

## Essential Caregiver Fact Sheet

**What is an Essential Caregiver (ECG)?** An Essential Caregiver (ECG) is a nominated person who can visit a care home resident regularly under all circumstances, even when the care home is in lockdown or during periods of isolation. The role was introduced in the Government guidance on visiting in care homes, effective from 8 March 2021.

**Is an ECG different to named visitors?** Yes. Under Government guidance residents can choose an ECG in addition to their named visitors. It says the role of ECG is “vitally important to supporting residents’ health and wellbeing”, as they can offer additional care and support including help with care needs.

**Is an ECG only necessary where the health of the resident is in immediate danger?** No. The guidance states that *every* resident should be supported to choose an ECG. The role is intended to ensure residents can benefit from the companionship and support of someone they have a personal relationship with. It is not limited to carrying out care tasks vital to the immediate health of the resident – such as help with eating – but can be for companionship, emotional support or relieving distress.

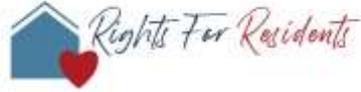
**How do residents access an ECG?** The Government guidance makes clear that *all* residents should be supported to choose an ECG. Care homes should not wait for a resident or their loved ones to ask about the role but should be proactive in letting residents, and the relatives/friends who used to visit them, know that the role is available.

**Does the ECG have to take on any specific care needs?** No. It would be inappropriate for the care home to insist that ECGs take on specific tasks, or require them to fulfil all a resident’s care needs. The duty to meet the resident’s care needs remains with the care home. The guidance also makes it clear that clinical care and medical tasks remain the responsibility of the care home.

**Do ECGs pose a risk to resident’s health?** ECGs will be subject to the same testing regime as staff and when providing direct personal care should follow the same PPE and infection prevention and control (IPC) arrangements as staff so they present no greater risk to a resident’s health than a staff member.

**Does the ECG have to have the COVID-19 vaccine before they can take on this role?** No. The guidance strongly recommends that ECGs receive the vaccine but this is not a requirement for taking up the role. Remember, ECGs should be supported by the care home to follow the same testing regime as staff.

**Will the ECG have to stop visiting in the event of an outbreak?** No. The guidance states that ECGs should be able to visit inside the care home even during outbreaks or periods of self-isolation except when the resident or ECG are COVID-positive.



**Should the ECG be restricted to timed visits?** No. The guidance now makes clear that visits should not be time-limited.

**Can residents only have one ECG?** No. The guidance states that there are exceptional circumstances where someone may need the additional support of more than one ECG. For example, a resident with two children who receives different support from each of them that is necessary for their wellbeing or if a resident is assessed as requiring support more regularly than their ECG can commit to.

**For more information about care homes' legal duties around Essential Caregivers see 'Visiting and the Law':** <http://www.relres.org/visiting-guide-providers/>

**For more information about the role of Essential Caregiver see** <http://www.relres.org/essential-caregivers/>