James and Claire Murdoch
NHS England and NHS Improvement
Skipton House
80 London Road
London
SE1 6LH

ray.james@nhs.net

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To:

- Mental health trust CEOs
- CCG and STP mental health leads, via regional teams
- Mental health, learning disability and autism provider settings
- Regional specialised commissioning mental health leads

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ray James', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ray James, CBE
National Director for Learning
Disability and Autism

NHS England and NHS Improvement

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Claire Murdoch', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Claire Murdoch, CBE
National Director for Mental Health

NHS England and NHS Improvement