

CONFUSED about the rules surrounding Covid-19? Don't worry you're in good company. Opinion polls show that most people are having problems keeping up with the myriad of rule changes the government has been announcing over the past few months. Now we have the latest set of regulations that will come into effect after the lockdown is over next week.

Some of these policies affect care homes, especially with regard to visiting. This week the BBC reported the government as saying that visiting will be widened from December, with relatives and friends allowed greater access to homes after taking tests.

The BBC quoted an official source saying: "Testing will be rolled out for care home visitors across England from December with every care home resident able to have two visitors tested twice a week. It means people who live in care homes will be able to hug relatives by the end of the month." It follows on from a pilot being carried out in 20 homes in the West Country.

However, when questioned on air, Health Secretary Matt Hancock was unable to confirm whether resources would be made available to support this. Similarly optimistic promises have been made to care homes before. So we'll wait and see, and make our own risk assessment before any change of policy. We'll report back to you as soon as we know the facts.

What is certain is that under the new post-Lockdown rules, residents of care homes aged over 65 will not be allowed to go home to join the "festive bubbles" among families that the government is permitting between December 23 and 27. This obviously applies to us at Springdene.

However, the good news is that our present visiting programme is up and running in all three homes – which, we're pleased to say, are Covid-free. Visitors do not need to take tests, and visits will take place in our kitted-out gazebos, which are cosy with powerful electric heaters. Do call to book an appointment. It will be great to have a gossip with your loved ones, especially with Christmas approaching.

We're delighted to say life in the homes is a hive of activity as ever and there's a big boost to our activities regime now Eirlys Roff, our new Group Activities Manager, is getting her feet under the table. Eirlys is already making a difference – and you will by now have seen the activities charts with attractive pictograms she sends out to all next of kin and friends every week.

Activities are at the heart of what we do. Right from the establishment of Springdene 52 years ago, founder directors Dr Arnold and Mrs June Powell made it a fundamental principle to provide a busy activities schedule every day of the week. In too many other homes, even now, residents sit around in circles either staring into space or aimlessly watching television.

At Springdene it could not be more different. Eirlys's charts show days packed with good things – ranging from singalongs to book clubs, from exercise classes to arts and crafts sessions. "Each home has its own special atmosphere and tastes, and we try to reflect that in what we do," says Eirlys.



For example, Springview's favourites are popular music and watching classic films, while at Spring Grove, folk are partial to quizzes, classical music and Scrabble. Residents at Spring Lane are particularly keen on arts and crafts. Balloon volleyball is one of the most popular activities in all three homes as well as baking (see delicious goodies being prepared at Spring Grove this week in picture left).

We're only too aware that since the advent of the pandemic, folk have been missing the entertainers and lecturers (and schoolchildren) who used to enliven the atmosphere in the homes every week. So now Eirlys, supported by Steve, Susie, Odile, Magda and Sally, is working on engaging entertainers virtually –

sometimes through Zoom, but also through entertainers recording their own DVDs and sending them to us.

The first spoken event took place this week with a live debate from the Abraham Debating Society on the "Jewish Gangsters of New York", streamed via Zoom. Everybody found it very interesting and there were questions afterwards.

The streaming technique has already worked very successfully through our "Artists 'n' Residents" concerts. The latest live-streamed recital on Wednesday featured pianist Katya Apekisheva, described as "a profoundly gifted artist" by *Gramophone* magazine. She was accompanied by violinist Patrick Savage, the former leader of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. There was something for everybody here, with music ranging from *Porgy and Bess* and *Fiddler on the Roof* to Chopin Nocturnes.

We can't wait for next week's recital on December 2 which will be performed by violinist Gaby Lester and Friends and include Mozart's Horn Quintet and Divertimento. You can tune in from home directly through the website

www.artistsandresidents.org. You are welcome to leave a comment or make a donation. It would be much appreciated.

Another popular innovation has been our Resident of the Week scheme. Congratulations to Rachel Kidd at Spring Grove, Peter Michelson at Spring Lane and Dr Allan Cook at Springview. Dr Cook, a former dentist and a talented guitar player, is looking forward to a glass or two of IPA with some cheesy straws as his special treat. He will enjoy his favourite roast chicken dinner as well as getting a hair and beard makeover.

Meanwhile preparations are in full swing for Hanukkah and Christmas, with residents having much fun helping to make the decorations. One of the great virtues of being a resident in a care home is that it is possible to enjoy a party (something currently forbidden to the rest of us!), and Spring Grove has prepared a splendid occasion for Hannukah next month.

There will be a feast of special food, music and, naturally, traditional dreidels will be on hand. We're very grateful to Emma Sinclair, granddaughter of resident Rose Kallenberg, for help setting this up. The other homes will be having their own celebrations, too.

Christmas got under way at Spring Lane this week, with folk painting the front windows on the theme of carols. It's already looking very jolly. At Spring Grove everybody was in good voice as Odile led the singing of favourite carols. Springview has a special post box outside (complete with snow and robin!) and relatives are invited to post a note to their loved ones to be read on Christmas Day. Don't worry if you can't call by, you can pop it in the mail to: Springview Reception, 10-12 Crescent Road, EN2 7BL.

As we went to press on Friday, Springview held its own tree-lighting ceremony, after residents had helped put up the decorations (see below). There was hot chocolate, marshmallows and roasted chestnuts to accompany. The proceedings were launched by residents Gladys Gathergood and Ken Newman, aged 107 and 99. With 206 years between them, that's a lot of Christmases past! And, we hope, there will be many more in the future, too!



Lastly, we are always grateful for the donations that are generously sent in by well-wishers to the homes, and this week we'd like to acknowledge a gift from Ms Emma Murphy who popped by at Spring Grove and donated 25 home-made visors. Thank you, Emma, they are very much appreciated.

Stay safe and stay well!.

Jeremy Balcombe
CEO Springdene Group