Guidelines for Hospital Ward Visiting

In-patients at our hospital benefit from visits from their families and friends during their stay in hospital. Some patients are more dependent on their visitors than others, for example as well as providing a reassuring and friendly face for patients, visitors can sometimes assist with finding out more information about their care, help to arrange transport and in some cases where appropriate, assist with feeding patients at meal times.

However, large numbers of visitors constantly at a patient’s bedside can be unintentionally unhelpful. Sometimes visitors without realising it prevent patients from getting sufficient rest, disturb patients in surrounding beds, intrude on patients’ privacy and dignity, make it difficult for domestic staff to clean around the beds and hinder staff carrying out clinical duties. Therefore, we would request that visitors contact the ward for visiting times.

Flexibility for visits is allowed if agreed with the senior nurse/ward manager. Examples where these additional visits would be appropriate include where visitors:

- are carers, and/or wish to assist with feeding at meal times
- are requested to assist with therapy sessions
- can help with communication barriers such as special needs
- are requested by the patient to help with their understanding of consultations with medical staff
- are visiting during exceptional circumstances such as visiting critically ill or dying patients
- have travelled a long way and/or have transport difficulties making visiting during restricted hours difficult for them.

Exceptions will be: the emergency assessment unit, critical care, children’s ward, neonatal unit and the maternity ward, where visiting times have already been agreed to reflect the special needs of these patients. Visitors should contact these areas directly to obtain information.

There will be no more than two visitors per bed in any ward (plus a carer if there is one) at any time, to reduce noise and disturbance to other patients.

These guidelines are intended to strike a balance between the above issues. They are however guidelines, and patients and visitors are encouraged to discuss their visiting requirements with the ward manager/nurse in charge, who can advise on the flexibility of visiting outside of these recommendations as long as this would be in the best interests of all the patients they care for.

*Thank you for your co-operation with these guidelines*