Information for Visitors

Visiting arrangements from 20 December 2021

The importance of support from family members to people in hospital cannot be overstated, bringing comfort to family, patients and staff. However, we need to carefully balance this with the additional potential risks to patients, family members and staff that visiting brings, particularly with the increasing rate of transmission of the Omicron variant and potential impact this may have on vulnerable patients.

The following provides details of the agreed visiting arrangements across NHSGGC from Monday 20 December 2021:

- Patients in shared accommodation such as nightingale type wards and 4 and 6 bedded bays will be able to have essential visits only.
- Patients in single room accommodation will be able to benefit from the support of one visitor. This visitor can change each day.
- Two visitors per day is recommended for patients in paediatrics, neonates and maternity wards.
- Mental Health, Addictions and Learning Disabilities staff will make a visiting plan with each patient based on their individual needs and circumstance, and the local risks that present in each ward.
- In line with infection prevention and control practice, wards with current active infection cases are required to temporarily restrict visiting to essential visits.
- As always, there may be some individual patients who are particularly vulnerable to the risks of infection. For these patients, visiting will remain at essential visits only.

Arrangements are being kept under close review. We understand the vital support that family provide and are sorry for how this will affect you and your family. We will help you to remain in contact with them using other means as much as possible.

Exceptions to the above arrangements

In some cases, the family member chosen to visit may need to be accompanied by another person, for example a child visiting a parent or sibling, or a frail elderly person who cannot attend the hospital independently. Ward staff will facilitate the presence of this additional person and will explain how we will support this.

The person providing support can be changed if required, for example if a person in hospital needs support from a different person for a variety of reasons, or if the person who has been providing support becomes unwell, needs a rest or is unable to visit for some other reason.

However, changing the named person every day would not be expected in normal circumstances.

On Christmas Day and Boxing Day 2021, patients in shared accommodation will be able to have one visitor, for one visit, on either the 25th or 26th December.
Key guidance and safety measures in place across all NHSGGC wards

1. Flexibility and compassion
This guidance will be applied with as much flexibility and compassion as possible. Consideration will be taken to assess each patient’s needs on an individual basis.

2. Lateral Flow Device Testing
You should have a **negative lateral flow test** a maximum of 24 hours prior to your visit – the nearer to the visit the better.

Information on how to order Lateral Flow Tests is on the [Scottish Government’s website](http://www.scottishgovernment.gov.uk).

3. Other safety measures
You must wear a Fluid-resistant surgical masks (FRSM) (not a face covering) for the duration of your visit to a hospital building, unless exempt. Clear face masks are available for you to use, if the person you are visiting needs to read your lips. Please speak to staff on the ward if you require this.

**Clean your hands** using hand sanitiser before and after you leave the ward or department and when you touch anything.

**Two metres distance** should be maintained from others. You are able to touch your relative or friend (for example, hold their hand, hug or kiss them) – however, please remember that keeping a 2 metre distance wherever possible will reduce the chances of COVID-19 or other respiratory viruses spreading to you, your relative or friend, other patients, and staff.

**Respiratory hygiene** also remains important, please cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, wiping or blowing your nose. You should throw the disposable tissue in a bin immediately and wash your hands.

Where possible you should use the toilet facilities provided for members of the public. We prefer that you do not use patient and staff toilets, unless there is no other option available.

There might be situations where staff will need to ask you to use Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) – **such as a face mask, apron, gloves etc.** If this is required, the staff will help you to put this on correctly and to dispose of it before you leave.

Avoid communal gatherings in public areas of the hospital. Take the stairs if possible to avoid waiting in lift lobbies. Try to avoid moving round the hospital as much as you can. It may be possible to go a walk with the person outwith the ward as long as you follow safety measures – please check with the ward staff.

Retail and food outlets are open on all our hospital sites. If using any of these facilities, you must make sure you take all the necessary safety measures required – wear your face mask, maintain a 2 metre distance, provide your contact details for Trace and Protect, apply hand sanitiser etc.
4. Privacy and dignity
There may be situations where staff may have to ask you to step outside the ward temporarily or to leave the ward during your visit. We will always explain when this is necessary. Your support and understanding when this is necessary is appreciated to ensure everyone’s safety and privacy.

5. Arranging a visit
If you are chosen to visit, please contact the ward to arrange a visit in advance, to ensure we can all follow physical distancing rules.

It is important that you do not come to the ward without an appointment – we may need to ask you to leave and come back at another time.

You can find a list of telephone numbers for all wards and departments on the NHSGGC website or you can contact the hospital switchboard.

6. When visiting may not be possible
COVID-19 is still with us and can be transmitted easily. To reduce risks careful attention to infection prevention and control measures around family support still need to be maintained.

There are many vulnerable patients in our hospital wards and in particular, some types of illness and types of treatments where we need to proceed with extreme caution, ensure a risk assessment is undertaken appropriately, and reassess as and when circumstances change.

If a visit is not possible, we will provide you with an explanation why this is necessary. We will keep this under review where possible and will reassess as circumstances change.

You must not attend if you are unwell, if you are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 or have been advised to self-isolate for another reason.

7. Guidance on essential visits
If there is a need to further restrict visiting to a particular ward or area for example due to an outbreak of COVID-19 or rapidly increasing community transmission, essential visits will continue.

Examples of the type of situations where “essential visiting” will be supported are:
- a birth partner supporting a woman during hospital visits.
- a person receiving end-of-life care, to support patients at the end of life spending meaningful time with their loved ones in their final days, weeks, or months.
• to support someone with a mental health issue, or dementia, or a learning disability or autism, where not being present would cause the patient to be distressed
• when someone is receiving information about life-changing illness or treatments
• to accompany a child in hospital
• a child in hospital is entitled to have one or both parents or carers present to support them. A child in hospital should be allowed visits from siblings or other children
• In these and other similar situations where support from another person is essential for advocacy and wellbeing.

Staff will take as flexible, person centred, and compassionate an approach as possible in applying this guidance.

Carers, those providing essential care or emotional support, or spiritual care are not considered visitors for the purposes of this guidance and will continue to be permitted to attend a patient in hospital, including in areas where essential visits only are in place.

8. Person Centred Virtual Visiting
Where in-person support is not possible, all patients will be supported to use the hospital iPad or their own personal device to maintain family contact. Further information about Person Centred Virtual Visiting is available on the NHSGGC website.

9. Give and Go
The successful ‘Give and Go Service’ is available for family to drop-off essential personal items for patients and to pick up laundry etc.

The service will be available at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, the Royal Alexandra Hospital and the Beatson, from 12pm – 5pm Monday to Friday. Local arrangements will be in operation in all other sites. Please speak to ward staff on other sites who will advise of local arrangements for dropping off and collecting belongings. Further information can be found on the Give and Go Webpage.

10. Further information
Further information about the new visiting arrangements is available on the NHSGGC Website.

If you require this information in an accessible format such as large print or Braille, or in a community language, please email person.centred@ggc.scot.nhs.uk