



# WESTERN ISLES HOSPITAL:

## New hospital visiting arrangements (from 20/9/21)

### What visiting is currently permitted?

At present (from September 21, 2021), each inpatient in Western Isles Hospital will be able to have a maximum of **three indoor visits per week**, subject to availability and ward conditions.

- Two named visitors from the **same household** may visit the same inpatient at the same time (where physical distancing from other patients allows).
- Named visitors from **different households** must visit at **different times**.

The named visitor/s may be changed for different visits. Ward staff must be notified in advance of who will be attending, when visiting slots are being arranged. Patients are, however, encouraged not to regularly change named visitors to help minimise infection risks.

The above visiting arrangements will be subject to ongoing review, and may be changed at short notice if infection rates increase.

Essential Visits will continue to be arranged for those inpatients who require them (see section on 'Essential Visiting').

### Why are there still restrictions on visiting?

Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway is the only hospital available to meet the needs of the local population on Lewis and Harris and, due to high demand for inpatient beds, we have had to increase on several occasions the number of beds in patient bays and have not been able to maintain safe physical distancing within ward areas.

Whilst the hospital continues to be extremely busy, and the COVID-19 transmission risk remains where physical distancing is challenging, NHS Western Isles will take steps to mitigate, as far as possible, risks in busy ward areas. This includes introducing new partition screens in each ward.

We would however stress to visitors and patients that transmission risks are ever-present and **visitors must risk assess their own visits** and ensure that they have taken every possible precaution to protect inpatients - many of whom are at increased risk of more serious illness if they contracted COVID-19. This includes careful observance of safety precautions to protect themselves from the risks of contracting COVID-19 prior to visits, and where possible minimising unnecessary contact with others before and between visits.

NHS Western Isles will continue to strictly enforce infection prevention and control requirements for all visitors, including the use of hand sanitizer, wearing clinical face masks (or additional Personal Protective Equipment – PPE on request) and physical distancing in communal areas.

### Asymptomatic Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Testing

**All visitors** are strongly advised to participate in the twice-weekly Asymptomatic Lateral Flow Device (LFD) COVID-19 self-testing scheme, to help protect our patients and staff as visiting restrictions are relaxed. Free test kits can be ordered at: <https://test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/order-lateral-flow-kits/condition> or by

calling 119, or they can be collected free of charge from local pharmacies. We would ask that visitors test themselves twice a week, and aim to test themselves before (on the day of) a visit to the hospital.

We would also stress that an **LFD self-test should not be used if you have any COVID-19 symptoms**. If you develop any symptoms, regardless of how mild, you should self-isolate and arrange a PCR Laboratory test (and **do not visit any inpatients in hospital, under any circumstances** - even if you tested negative through an LFD self-test). You can book a PCR test by calling 01851 601151 or emailing [wi.covid19queries@nhs.scot](mailto:wi.covid19queries@nhs.scot)

## Visiting Arrangements

Inpatients will be able to have **three indoor visits per week**.

- Two named visitors from the **same household** may visit the same inpatient at the same time (where physical distancing from other patients allows).
- Named visitors from **different households** must visit at **different times**.
- If a child is a named visitor, they may be accompanied by an adult.

**For each new named visitor, the first visit must take place during the afternoon visiting slot, to ensure that staff can advise them of visiting arrangements.**

All visitors will be required to hand sanitize and wear a clinical face mask on entering NHS premises, which will be provided at the front door (unless they carry a Scottish Government Exemption Card). Visitors must observe physical distancing in any communal areas, including a distance of at least two metres from staff and any other inpatients (those you are not visiting).

Close contact with the patient you are visiting should be kept to a minimum, though 'touch contact' is permitted (you may hold hands or hug to provide comfort or reassurance). Outwith 'touch contact' times, you should maintain a distance of **one metre from the patient you are visiting**.

Effective hand hygiene will remain crucial to protect families and patients alike. Depending on the circumstances, staff may require visitors to wear additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and this will be provided. Visitors must **only visit one patient** when they are in the hospital, they will not be permitted to visit any other patients during their visiting slot.

Please do not bring in cards, food parcels, flowers, helium balloons or similar items.

To arrange a visiting slot, please contact Western Isles Hospital reception at 01851 704704. **Visits will be made by pre-arranged appointments only and will be subject to visiting slot availability in the ward** to ensure the number of people in the clinical area at any one time is limited to maintain a safe physical distance.

## Visiting Slots

Each visiting slot will be limited to 30 minutes and visiting times are as follows (seven days a week):

**Afternoon:**

**1.30pm - 4.30pm**

**Evening:**

**6pm - 7.30pm**

## Essential Visiting

Essential visiting will continue for those who require an Essential Visitor. Examples of Essential Visits include (but are not limited to):

- A birth partner supporting a woman during hospital visits;
- A person receiving end-of-life care;
- To support someone with a mental health issue; or dementia, a learning disability or autism where not being present would cause the patient to be distressed;
- To accompany a child in hospital.

Essential Visitors may visit more than once a day if required, and there is no restriction on the numbers of Essential Visitors for each inpatient, although they **must be immediate family members**.

**For those who require more than one Essential Visitor, it is important to note the following:**

- Essential Visitors from the **same household** may visit the same inpatient **at the same time (where physical distancing from other patients allows)**.
- Essential Visitors from **different households** must visit at **different times**.

## Alternative Visiting Options

**Virtual Visiting** - Virtual Visiting continues to be offered and is an alternative option to visiting face-to-face. This service is supported by our staff and we would encourage visitors to keep in touch with family, friends and loved ones via virtual visits. If you would like to video call your friend or family member, or for further information, please telephone 01851 704704.

**Outdoor or 'Window' Visits** – Where circumstances allow, our staff are facilitating outdoor visits. Clearly this option is dependent on a number of factors, including the medical condition of the patient and weather conditions. Appropriate areas in the hospital grounds are being identified and prepared for outdoor visits.

## If you feel unwell

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**. If you are feeling unwell, you should contact the ward and a member of staff will advise the patient that you are unable to attend.

Prior to each visit, 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.

## Essential points for all visitors:

- 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.
- NHS Western Isles Board policy is that you will not be permitted to wear your own face mask or face covering in our hospital premises. **You must use the face mask provided on entry** to the hospital (unless you are exempt and have a Scottish Government Exemption Card). You will be refused entry if you do not adhere to hospital protocol. **You must keep your face mask on at all times.**
- Use hand sanitizer on arrival at the hospital and again on arrival at the ward or department. Ensure you use hand sanitizer frequently during the time you are in the ward, especially if you touch anything or anyone.
- Maintain the recommended physical distance **(2 metres) from staff and other inpatients** (not including the patient you are visiting).
- You will be permitted 'touch contact' with the patient you are visiting to provide comfort and reassurance (e.g. holding hands, hugging), however you should maintain a **1 metre distance** outwith direct touch contact times **from the patient you are visiting**.
- Do not remove your face mask to have conversations during your visit, and ensure your mask covers both your mouth and nose at all times.
- You must move directly to the clinical area where the visit is to take place. You must not gather or linger in communal areas of the hospital.
- Only use toilet facilities provided for members of the public, not patient or staff toilets.
- If you cough or sneeze, make sure you follow good hygiene practice (cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow - or into a tissue and dispose of the tissue).
- Only remove your face mask when leaving the hospital. Please follow safe disposal guidance on the removal of your face mask. You must use hand sanitizer at the main exit prior to leaving the hospital,

and you should wash your hands when you arrive home.

Part of the process of being a visitor for someone in hospital includes being asked to provide your contact details; this is normal in the current circumstances and is to assist Test and Protect colleagues, should there be a need to contact you. Consent will be asked to share your contact details with Test and Protect in the event of a COVID positive contact. Following your last visit, your details will be held in a secure location for a period of 21 days and then they will be destroyed.

## 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 unable to visit, are anxious, or may experience other issues. We ask that, where possible, the patient is provided with a laptop/tablet or mobile phone. However, there are a 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 704704.

### Can children visit?

Children (everyone below the age of 18) can visit adults in hospital. Every effort will be made for a child or young person to be able to visit their immediate family member in hospital safely, (which will often mean that they will need to be accompanied by an adult). A child in hospital is entitled to have one or both parents or carers present to support them. A child in hospital will also be allowed visits from siblings or other children.

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

You must continue to keep a safe physical distance (two metres) from staff and other inpatients (not the person you are visiting). You should keep contact with the patient you are visiting to a minimum, though you may hold hands with or hug your friend or relative to provide comfort and reassurance. At all other times, you must keep a one metre distance from the inpatient you are visiting. As this is now permitted, we would stress to you the importance of not attending the hospital with any symptoms of COVID-19, (or if you are isolating as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19), or if you are unwell, and we would remind you about the importance of hand hygiene and wearing your face mask at all times.

### 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 inside the hospital or try to visit other people in the hospital. If the weather permits and where appropriate, you may walk with your friend or relative around the hospital grounds, outdoors.

## 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](http://www.nhsinform.scot) or call NHS 24 on 111.