

Care Home Connections

Connecting with a loved one using Alexa



Information for Relatives

An Alexa device provides a way for you to chat with your loved one in a care home, without them needing to pick up a phone, or needing a member of the care home staff to set up the call. This sheet provides information on the initial set-up of the device.

Glossary:

In this guide the following words have these meanings:

Alexa: the so-called “brains” of the software and the name of the voice of the Device.

Device: Amazon Alexa Echo Dot (as these are the devices we are providing - instructions for other devices may vary).

Mobile: your personal smartphone or tablet device that you will use to communicate with the resident.

You: the relative or other individual setting up the Device to communicate with a care home resident.

Important information:

- We **will post the Device directly to the care home** for the attention of the named member of staff you provide us with, along with instructions for the staff on what they need to do to help you set up the device. If you would like to see the instructions we have sent them, they can be [downloaded from our website here](#).
- The **Device will need to be set up by you** using your Amazon account details (you can set up a free account at <https://www.amazon.co.uk> if you don't already have one).
- **You will need to go to the care home to set up the Device** so that you are in range of the care home's Wi-Fi network that the Device will be using. If you aren't able to go inside the care home, you should be able to complete the set-up process standing **outside** so long as you 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 you stand near the front door.

- On the advice and experience of other relatives who have successfully used an Alexa to stay in touch with their loved one at a care home, we have drawn up **an informal agreement**, for use between you and the care home staff, on how the device will be used. This is to cover eventualities such as the staff needing to interrupt your conversation with your loved one to help with personal care, or to ensure if you are playing music through the device that it does not disturb other residents. You can read the agreement via our website [here](#).

We have included “How To Guides” on the following pages, including: setting-up the Device, “Dropping In” and granting permission for others to “Drop In” on the resident.

Before you go to the care home:

1. Create an Amazon account if you do not already have one. You will not be able to use the Device without one. You can create a free account at <https://www.amazon.co.uk>
2. Download the free Amazon Alexa app onto your mobile from your mobile’s app store. (On an Android phone this will be Google Play, on an iPhone it is the App Store). Simply search for Amazon Alexa in the app store and click download).
3. Open the Alexa app on your mobile
4. Sign in with your Amazon account details
5. Go through the set-up procedure on your mobile
6. Select allow Alexa to access your contacts
7. Select allow Alexa to send you notifications (you can later change this in your settings)
8. Add your phone number
9. You do not need the Device to learn your voice, so you can skip this step. If you would like the Device set-up to recognise the resident’s voice and call them by their name, we have included information on how to do this in the care home’s guide since it will probably be the staff who need to do this in the resident’s room.

How to set up the Device at the care home:

You will need to organise a time to do this with the care home staff as they will need to help, especially if you are unable to go into the care home due to visiting restrictions.

1. You or the staff need to plug in the Device. A blue light will spin around the top for about a minute and then Alexa will greet you and ask you to complete the set-up process in the app on your mobile.

2. Make sure that Bluetooth on your mobile is turned on. You can do this you're your mobile settings.
3. Open the Amazon Alexa app which you previously downloaded on your mobile phone. Select "More" at the bottom right hand corner, then "Add a Device" at the top, then "Amazon Echo" and then "Echo, Echo Dot, Echo Plus and more"
4. The app will ask if your Echo is plugged in and in Set-up mode. The Device should be showing an orange ring of lights - if the Device is not lit up, press and hold the button on the Device with a dot in the middle - and then select "Yes" on your app.
5. Select the Device from the list of Available Devices.
6. Select the care home's Wi-Fi network and connect to it. The Device must be nearby, plugged in and in Bluetooth pairing mode.
7. The app will ask if you want to add the Device's location - this is useful if you wish the resident to be able to ask Alexa about the weather and other things in that area.
8. You should get a screen saying your Echo Dot is connected.
9. The Device can now be unplugged and taken to the resident's room to be plugged in there. You will be able to complete all other steps from your own home.

How to communicate with the resident using Alexa

You can use the "Drop In" feature to connect to the Device and chat to the resident whenever and wherever you want to. This works like a phone call to the resident that they don't need answer. You / the care home staff can explain to the resident that the Alexa is a special phone that they don't need to pick up.

We have prepared [this short video](#) to show you the steps to Drop In and what the resident will experience in their room.

1. Open your Alexa app and select "Communicate" from the menu at the bottom.
2. Towards the top, select "Drop In".
3. If "Drop In" is not currently enabled, your app will direct you to "settings" where you simply slide the button next to "Drop In" right to enable it. Then return to the "Communicate" window and tap on "Drop In" again.
4. A box will appear saying "Drop in on my Devices" - tap the Device you want to connect to. N.B. make sure you use the "Drop In" option rather than the phone call function (as phone calls require the recipient to answer a phone).

5. Your mobile screen will attempt to connect to the Device. Start your call with something easy for the resident to understand, for example “Hi Mum! It’s Ian on the Alexa phone”.
6. The light on the resident’s Device will turn green and they will hear a short “chime noise” followed by you saying your greeting. You can now proceed to chat to them.
7. To end the chat press the hang up icon on your app.

How to give permission for others to drop in on that resident

1. Make sure the person you are giving permission to has installed and set up the Alexa app on their mobile. They will need to have an Amazon account to do this.
2. Open the Alexa app on your mobile.
3. Click the “communicate” speech bubble icon at the bottom of the screen.
4. Click the contact (person) icon at the top right hand corner of your screen.
5. Find the person you want to give permission to and click on their name.
6. Click “allow drop in”. If “allow drop in” does not show up for that individual it means they do not have the Alexa app set up on their mobile.
7. Your permitted contact will receive a notification to their own Alexa device (if they have one) or their Alexa app, and can then Drop In on the resident following the same steps set out under the “how to communicate” section above.
8. Only people you grant permission to via the Alexa app will be able to Drop In on the resident’s device so you have complete control over this.

How to update the Device’s Wi-Fi network if the care home changes their Wi-Fi details

1. You will need to visit the care home again so that you are in range of the care home’s Wi-Fi network.
2. On your Alexa app select “Devices” at the bottom, then tap on the resident’s Device.
3. Under Wi-Fi Network tap “change”.
4. The app will ask if your Echo is plugged in and in Set-up mode. The Device should be showing an orange ring of lights - if the Device is not lit up, press and hold the button on the Device with a dot in the middle - and then select “Yes”.
5. Select the Device from the list of Available Devices.
6. Select care home’s Wi-Fi network and connect to it.
7. You should get a screen saying your Echo Dot is connected.

Other Useful Settings

You can also change various other settings via your Alexa app.

1. On your Alexa app select “Devices” at the bottom, then “Echo & Alexa”, then tap on the resident’s Device.
2. **Audio** - move the toggle to set the volume level of the Device. N.B. the volume can also be adjusted at the care home using the buttons on the Device.
3. **Do Not Disturb** - set up a scheduled time each day that Alexa won’t disturb the resident apart from any alarms or timers that have been set up. Useful for overnight.

Other Useful Features

The resident can also use the Device for other things, for example:

1. **Ask questions:** ask any question (useful for finding out information or checking crossword clues), e.g. “Alexa, what day is it today?” “Alexa, what is the weather like today?”
2. **Music:** you can link the Device to specific playlists (e.g. on Spotify or other accounts – you would need to set these up and there may be costs payable to the music provider). Alternatively, the resident can ask Alexa to play a specific radio station or genre of music, e.g. “Alexa, play Classic FM” or “Alexa, play Jazz”. Radio stations and “genre requests” will be played free (but may have adverts).
3. **Audiobooks:** you could sign up for Audible or other audiobook providers (N.B there may be a cost from the provider to use these services) and then the resident can ask Alexa to play an audiobook to them.
4. **Spiritual resources:** e.g. the Church of England has a special section for smart home speakers (such as this Device) to access daily prayers and services. Find out how to access their free resources here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/faith-action/our-smart-speaker-apps>
5. **Spiritual / pastoral care:** You can give a spiritual / pastoral leader access to Drop In for a chat, private prayer, bible readings etc.
6. **Set reminders:** e.g. drinking water or other useful things they’d like Alexa to remind them about.
7. If the resident has the capacity, they can use it to Drop In on friends and family who also have an Alexa device and who have granted the resident’s Device permission to Drop In on them.