



Subject:	Motion - Implementation of Care Partner Arrangements in Nursing and Care homes– Response from Minister of Health
Date:	22nd January, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To consider a response from the Minister of Health in relation to a motion on the Implementation of Care Partner Arrangements in Nursing and Care Homes.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider the response.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd November, passed the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor McAteer and seconded by Councillor Groves:

“This Council recognises the distress, confusion, physical and cognitive deterioration experienced by residents with dementia living in nursing homes, due to the lockdown in Spring 2020 and the subsequent curtailment of visits with relatives to one visit per week.

The Council also recognises the pain experienced by relatives of nursing home residents with dementia, many of whom, pre-Covid-19, cared daily for their loved ones in nursing homes, assisting them with washing, dressing, eating, drinking and exercise and provided them with love and cognitive stimulation.

Whilst the Council acknowledges the spread of the Covid-19 virus and adheres to the Executive guidelines on Council on public health, it also supports the “Regional Principles for Nursing and Residential Care homes in N Ireland” (published by the Department of Health on 23rd September, 2020), which establishes the designation of relatives or close friends as “Care Partners” and stipulates that care and nursing homes should facilitate Care Partner arrangements to enable relatives to assist with the communication, physical and emotional needs of their loved ones in care and nursing homes.

The Council calls upon the Minister of Health to provide the necessary human, financial and technical resources to nursing and care homes to ensure the immediate practical implementation of safe and secure Care Partner arrangements which will underpin the rights of dementia patients in nursing homes and deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for them and their families.”

3.2 A response has now been received from Minister Swann, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1.

3.3 The Minister begins by pointing out that the most recent visiting guidance relating to care homes, including information on the care partner concept, can be accessed via the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/Covid-19-visiting-guidance>

3.4 In November, the Department of Health published on its website additional guidance on the Care Partner concept, including the following Frequently Asked Questions document and an Information Leaflet for Care Home Residents and their Families:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-cp-faqs.pdf>

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-cp-flyer.pdf>

3.5 In addition, the Chief Nursing Officer and the Chief Social Work Officer issued the following joint letter to residential and nursing care home providers regarding the implementation of care partners in care homes in Northern Ireland:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-cp-cno-cswo-letter-131120.pdf>

3.6 The Minister goes on to explain that care homes are actively encouraged to adhere to all aspects of the revised visiting guidelines, including the introduction of care partners. The expectation is that care homes continue to work to facilitate a range of visiting options, in accordance with the detail of the visiting guidance aligned with the Alert Level relevant at the particular time and the care home’s individual circumstances. All decisions will be based on

	a risk assessment of the environment and will rely on the ability to ensure social distancing and the safety of residents, staff and the visitor.
3.7	He then points out that he had, on 22nd October, announced an additional allocation of £27.3m to the care home sector, which includes financial support for a number of measures which require additional management time in order to respond to the impacts of Covid-19. £9m of that funding will be paid directly to care homes to reflect the cost of i). the rolling programme of testing for both residents and staff; ii.) overseeing safe visiting and setting up care arrangements; and iii). the increased management time needed to oversee homes.
3.8	Following that announcement, the Director of Mental Health, Disability and Older People wrote to care homes and Chief Executives of the Health and Social Care Trust to outline how organisations could apply for additional funding and how it would be allocated to homes. A copy of that letter is attached at Appendix 2.
3.9	The Minister concludes by stressing that his Department recognises that the role of the care partner is of critical importance to the health and safety of care home residents. Whilst it is acknowledged that the concept may be challenging for care homes to implement whilst mitigating against the transmission of Covid-19, where there are difficulties in progressing the role, Health and Social Care Trusts have been asked to support care homes to seek a solution as a matter of urgency.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.10	None associated with this report.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.11	None associated with this report.
4.0	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Response from the Minister of Health Appendix 2 - Letter from Director of Mental Health, Disability and Older People