



Virtual Visiting: NHS Western Isles offers Virtual Visiting which can be an alternative to visiting in person. If you would like to video call your friend or family member, or for further information, please telephone 01851 708205.

Designated visiting in hospital

The Scottish Government has announced that NHS hospitals are starting to support people to visit patients in hospital. 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.

NHS Western Isles is enabling Designated Visiting to begin at each of its hospitals from 13th July 2020.

We hope this infosheet might help address some of your concerns. If you want more advice, please contact the hospital team providing care for your friend/relative 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.

What do I need to do before I visit?

Each patient in hospital is now permitted to have one Designated Visitor for the duration of their admission to hospital. However, no individual can be the Designated Visitor for more than one patient, or visit more than one patient whilst in the hospital.

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

The Designated Visitor can be changed if circumstances require. Patients will be asked to identify who is their Designated Visitor.

Visiting will be arranged with the Designated Visitor via the Visiting Coordinator. **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. We aim to be person-centred, however we cannot guarantee you will be provided with your personal choice of visiting time.

Some people who require essential visitors 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 (see our Frequently Asked Questions section). For example, someone who has a learning disability or is in high dependency 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 bring in cards, food parcels, flowers, helium balloons or similar items.

You may be asked to limit your visit to a set amount of time (currently 30 minutes), to allow other visitors to visit other patients, allow for cleaning between visitors and allow staff to manage numbers of people in any one area at a time.

What do I need to do when I visit?

It is very important for the health and wellbeing of your friend/relative 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. The Visiting Coordinator will conduct a wellness check (via telephone) with you in advance of your visit to the hospital.

Symptom checklist before visiting hospital

If you have any of these symptoms you should not attend the hospital. You should contact the Ward Nurse in Charge who will advise the patient that you are unable to attend. The patient will be invited to nominate an alternative designated visitor, whilst you are unable to attend.

- Are you feeling unwell?
- Do you have a new/continuous cough or breathlessness?
- Have you had any sickness or diarrhoea within the last 48 hours?
- Have you noticed a change in your temperature?
- Have you noticed a change to your normal sense of taste or smell?
- Are you self-isolating because you have 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:

- arrive at your allocated time at the hospital main entrance. There you will be met by a member of hospital staff who will escort or direct you to the ward and support you through the process of accessing the ward area
- use the face mask provided in clinical areas
- use hand gel on arrival **at the hospital**
- use hand gel again on **arrival at the ward** or department
- use hand gel **frequently** during the time you are in the ward, especially if you touch anything or anyone (we ask that you avoid any unnecessary contacts and respect physical distancing)
- maintain the recommended physical distance (2 metres) wherever possible even if the person has previously been in your household or social bubble. Chairs will be placed within the ward area please do not move chairs from their designated location. We fully understand this will be difficult for both you and your friend/relative, however it is a critical protective factor for both you, your friend/relative, staff and the wider community.
- if you cough or sneeze, make sure you follow good hygiene practice
- when leaving the ward, staff will instruct you in the safe disposal of your face mask use of hand gel and either escort or direct you from the ward. Visitors are advised to use hand gel again at the main exit prior to leaving the hospital, and wash their hands when they 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.

Consent will be asked to share your contact details with Public Health in the event of a Covid positive contact. Your details will be held in a secure location for a period of 21 days following the patient's discharge and then they will be destroyed.

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 I'm anxious about visiting a hospital setting?

NHS Western Isles offers Virtual Visiting which can be an alternative solution for those who are anxious or may experience other issues e.g. transport difficulties, work/family commitments, etc. We ask that, where possible, the patient is provided with a laptop/tablet or mobile phone. However, there are range of devices available and Virtual Visiting can be arranged by ward staff.

If you would like to video call your friend or family member, or for further information, please telephone 01851 708205.

What if the patient's circumstances mean they need to be visited more often?

Essential Visiting describes situations when it is very important for a relative/friend to be allowed to see a patient. 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.

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.

When patients are in hospital they are more susceptible to picking up infections from the community so it is imperative that we work together to protect patients whilst in hospital.

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

At the current time we would request 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.

Further help and information

For further information about visiting contact the Senior Charge Nurse of the ward you intend visiting.

For further information about coronavirus visit NHS Inform website at: www.nhsinform.scot or call NHS 24 on 111.

Disclaimer

The content of this factsheet is intended to augment, not replace, information provided by your clinician. It is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Reading this information does not create or replace a doctor-patient relationship or consultation. If required, please contact your doctor or other health care provider to assist you to interpret any of this information, or in applying the information to your individual needs.