

Care Home Connections

Connecting loved ones using Alexa



Information for Care Homes

We know that using video call technology to keep residents in touch with their loved ones brings various challenges for residents, relatives and care home staff. We have heard of families using devices like Amazon Echo Dots to virtually "drop in" on residents without needing staff time to set-up and supervise the calls. These voice calls can be less intrusive than video, and less confusing for residents who may find video technology too much, but understand the concept of a phone call. Plus it uses less bandwidth on the Wi-Fi.

We want as many families as possible to be able to use this technology to keep in touch with their loved ones. We have therefore assembled guides for care homes and relatives on how to use this technology, and through a very successful crowdfunding appeal we have a number of these Alexa Echo Dots to give free to care home residents.

Of course, no technology can replace the experience of face-to-face visits. However, we have seen that Alexa can work "incredibly well" as a way to communicate and connect with care home residents until family and friends are able to visit them in person as frequently as they wish.

Glossary:

In this guide, **Device** means Amazon Alexa Echo Dot (as these are the devices we are providing - instructions for other devices may vary).

Important information:

- We recognise that this will only work well if the care home and relative work together with a shared understanding on how the device will be used. We have written a suggested agreement document to facilitate this, which can be viewed on our website [here](#).
- We **will post the Device directly to the care home** for the attention of the named member of staff the relative provides us with.

- The **Device will need to be set up by the relative** using their Amazon account details. We have provided instructions to relatives on how to do this, which can be viewed on our website [here](#) if you would like to see them.
- **The relative will need to come to the care home to set up the Device** so that they are in range of the care home's Wi-Fi network that the Device will be using. If they aren't able to go inside the care home, they should be able to complete the set-up process standing **outside** so long as they are in reach of the care home's Wi-Fi network and the Device's Bluetooth connection. We would suggest a member of staff plugs the Device in at reception and the relative stands near the front door.

Setting-up the Device

- A relative should be responsible for setting up the device as they will be using their Amazon account to control the Device.
- When the relative comes to the care home to set-up the Device at the time agreed with you, (they can do this from outside the home), you will need to plug the Device in for them and provide them with Wi-Fi details for them to link the Device to their Amazon Alexa app and the Wi-Fi details for the resident's room (if different).
- Once the relative has completed the set-up, you will need to unplug the Device, take it to the resident's room and plug it in there. Ideally the Device should be placed at least 20cm from any walls.

Notes for care home staff

- If you change the care home's Wi-Fi details, the relative will need to visit the care home to update the Device with the new details using their Alexa app. Again, this can be done from outside if necessary.
- The Device will only "listen" to the room when someone says "Alexa" (which wakes the Device) or when a Drop In call is received. Unless the light on the Device is on, then the Device is not operating.
- If you want to ensure a Drop In call is not received during a certain time period (e.g. when the resident is being helped with personal care) you can press the mute button (the circle with a line through it) at any time and the Device will light up red. Simply press the button again to turn mute off.
- The Device can also be scheduled with a repeating Do Not Disturb period (useful for ensuring it does not operate after the resident's bedtime). This needs to be

set-up via the relative's Alexa app – instructions are included in the relative's guide.

- Relatives have been given the following suggested wording to start a Drop In. You can help the resident understand the Device by referring to it using the same phrases as their family use - that way they won't hear a sudden voice in the room but will hopefully understand it's a special phone that they don't need to pick up. We have suggested relatives start the call with something easy for the resident to understand, for example "Hi Mum! It's Ian on the Alexa phone".
- You may wish to get the Device to "recognise" the resident's voice so that Alexa knows their name and can communicate more personally with them. To do this, ask the resident to say "Alexa learn my voice" and then follow Alexa's instructions together.