



Western Health  
and Social Care Trust

# **Hospital Visiting Policy**

**August 2008**

Policy Title: **Hospital Visiting Policy**

Policy Reference Number: **PrimCare 08-001**

Implementation Date: **September 2008**

Review Date: **September 2010**

Responsible Officer: **Mr Alan Corry Finn, Director of Primary Care  
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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Western Health and Social Care Trust Hospital Visiting Policy has been developed:
  - To meet the therapeutic need for patients to see family and friends,
  - To ensure clinical care is delivered in a timely manner maintaining our patients' privacy and dignity,
  - To help prevent and reduce hospital-acquired infections and
  - To ensure that there is provision of restful times in a quiet environment for patients, which is conducive to the promotion of their wellbeing.
- 1.2 Family and friends are therefore requested to visit between the hours of 3:00pm to 4:00pm and 7.00pm to 8:30pm [Adult Wards], and to limit visitors to two [2] at a time at the bedside.
- 1.3 There may be exceptional circumstances where visiting outside these recognized visiting hours will need to be agreed with staff. These should be agreed based on individual patient need and there may be a requirement to review these arrangements as circumstances change.
- 1.4 In cases where visitors or patients may experience difficulty in complying with the advertised visiting times on grounds of disability, religious beliefs or other personal reasons, their requirements should be accommodated where it is reasonably possible, without compromising either health and safety or infection control issues.
- 1.5 This document incorporates the current statutory and legal requirements as detailed in appendix 1. However any subsequent or additional statutory requirements must be observed in the application of this policy.

## **2 Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all patients and visitors in Altnagelvin, Erne, Gransha, Lakeview, Tyrone County, Tyrone & Fermanagh and Waterside Hospitals.
- 2.2 It is to be implemented by all health and social care professionals.
- 2.3 There are different visiting arrangements for the Intensive Care Unit/High Dependency Unit, Children's Ward, Neonatal Unit, Special Care Baby Unit and Maternity Department (see Appendix 2).

### **3 Staff Responsibilities**

#### **3.1 The Operational Directors have a responsibility to:**

- 3.1.1 Provide information on visiting times and to provide clear direction to staff and visitors. Visiting times will be clearly displayed on the entrance doors to all wards and will be included in the Hospital Information Booklet and Trust website. Patients will be advised of visiting times on admission. A visitor information leaflet will be available to all patients, which will advise on visiting times.
- 3.1.2 Advise the Corporate Management Team of compliance with the policy.
- 3.1.3 Staff will develop a system to ensure visitors are requested to use the alcohol hand rub before entering and on leaving the ward.

#### **3.2 Assistant Directors / Divisional Clinical Directors have a responsibility to:**

- 3.2.1 Provide support to Ward/Department Managers in dealing with difficult/complex situations and circumstances relating to visiting.

#### **3.3 Ward/Department Managers should:**

- 3.3.1 Ensure that patients and relatives are aware of visiting times.
- 3.3.2 Make judgments when extenuating circumstances require exceptions to this policy.
- 3.3.3 Ensure there is a system to monitor visitor numbers and compliance with visiting times.
- 3.3.4 Ensure hand hygiene facilities and advice are available at all times.

## **4 Visitors' Guidance**

- 4.1 Visitors are asked not to sit on the bed or touch wounds, drips, drains, or patient's notes, or leave personal belongings on the bed.
- 4.2 Visitors must only visit during the designated visiting times unless alternative arrangements have been agreed with the Ward Manager due to extenuating circumstances e.g. when a patient is very ill or where a relative/carer is involved in the delivery of patient care.
- 4.3 Visitors are asked to wash their hands or use the alcohol hand rub on entering and leaving the ward. A notice advising visitors on hand hygiene will be displayed in a prominent place along with hand hygiene products.
- 4.4 Visitors are asked to ensure there are only 2 visitors at the patient's bedside. If numbers exceed this, nursing staff will ask some visitors to leave.
- 4.5 Visitors should not visit from ward to ward as this can increase the risk of the transfer of infection.
- 4.6 Visitors are reminded that children under 12 are not allowed to visit unaccompanied by an adult. If they visit the wards parents are asked to ensure children are appropriately supervised at all times. Children should only visit close relatives. Children under 2 years of age should not visit.
- 4.7 Visitors are permitted to bring washed fruit and soft drinks for patients. No other food or drink is permitted.
- 4.8 When visiting the hospital visitors should only use the public toilets.
- 4.9 Limited facilities are available for relatives to stay overnight. Advice can be given by ward staff.
- 4.10 The DHSSPS Zero Tolerance policy on violence against staff expects that all visitors will treat staff with respect and politeness. An acceptable standard of behaviour is expected and if this is not met the visitor will be asked to leave.
- 4.11 Visitors are asked to help keep the hospital clean by informing staff of any cleaning concerns.

- 4.12 Visitors are requested NOT to come to the hospital if they have had:
- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea and must not visit until they have been symptom free for 48 hours
  - Coughs, colds or flu-like symptoms
  - Any infectious condition e.g. chickenpox, mumps, etc.
- 4.13 Visitors should be advised that in the interest of promoting patient privacy that camera phones, cameras and camcorders should not be used within the ward area except in Maternity Department where special guidance is available.

## **5 Monitoring**

- 5.1 A survey of patients and staff will be undertaken one year post implementation of the policy to establish the effectiveness of the policy.

## **Appendix 1 – The Statutory & Policy Framework**

- Health & Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 & Health & Safety at Work (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2006
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Human Rights Acts 1998
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
- ‘Changing the Culture Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Healthcare Associated Infections in N.I.’ DHSSPS 2006/2009
- ‘Cleanliness Matters’ the DHSSPS environmental cleanliness document
- “Ward Sisters’ Charter” An Action Plan for Cleaner Hospital in Northern Ireland DHSSPS (Oct 2006)

## Appendix 2 – Visiting Times Leaflet



### Hospital Visiting Times

To ensure our patients have adequate rest and recuperation, receive timely care and treatment and help maintain hospital hygiene

Maximum number of visitors two ( 2 ) per patient at any one time

### Daily Visiting 3pm - 4pm & 7pm – 8.30pm

#### Additional Ward Specific Times

- **Children’s Ward:**  
Parents & Carers only **Anytime**
- **Maternity Department:**  
Partners **1pm - 9:30pm**
- **Neo-Natal Unit:**  
Parents / Grandparents & Brothers / Sisters  
(For infection control purposes children are not permitted to visit from October to April) **Anytime**
- **Intensive Care Unit:** **2pm - 8:30 pm**

#### Exceptional Arrangements

Relatives / carers of critically ill patients, or relatives involved in direct care of patients, can agree visiting arrangements with the Ward Manager

Please Do Not Visit if You Have:

- 1. Vomiting, Diarrhoea**
- 2. Coughs, Cold or Flu**
- 3. Any other infectious conditions**

**Please wash your hands or use alcohol hand rub before and after visiting**

### **Advice to Promote Patient Well-being**

- Keep to the allocated visiting times
- Limit visit to two people for each patient at any one time – please do not visit more than one ward
- Do not sit on the bed or touch your relative's / friend's wounds, drips or drains
- Visitors are permitted to bring washed fruit and soft drinks for patients - no other food or drink is permitted
- Camera phones, cameras and camcorders should not be used by visitors within the ward area except in Maternity Department where special guidance is available
- Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult - children should only visit close relatives
- Children under 2 should not visit