



Entry to our hospitals remains restricted for patient safety reasons, and entry requirements remain in place. Failure to comply will result in access being denied.

Please note that the arrangements below may be changed at short notice in the event of an outbreak.

Hospital Visiting Arrangements (from May 2022)

NHS Western Isles is continuing to support people to visit patients in hospital, as appropriate and possible. However, people who are unwell in hospital are vulnerable and remain at higher risk from COVID-19 than people who are well. Therefore, visits need to be managed carefully to protect the most vulnerable.

NHS Western Isles has relaxed visiting restrictions (applicable from May 23rd 2022) which means that every inpatient will be able to have one daily visit (from any two visitors) whilst in hospital.

We hope this infosheet will address any questions or concerns you may have. If you want more advice, please contact the hospital team providing care for your friend/relative and they will be able to help you.

What are the new arrangements?

All visits (including Essential Visits) must be booked in advance, by calling Western Isles Hospital reception: 01851 704704.

The new arrangements, which apply to Western Isles Hospital on Lewis, Uist and Barra Hospital on Benbecula, and St Brendan's Hospital on Barra, mean that all inpatients (with the exceptions outlined below) will be permitted **one 30 minute visit every day from two visitors**. The visitors no longer have to be designated for the duration of a patient's stay, so patients can now have different visitors on different days. There is no longer a requirement for visitors to be from the same household.

Exceptions to the above arrangements include:

- Patients who have tested positive for COVID-19/in COVID Wards will normally be permitted **one Designated Visitor** a day (subject to change, depending on ward conditions at the time).
- Patients in a ward or area with a COVID outbreak will normally be permitted **one Designated Visitor** a day (subject to change, depending on ward conditions at the time).

Essential visiting

In addition to the above, Essential Visiting for those inpatients who require more frequent visits will continue to be arranged as required, without restrictions on the number of visits or visitors, although visitors must be family members (and also subject to ward conditions and availability).

Essential visits can be arranged for a range of situations including 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; or to accompany a child in hospital.

Some people who require Essential Visitors may require a number of 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, a child, or someone in high dependency might need more frequent visits. Someone who is on the road to recovery might be able to manage with fewer visits. It is important to think about these things when planning your visits.

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 inpatients allows.
- A maximum of two Essential Visitors from different households may visit at the same time.
- Where a patient is 'end of life', family members from different households may visit at the same time.

What should I know?

All visits must be booked in advance to ensure the number of people in the clinical area at any one time is limited to maintain a safe physical distance. Visitors must pre-arrange all visits by calling Western Isles Hospital reception - 01851 704704.

NHS Western Isles staff will provide the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for visitors depending on the area they are visiting and advice on protective measures (e.g. hand sanitizing and physical distancing). However, visitors should be aware, in particular when visiting COVID positive patients or COVID wards, that they attend at their own risk.

Each visiting slot will be 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.

Visitors should stay at the bed or chair side of the individual they are visiting (if the individual has their own room, visitors should remain within the room). Visitors must not visit other patients in the hospital during their visiting slot.

Visiting times are 1.30pm – 4.30pm and 6pm – 7.30pm.

We aim to be person-centred, however we cannot guarantee you will always be provided with your personal choice of visiting time.

We would stress to visitors and patients that transmission risks are ever-present and all 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 before and between visits 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. We also request the visitors self-test with a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test before each visit.

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Testing

All visitors are requested in the strongest terms to carry out a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) COVID-19 self-test before every visit, to help protect our patients and staff. Free test kits can be ordered at: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests> or by calling 119. Where visitors need to arrange a visit at short notice, following an urgent admission, and do not have time to order tests, please contact your hospital reception to arrange collection. You should order LFD test kits online or by phone in the meantime.

Even if your test is negative, please do not visit if you feel unwell.

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you should not visit for 10 days from the date of positive COVID-19 test or from the date of symptom onset, whichever comes first.

Checklist before visiting hospital

If you are feeling unwell, you **should not attend the hospital** (see checklist). You should contact the Ward

Nurse in Charge who will advise the patient that you are unable to attend.

- Are you feeling unwell, or do you have respiratory symptoms?
- 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 a recent close contact of anyone suspected as having, or that has tested positive for coronavirus?

Please be advised that staff may ask for contact details in the event that contact tracing is required. Consent will be asked to share your contact details 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.

Essential points for all visitors:

- Arrive at your allocated visiting slot time at the hospital main entrance.
- Use hand sanitizer on arrival at the hospital. NHS Western Isles Board policy is that you will not be permitted to wear your own face mask or face covering on our hospital premises. You **will be required to use the face mask available on entry** to the hospital (**unless you have a medical exemption**). You will be refused entry if you do not adhere to hospital protocol. You need to keep your face mask on at all times in the hospital building.
- Use hand sanitizer 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. You can have close contact (such as holding hands) with the inpatient 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.
- Please note that dining rooms are currently not open to the public.
- 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). You should sanitize your hands again.
- 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.
- Please do not bring in cards, food parcels, flowers, helium balloons or similar items in to hospital.

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.

Frequently asked questions

What is an Essential Visitor?

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;
- 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 an immediately life-threatening illness, when someone is receiving difficult news, or similar situations;
- when people have an acute mental health issue; or
- anyone with dementia, autism or learning disabilities.

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 704704.

What if my relative wants to cuddle or touch me?

You can have close contact with the person you are visiting (e.g. holding hands), if the patient is comfortable with this.

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

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. The dining rooms are currently closed to the public.

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.