



**Addendum to the Trust Visiting Policy  
Revised Visiting Guidance - Supporting Family Presence &  
Participation with patients and/or residents during COVID**

**31 May 2022**

**Update Version 0.7 – 31 May 2022**

## Version Control Table

Date	Version	Document Revision Description	Document Author
03/07/2020	0.1	First document	Dr Bob Brown
15/09/2020	0.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk assessment for visitors</li> <li>• Visitor contact details retained for 21 days</li> <li>• Exemption from wearing a face covering</li> </ul>	Dr Bob Brown
25/09/2020	0.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits for a maximum of ONE hour, for no more than ONE visit per week</li> </ul>	Dr Bob Brown
07/05/21	0.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated DoH Guidance Implementation date 7 May 2021</li> </ul>	Dr Bob Brown
28/05/2021	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care Home visitors * 3 per week</li> </ul>	Dr Bob Brown
17/01/2022	0.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update required for implementation of temporary Visiting Restrictions</li> </ul>	Mrs Donna Keenan
31/05/2022	0.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated for <b>WHSCT Pathway moving towards normalised visiting</b></li> </ul>	Mrs Donna Keenan

## ***Changes to Our Visiting Policy:***

### **Trust Facilities Visiting Guidance - Supporting Family Presence & Participation with patients and/or residents during COVID 19.**

The Department of Health issued its updated COVID-19: REGIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR VISITING IN NORTHERN IRELAND A Pathway to Enhanced Visiting (Published 30 April 2021), with an implementation date of 7 May 2021, with a four week review period, dependent on local arrangements being in place to safely facilitate the resumption of visiting. Specific Guidance has been issued for Nursing and Residential Care Homes.

Set out below is the Western Trust's Updated Visiting Guidance which will be kept under review and updated to reflect the Regional Surge Level Position.

The Trust will adhere as close as possible to the regional guidance, unless specific circumstances dictates otherwise.

#### **Introduction**

This guidance will be issued as an addendum to the WHSCT '***Hospital Visiting Policy – Supporting Family Presence & Participation***' – April 2017. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing of our patients, communities and individuals and teams remain our absolute priority.

This Visiting Guidance was developed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, to facilitate visiting while the Trust was in a Pre or Low Surge state (evidence of community spread and/or increasing numbers of hospital admissions) and has been revised in response to regional direction following increased surge situations at various stages during 2020/21. The Guidance is subject to change should any individual Ward or Facility have two or more confirmed or suspected cases in either patients/residents or staff of Covid 19, in which case all visiting will cease. Our priority is to safeguard and protect people who are receiving care and protect our Health Care Workers so that they are able to care for patients and families.

- Please note that at times it may be necessary to implement temporary Visiting Restrictions to our facilities and when this happens, these changes, together with any relevant specific detail, will be notified via our public website here:
  - <https://westerntrust.hscni.net/western-trust-covid-19-information-updates/western-trust-covid19-visiting-guidance/>

The Trust will consider special circumstances relating to visiting, for example, people receiving End of Life care.

### **Particular considerations to support visiting**

- The decision to permit visitors into Trust facilities will on a day to day basis, lie with the nurse-in-charge, in hospital settings, and the home manager in trust residential home settings. This will depend on the ability to ensure social distancing and safety of both patients/residents and the visitor. Visiting was only restricted because it was absolutely necessary to do so to protect against the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 virus and the subsequent development of COVID-19 infection. Given progress has been made, the time is now right to take steps to carefully enhance visiting arrangements. Where possible virtual visiting remains an option, to support this all areas will continue to facilitate virtual visiting.
- Before visiting, the Ward Sister/Charge Nurse/Home Manager/admitting nurse will advise the nominated visitors of the arrangements for visiting.
- The nominated visitor must be informed that they must not attend if they have had any symptoms consistent with COVID 19, are a close contact of a positive case or have travelled from a country not exempted from the safe travel corridor and have been advised to self-quarantine
- On admission, each patient/resident will be asked to name two people as their nominated visitors from no more than two households.
- It is important that each nominated visitor is risk assessed at each visit to establish if they have and COVID19 related symptoms. Visitors who indicate that they have any symptoms consistent with Covid-19 will not be permitted to visit. The visitors contact details (Name, phone number) will be recorded in the visiting book to assist with contact tracing if required. *See attached template at **Appendix One**. Based on PHE Guidance, these details will retained for a period of up to 21 days*
- If nominated visitors show any of the symptoms of coronavirus or feels unwell they must not visit, even if these symptoms are mild or unconfirmed, due to the risk they pose to others. This is an essential infection prevention and control measure.
- In certain circumstances, it may be possible to change the name of the nominated visitor due to changing personal or work commitments; while adhering to the requirement that nominations come from two households. This will be at the discretion of Ward sister/charge nurse, home manager. In the event that the names of the nominated visitor change, it is important that the contact tracing details be recorded for the newly nominated visitor.
- **The number of visitors at the bedside is limited to ONE daily visit from one of three nominated individuals, where this can be accommodated within COVID19 secure environments, the duration of the visit should be agreed with the person in charge. The Trust has developed a pathway for normalising visiting which is outlined in *Appendix 6*.** The Trust is currently at 'Cautious First Steps' stage along this pathway.
- In multi-bedded bays that accommodate between four and six patients, there will be a maximum of two visitors allowed to visit in a bay at a time and this will be factored in when organising the visiting times for the day (e.g. this means a maximum of two visitors for four patients in an open bay area).

- Visitors will be informed in advance about what to expect when they see the patient and, be given practical advice about social distancing, wearing personal protective equipment if appropriate, hand washing and risks associated i.e. the removal of gloves to hold hands.
- An information leaflet and Poster will be available detailing the Do's and Don'ts of visiting within Western Trust facilities. *See attached Poster at **Appendix Two**.*
- The nominated visitor will be informed of the time slot allocated to them by the Ward/Facility. There may be local negotiation with staff and families to ensure the time suits the nominated person to visit and ensure that visiting numbers are spread across the visiting times as possible.
- All people visiting Health and Social Care Settings and Care Home settings will be required to wear face coverings for the foreseeable future, and to ensure they keep their face covering in place throughout their visit to the ward or facility. People will be required to supply their own face covering, and will not be permitted to enter the facility without it. *See attached advice on Wearing a Face Covering at **Appendix Three**.*
- In circumstances where a visitor claims exemption from wearing a face covering, the social distancing measure of 2 meters must be strictly observed and adhered to.
- Visitors may not be permitted to Wards in certain circumstances, such as where there is considered to be increased risk or vulnerability to patients, and where this applies local guidance and information will be available at Ward level. Patients and relatives will be informed of the reasons for a “No Visiting approach”. It is important that any area that works outside of the regional and Trust visiting guidance undertakes and documents an appropriate risk assessment and reports this to the Visiting Reset Group chaired by the Executive Director of Nursing. Communication with and involvement of patients and families in reaching such decisions is essential.
- Patients requiring special assistance with communication, for e.g., interpreters and individualised care in specific circumstances (such as a person with individual needs and requiring enhanced emotional support) may have a carer attend while they are in hospital – this person does not count as a visitor. This person will be required to be risk assessed and leave their contact details for any area that they are required to visit, to facilitate contact tracing if required. They will be required to practice social distancing and to wear appropriate PPE that enables, for example, the patient to lip read via the provision of a special mask.
- No children (up to 16 years) will be allowed to visit until further notice.
- People attending for clinic appointments will be required to wear face coverings for the duration of their visit to the clinic or as otherwise directed by clinical staff. Instructions will be provided in Appointment Letters. Communication with persons attending an outpatient clinic should also include notice that only the person booked for an appointment should attend, unless they require mobility or personal care assistance – this is to maintain a secure COVID-19 social distancing environment.
- If the nominated visitors has a hearing impairment they must inform the Ward sister/ charge nurse or home manager and alternative arrangements will be put in place to facilitate a visit where the patient and or the visitor relies on lip reading to communicate.

All visiting will be subject to risk assessment, and as situations change, we may amend the guidance in a specific ward or home at short notice. We ask that the public continue to work in partnership with us, by following the COVID-19 secure environment guidance (face covering, 2m social distancing, frequent hand washing, good room ventilation, use of appropriate PPE when requested) and follow the direction of the nurse in charge of the unit you are visiting.

We appreciate your assistance and understanding as we endeavour to protect patients and visitors during this pandemic and equally to protect our Health and Care workers.

### **Visiting Arrangements**

Visiting times whilst restricted will vary to assist the Trust to manage footfall of people in hospital and community facilities, and to maintain a safe environment for our patients and health care workers. The nominated visitors will be provided with a designated time to visit.

**Duration of visiting time – Strictly up to a maximum duration of One Hour, daily and to one patient.**

#### **Acute and Community Hospitals**

**Visiting times whilst restricted will vary from 2pm and up to 8pm each day, excluding Maternity whose times are noted below.**

- **Inpatient wards** - One daily visit from one of three nominated individuals can be permitted, where this can be accommodated within COVID secure environments.
- **Hospice Facilities** - Omagh Hospital Palliative Care Ward is considered a hospice facility and aligns its visiting principles to the Regional Hospice services guidance.
- **Intensive Care Units** - One daily visit from one of three nominated individuals can be permitted, where this can be accommodated within COVID secure environments. Visiting will be more flexible in exceptional circumstances.
- **Emergency Department** – Due to inability to ensure a social distance of 2 metres, it is not possible for one person to be facilitated to accompany each patient at the Emergency Department. Where possible the patient attending ED should do so alone, except where they have mobility or other impairment that requires them to be accompanied by one other person.
- **Outpatient Appointments** - Due to inability to ensure a social distance of 2 metres, it is not possible for one person to be facilitated to accompany each patient at all outpatient appointments. Where possible the patient attending for the appointment should do so alone, except where they have mobility or other impairment that requires them to be accompanied by one other person.
- **Radiology Department** (Including Breast Screening appointments) - One person only to be facilitated to accompany each patient where the environment is COVID secure exceptions are in the following circumstances:
  - Patient is unable to understand or communicate with staff,
  - Patient requires physical or emotional assistance beyond that which Radiology staff can provide.

- Patient is a child, so must be accompanied by a parent or chaperone. In these cases one person only to accompany patient.
- **Foetal Anomaly scanning** - Women attending for Anomaly scanning may be accompanied by one nominated person.
- **Any patient developing COVID19 symptoms prior to their appointment should contact their local Radiology Department for rescheduling advice**
- For all attendances at Radiology a face covering must be worn.
  
- **Cancer/Burns/Renal Units** – One person only to be facilitated to accompany each patient where the environment is COVID secure. This is subject to local discretion in response to individualised risk assessment due to the vulnerability of the patients being cared for in these units.
- **Day Procedure Units** – Due to inability to ensure a social distance of 2 metres, it is NOT possible for one person to be facilitated to accompany each patient attending for a day procedure as well as other short stay elective admissions. Where possible the patient attending for the appointment should do so alone, except where they have mobility or other impairment that requires them to be accompanied by one other person.
- **Maternity Wards** - One daily visit from one of two nominated adults can attend will be permitted in our inpatient wards. The midwife in charge will decide the duration and timing of the visits and always within the confines of maintaining a COVID secure environment.
- **Maternity Outpatient's - Scan and antenatal appointments**
  - One partner may accompany a woman attending antenatal appointments
    - We have to adhere to 2-metre social distancing in our outpatient settings - in particular, the waiting areas. While you are welcome to bring your partner to all appointments, please be aware that your partner will be asked to wait outside the building until called into your appointment.
- **Labour and Birth:** A nominated birth partner may accompany a woman for the initial induction process; the midwife in charge will decide the duration of the visit. One birth partner may support women in early labour. One nominated birth partner may accompany a woman to delivery suite/MLU for the duration of labour and birth and, for up to three hours after the birth. Please see **Appendix FIVE** for Maternity COVID 19 Guidance Poster
- **Children's wards** – Any child admitted to the Children's ward can be accompanied by two persons (either/both parents or two nominated caregivers from up to two households), at all times for the duration of the stay. We would however ask that parents or other nominated visitors swap places (one person at a time at the bedside) to enable us to maintain effective social distancing.
- **Neonatal Unit** - both parents will be allowed to visit at any time during the day. It may however, not always be possible to enable both parents to be together at cot side, as this may restrict our ability to maintain effective social distancing – the nurse in charge will risk assess and advise as appropriate.
- **Trust Residential Homes** – In keeping with the latest review of the regional care homes guidance, '*Visiting with Care – A Pathway*' which was further revised on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022, from Monday 2 May 2022 it is appropriate for our visiting to continue to be facilitated under the terms of the third full stage of the Pathway – "Further Easing", that is, no restriction on number of people who may visit but visits limited to visitors from two household per day. The 'COVID-19: REGIONAL

PRINCIPLES FOR VISITING: NURSING & RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES IN NORTHERN IRELAND – Visiting with Care – A Pathway’, have been included in **Appendix Four**.

- **Community hospitals and Intermediate care facilities** – One daily visit from one of three nominated individuals can be permitted, where this can be accommodated within COVID secure environments

**Mental Health/ Older People Mental Health** - One daily visit from one of three nominated individuals can be permitted, where this can be accommodated within COVID secure environments. In specific circumstances where the visitor requires assistance then no more than one additional person will be permitted access to visit at any one time where this can be accommodated within social distancing guidance.

**Learning Disability** -

One daily visit from one of three nominated individuals can be permitted, where this can be accommodated within COVID secure environments. In specific circumstances where the visitor requires assistance then no more than one additional person will be permitted access to visit at any one time where this can be accommodated within social distancing guidance.

**Physical Disability** -

One daily visit from one of three nominated individuals can be permitted, where this can be accommodated within COVID secure environments. In specific circumstances where the visitor requires assistance then no more than one additional person will be permitted access to visit at any one time where this can be accommodated within social distancing guidance.

**Hospital Chaplains & Ministers of Faith** - Where there is particular benefit from the Minister of Faith/Chaplain being present, and particularly given they are members of the multi-disciplinary teams providing pastoral care to patients/residents and are not counted as visitors. Chaplains will visit a patient once throughout the duration of their stay in hospital (variations to this are subject to individual discussions with the nurse in charge e.g. in an end of life situation) and only visit one patient per visit. For all other contact, Chaplain’s will use the mobile devices that have been provided to them at individual wards/facilities. Chaplains will continue to adhere to the Trust IP&C and PPE guidance at all times. It is now possible for ministers to visit in both care homes and hospitals, in addition to visits from family members. All local restrictions and procedures should be followed, including in most cases advance appointments for care homes

**Communication** – In the event that a Ward or Facility has to cease or restrict visiting to protect their patients, families and staff, this decision must be communicated via line management to the Communications Team. This includes during out of hours periods.

**During Visiting**

- Prior to visiting, wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. Use hand sanitiser as supplied at hospital /ward/ residential homes /community facilities at the entrance and on exiting facilities. Decontaminate your personal devices like phones with wipes before and after ward/community care facility visit.
- Follow social distancing rules when you visit with respect to other patients/residents/visitors/staff. The Trust's hospitals have adopted a 'keep left' policy and visitors will be asked to follow signage and adhere to it. Be mindful of social distancing when queueing at entrances to the hospital/ward or other care setting.
- Visitors must be assessed if they have had any symptoms consistent with COVID 19, are a close contact of a positive case or have travelled from a country not exempted from the safe travel corridor and have been advised to self-quarantine. If any of these are the case the visitor must be asked to leave the ward/department and contact 111 or their GP if they are unwell.
- Visitors are asked to remain at the bedside at a distance of two meters from the patient/resident throughout the visit, at all times wearing their face covering, unless directed by your clinical team. A chair will be provided and visitors are not permitted to sit on the bed.
- Visitors are discouraged from bringing anything, other than essential items, for the patient/resident, flowers are not permitted.
- Visitors who do not follow the hospital visiting guidance will not be permitted to remain in the Ward/facility, as the arrangements put in place by the Trust are to protect patients/visitors/health care workers and the wider public. Failure to follow this guidance may result in the Trust reviewing a person's right to visit.
- The Trust recognises its responsibilities to provide a secure environment that protects patients, clients, staff and visitors and their property. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Trust's 'ZERO TOLERANCE AND SECURITY POLICY', January 2018.
- Contact the ward/department if you test positive for COVID 19 and have visited our health and social care facilities anytime from 2 days before your symptoms developed and up to 7 days from onset

### **Trust Staff**

- **Trust staff engaged in clinical activity must wear ALL appropriate PPE, this includes gloves, apron/gown and face mask and wear a minimum FRSM or of an appropriate standard if engaged in an aerosol generating procedure.**
- **Trust staff who are present or working in non-clinical areas must wear a face covering when in open spaces or public thoroughfares.**

## **APPENDIX ONE**

Template for Recording Visitor contact Details:



Template for  
recording visitor cor

## **APPENDIX TWO**

Trust Facility Entrance – Visiting Poster



Visiting Posters -  
Do Not Visit.pdf

## **APPENDIX THREE**

Wearing a Face Covering (including poster)



Wearing a face  
covering.docx

## **APPENDIX FOUR**

**Visiting with Care – A Pathway applicable to all Care Homes in Northern Ireland**



doh-visiting-with-c Care Home Visiting  
are-a-pathway.pdf Guidance - Latest Re

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## **APPENDIX FIVE**

**Maternity Covid19 Guidance Poster**



Maternity COVID 19  
Guidance Poster.do

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## **APPENDIX SIX**

**WHST Pathway moving towards normalised visiting**



Visiting - gradual  
easing may 2022.do

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