

## **LTHT visiting guidance during COVID-19 restrictions - revised 12/06/20**

### **Introduction.**

On 5th June 2020, NHSE/I issued changes to visiting guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic, which superseded guidance published on 8 April 2020; The revised guidance can be found here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/visitor-guidance/>

In response to this, the Trust will be progressing a cautious and phased implementation of revised visiting practice.

This will be reviewed two weekly, and will take into account staff feedback. The national guidance has been reviewed as part of this process and has informed the guidelines provided below.

Consultation on this document has taken place with, Children's services, Maternity services, representative clinicians and Head of Nursing and the patient experience team.

### **Background**

As a result of COVID-19 and guidance issued by NHSE/I dated 8 April 2020, visiting was restricted across the Trust. There were exceptions to this, which enabled visitors to attend patients at the end of life, parents to visit children and birthing partners to support women in labour.

It has been recognised that the restrictions on visiting have resulted in significant distress to patients, families and friends. Other means of support have been established for our patients to try and mitigate the effects of this and have included electronic devices (iPods and iPads) being made available in all ward areas to enable video calls between patients and their loved ones. In addition, an e-mail address was set up to receive letters and messages that were then hand delivered to patients. This initiative, Letters to Loved Ones, has delivered almost 1500 personal messages to date. It remains the case however that restriction to visiting is one of the impacts of Covid-19 that patients and families are reporting as the most difficult to bear, and one that is affecting their emotional well-being.

In order to reintroduce visiting in June 2020 in LTHT the following will apply:

### **Principles**

- Visiting restrictions will be lifted for some groups of patients.
- In adult in-patient wards and critical care areas, visiting will be limited to one close family contact or somebody important to the patient. The visitor may change from day to day.
- Visiting will be supported between the hours of 2pm - 4pm.

- No changes will be made to Women's and Children's services visiting arrangements Women will continue to be restricted to one birthing partner. Children will continue to be enabled to have one parent visiting / resident with them at any time.
- Visitors should 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 and handwashing.
- Patients residing on wards solely designated as Hot Wards, will not be allowed to receive visitors.
- Patients on super cold wards (where they have self-isolated and had a negative swab prior to admission for surgery) will not be allowed to receive visitors. Exceptions to this may be considered at a local level, ie patients who may be accompanied by a relative / carer to assist with communication or health and social care needs.
- Patients with a positive COVID-19 result in wards other than hot wards, will not be allowed to receive visitors.
- Anyone showing any signs of coronavirus must not visit.
- Anyone self-isolating with other people showing signs of coronavirus must not visit or anyone who has been contacted by the Track and Test programme.
- Environmental signage will be visible in all areas to ensure the 2 metre social distancing rule is maintained.
- Patients at the end of life will be allowed 2 visitors, if this can be safely accommodated within the ward / area.
- Patients may be accompanied where appropriate and necessary to assist with the patient's communication and / or to meet the patients' health and social care needs.

### Frequently asked questions.

#### **How many visitors can a ward / area allow at any one time ?**

Visiting must be managed by each ward, wards must identify how many visitors it is safe for them to have at any one time and in each space, eg, bays. Wards clerks (or other designated members of staff) are to maintain an appointment diary that supports the organisation of this. Visitors will be asked to pre-book appointments using this system. It is recommended that visiting is restricted to one hour, to support more people to be enabled to visit their loved ones within visiting hours.

#### **Can patients who have been shielding prior to admission have visitors?**

Patients who have been shielding will be allowed one visitor, this must be the same visitor.

### **Do visitors have to wear PPE ?**

Visitors must wear a surgical face mask/or a clean face covering at all times in clinical areas. A surgical face mask can be provided by the ward / area. Wards should have a system of ensuring visitors are provided with a mask on arrival. Visitors must also be asked to dispose of the mask as they leave. Visitors should also be encouraged to wear a face covering on their journey to and from the ward, when on hospital grounds.

### **Will visiting be supported outside of the hours of 2pm - 4pm ?**

Wards are encouraged to keep to the agreed visiting times of 2- 4pm, to ensure consistency across the Trust.

### **What about patients who require extra support from Carers to maintain their well-being ?**

Some patients require extra support to maintain their well-being and this may include some patients with dementia or a learning disability for example. Wards should assess this compassionately and enable extended visiting for those patients. Visitors of these patients providing this support function, must however be counted in the overall number of visitors allowed in each area/ space.

### **Can COVID positive patients at the end of their life be allowed visitors ?**

Yes, this guidance applies to all patients at the end of their life. Visitors should be advised to self-isolate at home during the period of visiting and for 14 days following the last contact.

### **What steps can we put in place if a face to face visit is not practical ?**

Where face to face visits are not practical, other means of communication have already been established. These include video calls and letters to loved ones, coordinated by the patient experience team, who can be contacted for support and further advice.

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