



**Western Health  
and Social Care Trust**

# **Hospital Visiting**

**Supporting Family Presence & Participation  
with patients when in Hospital**

**April 2017**



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Hospital Visiting: Supporting Family Presence &amp; Participation When Their Relatives Are In Hospital</b>		
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## **1.0 Background**

Visiting patients in hospital is an integral part of health care and can help promote patients wellbeing. All patients should be enabled to maintain contact with relatives and friends for the duration of their stay in hospital (DHSSPS 2008 Principles for Hospital Visiting Policies).

The Trust recognises the need for a balance to be struck between patients' and relatives' emotional needs and the need to carry out clinical duties. It is often during visiting time when staff can connect with patients, relatives and/or their carers. This can lead to new perspectives on a patient's home and social circumstances and greater understanding of the interactions and dynamics of the family.

This policy is predicated on achieving the balance between the therapeutic effect of patients spending time with relatives, carers and friends with their need for rest but also providing time for clinical staff to provide care safely and efficiently.

Times to visit wards differ from ward to ward reflecting the needs of patients and their families.

On general adult wards, visiting time is normally between 2.30 - 4pm and 6.30 - 8pm with different arrangements in place for areas such as Adult Intensive Care Units/High Dependency Units, Children's Ward, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and the Maternity Departments.

Visiting times are listed on the visiting posters located outside the areas and wards.

However, where a patient is critically ill or dying, relatives/carers & friends are encouraged to visit outside of these hours to provide support and care as appropriate.

The Chief Executive has endorsed the national 'John's Campaign', which supports the right of carers to stay with patients with dementia outside the normal visiting hours. Staff should make appropriate arrangements with carers to facilitate the principles of the campaign.

This should be clearly communicated to the patient and their relatives/carers/friends as appropriate and it is the responsibility of the ward sister/charge nurse to ensure staff are flexible and accommodate these requirements.

## **2.0 Scope of the Policy**

The statements included in the policy apply to all hospital wards which include Altnagelvin, Tyrone and Fermanagh, Tyrone County, Waterside, Grangewood & Lakeview and the South West Acute Hospital.

### **3.0 Purpose of the Policy**

- 3.1 To support appropriate visiting arrangements for patients families and friends
- 3.2 To ensure that there is provision of restful times in a quiet environment for patients, which is conducive to the promotion of their wellbeing
- 3.3 To allow patients time to have their meals free from interruption
- 3.4 To allow staff to provide care and treatment at the optimum times
- 3.5 To allow for thorough cleaning of the ward area
- 3.6 To promote safe and effective Infection Prevention and Control practices and help reduce the occurrence of Healthcare Acquired Infections

### **4.0 Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

Staff should advise visitors & patients of the following:

- Family members and or formal carers proactively that they are welcome on the ward to support and care for their relative if that is what the patient wishes and they want to continue to do so. They should be encouraged to be present for example, to help the patient at meal times.
- If there are specific infection and prevention control measures in place and how to follow these.
- When the ward has been 'closed' to visiting due to infection control reasons. However, the ward sister/charge nurse must also exercise discretion where there are requests to visit patients during an outbreak situation, for example where patients are receiving terminal care, where the patient has special needs or where visitors have travelled long distance.
- Provision can be made for relatives/carers who wish to stay overnight with critically ill patients or dementia patients.
- Anyone who is feeling unwell has a cold or has had any diarrhoea and/or vomiting within the previous 48 hours to refrain from visiting the hospital until well again.
- To avoid sitting on the patients' beds but to use the chairs provided.
- Not to use the patients' toilets while on the wards providing information on the available public toilets.
- All Trust premises, including the grounds, are **no smoking areas**.
- When a patient wishes to leave the ward with their visitors they need to advise staff where they are going and for how long.



- Patients who have medical equipment in place such as pumps and Intravenous drips that they should not be leaving the ward without express agreement by the nurse in charge and should leave a mobile number if they have one
- It is generally recommended that young children and babies are not brought onto the wards but to check with the nurse in charge if this is permitted.
- Visitors & patients are not permitted to take pictures or record staff undertaking their duties or photograph patients who are not their relative.
- About the best food to bring into hospital and what foods to avoid.
- The Trust operates a zero tolerance policy relating to any kind of verbal or physical abuse and visitors may be asked to leave if their behaviour causes disturbance to other patients or staff

### **5.0 Visitors' Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of visitors are outlined in the poster located at Appendix 1.

These posters should be displayed in prominent places both inside and outside the ward area.

**Appendix 1**

# Visiting Patients in Hospital

Supporting family and carers' presence and participation in hospital  Western Health and Social Care Trust

- Supporting patients** The Trust values the support that relatives and carers give to patients when they are at home. Please speak to the nurse-in-charge if you would like to continue supporting your relative while in hospital; we will make every effort to help you come into the ward to do this.
- Illness** Please stay at home if you have a cold or diarrhoea or vomiting. Consider phoning or texting the patient to say you will visit when you're better, and that you're thinking about them.
- Helping with meals** Arrange with our nurse-in-charge to come in to help the patient with their meals if this is needed and you would like to do so.
- Food and drink** If you want to bring in food and drink for the patient, please check with our nurse-in-charge about what will be suitable. Please don't bring in sandwiches or yogurts. On a warm ward, they can grow harmful bacteria.
- Visiting times** Keep to the visiting times unless otherwise agreed. This helps our patients to get plenty of rest and recovery time. It also helps us do our job properly.
- Hand hygiene** Cleanse your hands before and after visiting. Use the hand gel at the ward entrance.
- Bedside manners** To avoid overcrowding, keep to the 'two at a bedside' rule. Don't sit on the beds. Don't touch the patient's wounds, drips or drains.
- Smoking** To support patient care, we are now a no-smoking Trust. Please respect this and don't smoke inside Trust property or in the grounds.
- Taking photos etc** You must not photograph staff or record them doing their work. You must not photograph any patient who is not your relative.

## Visiting times at Altnagelvin Hospital

<p><b>Adult wards</b> 3–4pm and 7–8.30pm <i>Relatives of patients with dementia are also welcome to visit outside these hours.</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Intensive Care Unit</b> 2–8.30pm</p> <hr/> <p><b>Children's Ward</b> <i>Parents and carers only: any time</i> <i>Other visitors: 3–4pm and 7–8.30pm</i></p>	<p><b>Maternity Ward</b> <i>Partners: 1–9.30pm</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Neo-natal Unit</b> <i>Parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters:</i> <b>any time</b></p>
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