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Scrap 'barbaric' 14-day self-isolation rules for care home residents

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1 day ago

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Ministers are facing renewed calls to scrap 'barbaric' isolation rules for care home residents.

Guidance states that residents who leave the home – even for a walk in the park – must isolate alone in their room for 14 days on their return.

It means the UK's 400,000 care home residents have been effectively trapped within the same four walls for the past 13 months.





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Campaigners say this is a breach of human rights law and there is no scientific justification for the draconian rule.

They are also furious that visits continue to be restricted by some care providers, despite most residents now having received both jab doses.

'I just want an hour in sun'

Before the pandemic, Reg Heinz would relish days out in the sunshine with his family.

But over the past year the 83-year-old has only been able to leave his care home twice –for hospital check-ups.

Mr Heinz said: 'I feel like I am missing out on living my life'.

He has lived in his care home in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, for three and a half years and his wife Kathleen, 73, and daughter Victoria live nearby. He is urging the Government to drop the 14-day isolation rule so that he can once again sit in his daughter's garden with a beer.

He said: 'I previously enjoyed visits to my family, events such as car shows and family meals.

'I would like to go out for an hour and enjoy the fine weather, but cannot face the isolation of 14 days in my bedroom. I just want to have things to look forward to.'

Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, the deputy chief medical officer, said yesterday that it was 'incredibly safe' for two vaccinated people to meet freely.

Yet the 14-day rule means care home residents who pop outside for a walk have to self-isolate for longer than a traveller coming back from India.

Anyone in the UK who tests positive for Covid-19, or who flies in from abroad, must quarantine for 14 days.

contact with anyone when they left the home and later test negative.

The sister of a disabled woman living in a care home labelled the rule 'barbaric'.

On Wednesday, Health Secretary Matt Hancock hinted the 14-day isolation rule may soon be scrapped and there may be 'good news' soon for residents. But Mike Padgham, from the Independent Care Group, said the rule should be changed immediately.

He added: 'Life is full of risks. Who are we to say you can't go out and enjoy yourself? They're seeing the rest of the country enjoying freedom as the lockdown eases and they want to be treated the same.'

John's Campaign, a group which supports those with dementia, has begun legal action against the Department of Health over the 14-day rule.

Julia Jones and Nicci Gerrard, from the organisation, said: 'Vague promises that things might change in the future are not good enough. Action is needed now.'

In November, the Daily Mail launched a campaign for an end to visiting bans at care homes. Residents are currently allowed to welcome two 'named visitors', provided they test negative and wear PPE. But some say they are still being denied the chance to see their loved ones.

The campaign group Rights for Residents are demanding that the right to visit loved ones is enshrined in a new law which recognises family members as 'essential caregivers'. They will deliver a petition to Downing Street next week.

The campaign has been backed by West End star Ruthie Henshall, who went almost a year without being able to visit her mother.

But Professor Danny Altmann, of Imperial College London, said caution was required as 'we are still vulnerable'.

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