

## Visiting Your Loved One in Hospital

### Introduction

The Scottish Government, has announced that NHS hospitals and other similar settings are starting to support people to see their families in person again. However, people who are unwell in hospital are vulnerable and at higher risk from COVID-19 (Coronavirus) than people who are well. Therefore, visits will need to be managed carefully. Our approach will be individualised to ensure:

- The risk of infection is minimised;
- A compassionate approach is taken to each person's circumstances
- The safety of patients, their visitors, and our staff;
- Areas of the hospital with active COVID-19 may still need to remain restricted to essential visits only (examples of essential visits are given in the box below)

An **essential visit** describes situations when it is very important for a relative or friend to be allowed to see their loved one. Examples of this include:

- a parent accompanying a child or in maternity settings, partners or birth partners being able to attend ante-natal, clinic or scan appointments with their partner.
- When someone has reached the end of their life, has a life-threatening illness, when someone is receiving difficult news, or similar situations.
- When people have a mental health issue such as dementia, autism or learning disabilities.

Every person's experience is unique, but we hope this leaflet might help address some of your concerns. If you want more advice, please contact the hospital team providing care for your loved one and they will be able to help you.

### When will visiting happen?

The current proposed phasing of a gradual return to normal visiting is dependent on the guidance of the Scottish Government based on advice of the Scientific Advisory Committee and applies to hospitals which do not have active outbreaks of COVID-19. A table is included at the end of this leaflet outlining these different stages.



### What do I need to do before I visit?

Each person in hospital is now permitted to have **one Designated Visitor**. The designated visitor can be changed if circumstances require. Visiting will be arranged with you *via* the care team looking after your loved one. **Visits will be made by pre-arranged appointments** to ensure the number of people in the clinical area at any one time is limited to maintain a safe physical distance. Some people may require a number visits each day to support them whilst in hospital, whereas others might be able to get by with less frequent visits, perhaps daily or less often. For example, someone who has a learning disability or is in intensive care might need more frequent visits. Someone who is on the road to recovery might be able to cope with fewer visits. It is important to think about these things when planning your visits. Please do not to bring in food parcels, flowers, helium balloons or similar items.

A **Designated Visitor** is someone chosen by the patient who they would like to be their named visitor. This might be a spouse or next of kin or a friend. It is recommended that this person is also the main link for communication

### What do I need to when I visit?

It is very important for the health and wellbeing of your loved one that you **do not visit** if you have been feeling unwell in any way. There is a checklist below to help you be sure about this.

### Symptom checklist before visiting a hospital:

- X Are you feeling unwell?
- X Do you have a new/continuous cough?
- X Have you had any sickness or diarrhoea within the last 48 hours?
- X Have you noticed a change in your temperature?
- X Have you noticed a change to your normal sense of taste or smell?
- X Are you self-isolating because you been in contact with anyone suspected as having, or has tested positive for coronavirus, in the past 14 days?

In addition, you may be asked a series of questions by the staff – this is normal in the current situation and is intended to try and make sure that everyone stays safe.

### For all visits it is essential that you:

- wear a face covering whilst inside the hospital
- wash your hands **on arrival at the hospital**
- wash your hands again on **arrival at the ward** or department
- wash your hands **frequently** during the time you are in the department, especially if you touch anything or anyone
- maintain the recommended physical distance wherever possible even if the person has previously been in your household or social bubble.
- if you cough or sneeze, make sure you follow good hygiene practice
  - cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow or a disposable tissue
  - dispose of the tissue
  - wash your hands
- wash your hands as you **leave the ward** or department, as you **leave the hospital** and when you **arrive home**.

Part of the process of being a Designated Visitor for someone in hospital includes being asked to provide your contact details; this is normal in the current circumstances and is to assist Public Health, Trace and Protect colleagues should there be a need to contact you.

### What next?

Initially, as explained above, people in hospital will be allowed one Designated Visitor who will be able to visit at pre-arranged times. At each stage, when guided by the Scottish Government, these restrictions will be revised and altered dependent on the outbreak status of the virus and any outbreak within the hospital and local community.



## Frequently asked questions

### What if my relative wants to cuddle or touch me?

One of the hardest aspects of the COVID-19 situation is the need for physical distancing. Unfortunately, when someone comes into hospital you will need to maintain physical distancing wherever possible even if the person has previously been in your household or part of your social bubble. This is because the risks of infection change and become much higher once someone comes into the hospital environment.

### What if my relative wants to walk around with me or go to the hospital cafe?

At the current time we would ask that you do not move around different areas of the hospital or try to visit other people in the hospital

### What if I don't feel able to visit my relative?

Feeling anxious or nervous about coming into a hospital is a normal response to recent events. Speak to the care team if you are worried and they will be able to advise you.

## Staged approach to reinstating person-centred visiting

(each stage is dependent on the scientific advice given at the appropriate time)

Stage Readiness	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<b>Visiting</b>	<p><i>Do not visit if you Covid symptoms or are self-isolating</i></p> <p><i>Essential Visits. (End of Life Care, Stress and Distress behaviours, children).</i></p>	<p><i>Do not visit if you Covid symptoms or are self-isolating</i></p> <p><i>Essential Visits</i></p> <p><i>Visits from single designated visitor</i></p> <p><i>Visits pre-arranged with clinical area</i></p> <p><i>Hand hygiene and face coverings</i></p> <p><i>Social distancing</i></p> <p><i>No routine visits to Covid positive areas</i></p>	<p><i>Do not visit if you Covid symptoms or are self-isolating</i></p> <p><i>Essential visits.</i></p> <p><i>Visits from 2 designated visitors</i></p> <p><i>All other Stage 2 restrictions remain in place</i></p>	<p><i>Do not visit if you Covid symptoms or are self-isolating</i></p> <p><i>Essential visits</i></p> <p><i>As for stage 3 but with the addition of:</i></p> <p><i>Limited visits to other patients in hospital by arrangement.</i></p> <p><i>Local restrictions may need to be reintroduced as required</i></p> <p><i>Gradual return to full NHS Scotland Person-Centred visiting</i></p>
<b>Required</b>	<p>Visitors must follow hand-washing guidance and wear face covering</p> <p>Visitors must not move to other areas of the hospital unless part of the care and support for the patient (i.e. child and parent, birth partners accompanying for investigations or family members providing support to hear difficult news or undergo investigations)</p>			
<b>Settings</b>	<p>Hospitals in the absence of local coronavirus outbreak</p>			