

## Directorate of the Chief Nurse

# VISITORS POLICY

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Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust actively seeks to promote equality of opportunity. The Trust seeks to ensure that no employee, service user, or member of the public is unlawfully discriminated against for any reason, including the "protected characteristics" as defined in the Equality Act 2010. These principles will be expected to be upheld by all who act on behalf of the Trust, with respect to all aspects of Equality.

## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 Northern Lincolnshire & Goole NHS Foundation Trust cares for many vulnerable people and must take measures to control the environment in which that care is delivered. The Trust is committed to working to meet the needs of patients and their visitors whilst also promoting safety, privacy and dignity, and infection control.
- 1.2 This policy is supported by a visitor information leaflet which is available via the Trust website and also included in the Patient Bedside Folder in all inpatient areas. This provides patients and their visitors with additional information which they may need to ensure that they understand why adherence to the policy is important.

## 2.0 Area

This policy will apply to all inpatient areas of the Trust, across all sites except the following specialised areas due to the specific needs of the patients in these areas:

- Coronary Care Units
- Medical Assessment/Clinical Decision Units
- Intensive Care Units
- Children's Wards
- Neonatal Intensive Care Units
- Maternity Wards

## 3.0 Duties

- 3.1 It will be the responsibility of the Matrons to ensure the successful implementation of this policy, with the support of Operational Group Teams.
- 3.2 Staff with responsibility for the application of this policy are:
- All Nursing and Midwifery Staff
  - All ward-based Patient Administration Staff

## 4.0 Actions

### 4.1 Patient Care Interventions

In recognition of the greater restrictions placed upon visitors, the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse or Midwife in Charge will ensure that, wherever possible, clinical interventions will be minimised during visiting hours.

## 4.2 Circumstances Requiring Special Consideration

The Ward Sister/Charge Nurse or Midwife in Charge of each clinical area is responsible for the implementation of this policy, and may make exceptional allowances in the following situations:

- Where the patient is receiving palliative care and/or when specific support and care is required, for example for patients with Learning Disabilities, patients known to be dying, and when carers provide a significant amount of care to the patient
- In other individual, exceptional and specific circumstances, to meet special needs of a patient. Examples may include circumstances where a patient is particularly vulnerable and for visitors to avoid prolonged travelling, or in response to public transport issues

## 4.3 Guiding Principles of This Policy

4.3.1 To ensure that this policy is adhered to the Trust will:

- support the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse or Midwife in Charge as the gatekeepers of this policy
- provide exception guidance to support specific patient needs

4.3.2 In order to provide a safe, clean and comforting environment, visitors are asked to respect the following rules.

## 4.4 Agreed Visiting Times

The Agreed Visiting Times will be displayed at the entrance to the ward areas.

## 4.5 Visitor Code

4.5.1 In circumstances where visits outside of normal visiting times are considered to be in the patients' best interest and not detrimental to the care of others, special permission may be granted by the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse or Midwife in Charge and recorded in the patient care plan. This supports the Trust Policy on the Involvement of Carers in Patient Care Provided in Hospital.

4.5.2 All visitors are asked to help the hospital staff to help those in our care by adhering to the following simple rules:

- Please observe the visiting times indicated for each ward
- Adhere to the maximum numbers of visitors allowed. This is 2 visitors at the bedside at any time, unless special permission is granted by the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse or Midwife in Charge
- Please note that if a clinical procedure needs to be undertaken in a ward area you may be asked to leave the ward temporarily. The clinical procedure may not be affecting the patient you are visiting, but may be in the same bay

- Do not visit if you are unwell:
  - Visitors should be free of any symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea for 72 hours before coming to the ward
  - With reference to coughs and colds and other infections you should be symptom free before coming to the wards
- Use the hand rub provided as you enter and leave the ward
- When visiting a ward that is closed due to an outbreak, soap and water hand wash should be used
- Wash and dry your hands after visiting the toilet
- Do not sit on the bed or use the patients' toilets. Only use toilets designated for visitors
- Do not share your relative's toiletries, tissues etc. or items of hospital equipment with other patients, unless it has been approved by a member of the nursing team
- Do not visit wearing a uniform worn in other health care settings, e.g. nursing/residential care homes
- Do not touch your relatives' or friends' wound, or any devices such as drips or catheters
- When visiting patients who are being nursed in Isolation Rooms, check with the Nurse/Midwife in charge about any precautions that need to be taken
- Talk to the Nurse or Midwife in Charge, or ask to see the Matron if you have any concerns about the cleanliness of the hospital environment

## **4.6 Visitor Pledge**

### **4.6.1** What we will do for you, as visitors:

- We will introduce ourselves, treating you with respect and politeness
- We will give you our names so you know who you've spoken to
- We will strive to answer any questions you may have, in a way that you can understand, whilst always respecting the confidentiality of our patients
- We will offer you a private place to talk if you wish, wherever possible
- We will always try to be flexible if you have special visiting needs, please speak to the ward staff
- We will always strive to deal with any issues that you have in an appropriate and timely manner but ask that you speak to the ward or department as the first point of contact

#### 4.6.2 What we would like you, as visitors to do:

- Please always behave in a respectful manner to all our staff. We do not accept aggressive or abusive behaviour being directed toward us or others
- Please agree as a family who will call the hospital, so that one person makes the call and gives feedback to everyone – this will help free up staff from answering the telephone and enable them to spend more time at the patient's bedside
- Please respect that if you turn up outside of visiting hours you may not be able visit. Please always make these arrangements with the ward staff
- Please be respectful whilst using your mobile phone whilst making sure you do not inconvenience others. It may be appropriate to make calls off the ward area and it would be considerate to have your phone on silent mode, thank you. The taking of photos with mobile devices is not allowed, this is to protect the privacy and dignity of others in our care
- We ask that you are mindful that any actions which may lead to staff, patients or other member of the public feeling vulnerable will be dealt with according to Trust policies and procedures

#### 4.7 Children

Patients' children/grandchildren may visit following discussion with the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse or Midwife in Charge and subject to the following conditions:

- that they are supervised by a responsible adult at all times, acknowledging that they will, politely, be asked to leave if they roam the ward or disturb other patients
- that they follow the above criteria for visiting e.g. use of hand rub, not sitting on beds etc
- that the patient/parent accepts that there may be times, due to unforeseen ward activity, that visiting by children may be not be allowed e.g. during emergencies
- in some circumstances, visiting may be possible outside of the ward environment. Please discuss this with the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse or Midwife in Charge
- Please do not change baby's nappies on the wards. Nappy changing facilities are available in visitors toilets

#### 4.8 Chaplaincy

- 4.8.1** Chaplains are employed by the Trust and work in the hospital alongside other members of the clinical team to ensure that patients' stays in hospital are as positive as possible. Chaplains are available for all people, whether they have a faith or not.

**4.8.2** Chaplains are also there to support visitors to the hospitals. Sometimes having a friend or loved one in hospital can be a worrying time, the Chaplains are happy to meet with visitors and can be contacted through ward staff or by asking the hospital switchboard to contact the Chaplaincy Office. The Chapels in our hospitals are also open for all to use, and we encourage visitors to make use of these quiet and peaceful spaces.

**4.8.3** The Trust Chaplaincy Office can be contacted on (01724) 203474.

#### **4.9 Zero Tolerance – Violent, Threatening and Abusive Behaviour**

**4.9.1** The Trust and its staff are committed to providing high quality care to patients and giving consideration to the needs of their visitors. However, all patients and visitors are advised that the following inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated:

- Swearing
- Threatening/Abusive Behaviour
- Verbal/Physical Abuse

**4.9.2** The Trust reserves the right to withdraw visiting rights from patients who are threatening/abusive/violent and will ensure the removal of those persons from the premises.

**4.9.3** All acts of criminal violence and aggression will be notified to the Police immediately.

#### **5.0 Monitoring Compliance and Effectiveness**

**5.1** To ensure compliance at Ward level, Matrons will receive feedback on the application of the policy from Ward Sisters/Charge Nurses. This will include the effect on patients, and on the ability of visitors to comply with Infection Control Policies and Procedures.

**5.2** A measure of the effectiveness of this policy will be a review of the number of PALS concerns and Formal Complaints made to the Trust in relation to visiting arrangements, or arising from the implementation of this policy, to be reported to the Matrons Forum each quarter. The views of patients as reflected in their responses to questionnaires, inpatient surveys etc. will be considered.

**5.3** This policy will be reviewed by the Matrons Forum on a regular basis in light of the needs of the Trust.

#### **6.0 Associated Documents**

**6.1** NL&G Infection Control Top tips for Visitors.

**6.2** NL&G Information for Visitors.

## 7.0 References

- 7.1 NL&G Infection Control Policy.
- 7.2 NL&G Policy on the Involvement of Carers in Patient Care Provided in Hospital.

## 8.0 Definitions

None.

## 9.0 Consultation

This policy has been widely circulated throughout all Clinical Operational Groups. Consideration has been given to the comments received from the Patient Visiting Questionnaire carried out in 2006. Input was sought from Operational Groups Clinical Governance Committees, the Matron's Forum and via the Trust Intranet Document Consultation page.

## 10.0 Dissemination

This document will be readily available throughout the Trust via the intranet site, and will be brought to the attention of all Ward Sisters/Charge Nurses and their staff through their Matron. The policy and the Visitor Code will be more widely publicised via the Trust Internet site, and, on occasions, through the local Press and included in the Patient Bedside Folder.

## 11.0 Equality Act (2010)

- 11.1 In accordance with the Equality Act (2010), the Trust will make reasonable adjustments to the workplace so that an employee with a disability, as covered under the Act, should not be at any substantial disadvantage. The Trust will endeavour to develop an environment within which individuals feel able to disclose any disability or condition which may have a long term and substantial effect on their ability to carry out their normal day to day activities.
- 11.2 The Trust will wherever practical make adjustments as deemed reasonable in light of an employee's specific circumstances and the Trust's available resources paying particular attention to the Disability Discrimination requirements and the Equality Act (2010).

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