

## Standard Operating Procedure for Safe Management of Visitors to Inpatient Settings and Birth Centres

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The latest approved version of this document is online.  
If the review date has passed please contact the Author for advice.

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## Version Control

Version	Summary of Changes/Amendments	Issue Date
1	Initial Issue	Dec 2021

## Engagement & Consultation

### Key Individuals/Groups Involved in Developing this Document

Role / Designation
Infection Prevention Control Team
Lateral Flow Testing Visiting Group.

### Circulated to the following for Consultation

Date	Role / Designation
	As above

## Evidence Base

### Please list any National Guidelines, Legislation or Health and Care Standards relating to this subject area?

Welsh Government Hospital Visiting Guidance:

[Hospital visiting during the coronavirus outbreak guidance: June 2021 | GOV.WALES](#)

## Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment Summary					
	No impact	Adverse	Differential	Positive	Statement
Age				X	
Disability				X	
Gender reassignment				X	
Pregnancy and maternity				X	
Race				X	
Religion/ Belief				X	
Sex				X	
Sexual Orientation				X	
Marriage and civil partnership				X	
Welsh Language				X	
Human Rights				X	
Risk Assessment Summary					
<p><b>Have you identified any risks arising from the implementation of this policy / procedure / written control document?</b></p> <p>No risks identified as the document is a risk reduction strategy.</p>					
<p><b>Have you identified any Information Governance issues arising from the implementation of this policy / procedure / written control document?</b></p> <p>No</p>					
<p><b>Have you identified any training and / or resource implications as a result of implementing this?</b></p> <p>No</p>					

## **1. Introduction**

To ensure the health and safety of patients/service users and staff our first priority is the prevention and control of infection in healthcare settings (WG). The COVID-19 pandemic has required a revision of traditional visiting arrangements and there is a need to respond to updated guidance and work in different ways to manage patient care thoroughly and safely. COVID-19 has created a necessity to consider new ways of working and to initiate change that will support patients/service users and staff during the period of anticipated increase in cases of COVID 19 including subsequent SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern.

## **2. Objective**

This standard operating procedure is underpinned by Welsh Government guidelines to support healthcare staff by providing robust guidance on safe systems for working. This document is based on the need to amend services during this pandemic period considering national guidance therefore resulting in changes to services. This document provides procedural guidance for staff working within health services for management and planning of visiting individuals during this the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure a safe and consistent service.

## **3. Aims**

- To prevent visitors with Covid 19 entering PTHB inpatient areas maternity settings and therefore reduce transmission risk
- To help maintain the safety of all individuals using or working within PTHB services

## **4. Definitions**

- Visitor – Any citizen including staff, contractors or members of public attending a community hospital ward
- Purpose – A specific reason for visiting that does not include socialisation
- LFD – Lateral Flow Device (test)
- PCR – Polymerase Chain Reaction (test)
- FRFM – Fluid Resistant Face Masks
- PTHB – Powys Teaching Health Board

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **All Staff in Inpatient Settings and Birthing Centres**

Disseminate to staff

- Ward and departmental managers must ensure that all staff read and understand this procedure

- Cascade to non-clinical staff who may be dealing with telephone queries/bookings
- Communicate any changes to this document
- Reading and being familiar with contents of this document
- Amending practice where necessary to meet the requirements of the Standard Operating Procedure during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Keeping up to date with changes and advice in relation to COVID19 as communicated by senior staff.

## 6. Standards in relation to visiting PTHB premises

There are well documented and evidenced benefits to patients/service users of receiving visitors while they are in hospital and birth partner support for Maternity settings. While these benefits are acknowledged, the offering of visits during the COVID19 pandemic must be risk assessed against the potential harm of increased footfall and likelihood of increased transmission within healthcare settings.

To that end, reducing and restricting footfall has been recommended by Welsh Government. This does not mean that visiting is prohibited, rather it should be assessed on a case-by-case basis to evaluate the extent of harm experienced by a patient or by a visitor from a lack of visitation. This has been termed 'visiting with a purpose' within the WG guidance.

## 7. Guidance and recommendations for visitors

### Citizens are required to:

1	Be aware that visiting should be with a clear purpose and agreement for visiting based on the best interests of the patient/service user or the well-being of the visitor.
2	Understand that visiting is for one visitor at a time
3	Be aware that changes to visiting arrangements can be made at short notice to ensure the safety of all patients and to comply with legislation.
4	Not to visit where there are any signs or symptoms of COVID19
5	It is strongly recommended that all visitors take a lateral flow test as close as possible to the visit but not exceeding 24 hours.
6	Adhere to visiting appointment time (both arrival and departure) or agreed support as a Birth Partner for women using Birth centres
7	Comply with all infection prevention measures including mask-wearing, social distancing and hand hygiene. Masks must be fluid resistant and if necessary will be provided. All visitors 11 years and older are required to wear a mask.
8	Avoid bringing gifts and personal items into hospital premises
9	Avoid sharing food or drink with patients/service users
10	Restrict visiting to their allocated slot
11	Book any and every visit directly with the ward or area they wish to visit

12	Be aware that permission for one visit does not mean there is ongoing agreement for future visits.
13	Always follow advice and guidance from clinical staff
14	Children visiting parents or carers etc should be accompanied by an adult.

### Guidance and Responsibilities for Staff:

1	Comply with Health Protection regulations and restrict visiting to those with a clear purpose and agreement for visiting based on the best interests of the patient/service user or the well-being of the visitor.
2	Carry out screening checks
3	Staff should promote visitors undertaking a lateral flow test prior to any visit (please note: lateral flow tests are not mandatory, this is guidance).
4	Provide Fluid Resistant Face Masks (FRSMs) where necessary
5	Comply with booking requirements to mitigate the possibility of too many visitors at any one time at any location
6	Promote the potential of outdoor visits where practicable
7	Remind visitors of the methods of maintaining contact with loved ones – cards, phone calls, video calls, social media
8	Be aware of exceptions and carry out risk assessments (see appendices 1, 2 & 3) for a list of questions to aid decision-making)
9	Provide a visitor toilet
10	Provide clear and accurate signage
11	Provide access to hand-washing/hand-sanitiser stations
12	Put increased cleaning measures in place particularly in communal visitor areas e.g. toilets/hand-washing facilities and be able to evidence a robust cleaning schedule.
13	Document appropriately to allow for audit and feedback

### 8. Exceptions

It is essential to maintain robust infection prevention and control strategies at this stage in the pandemic, for the safety of patients, visitors and staff, however exceptional circumstances should be taken into consideration.

A family carer / parent / guardian / supporter / personal assistant should be facilitated to visit a patient where it is in the best interest of the patients care. Patients receiving care in the last days of life, may have up to 2 visitors, preferably from the same household or extended household in any given week. Otherwise, visits must be carried out at separate times. Where visitors are symptomatic of COVID 19, they must refrain from visiting.

Patients may be accompanied where appropriate and it is necessary to assist their communication or to meet their health, emotional, religious or spiritual care needs as agreed with ward / department.

## **9. Maternity / Birthing Centres**

As part of the Welsh Government Visiting guidance it has been standard practice through COVID19 that women choosing to birth in a Powys Community Hospital Birth Centre will be supported with a birthing partner or nominated essential other. Welsh Government guidance has emphasised where possible, recommending that partners, visitors or other supporters should preferably be from the same household or part of an extended household as the woman. The support for labour is discussed with the Named Midwife as part of the antenatal birth preferences discussion.

The principles for the Standard Operating Procedure for safe management of visitors to community hospital wards should be followed. Birthing partners or nominated essential others should complete a test when a client is showing signs of labour, so that the lateral flow test (LFT) result is known prior to attendance at the Birth Centre. Women are advised to consider an alternate essential support person in the event of their birthing partner having a positive LFT.

## **10. Review & change responsibilities**

Nosocomial Group

## **11. References/bibliography**

This Standard Operating Procedure has been written in accordance with the following guidance:

Welsh Government Hospital Visiting Guidance:

[Hospital visiting during the coronavirus outbreak guidance: June 2021 | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/hospital-visiting-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak-guidance-june-2021)

## Appendix 1: Individual visitor risk assessment

<b>Considerations for visiting in non-COVID-19 healthcare settings</b> (this is in addition to the usual risk assessments carried with visitors, and in accordance with the Welsh Government guidance: see link in section 11 above)	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Is the request for visiting with a purpose? That means it is not a social occasion but to improve the well-being and aid the recovery of a patient or benefit the wellbeing of a visitor?				
Would the patient's/service user's health and well-being benefit from seeing an appropriate visitor?				
Is the patient/service user COVID-19 free and placed on a COVID-19 free ward				
What is the COVID-19 situation in the healthcare setting? Visiting will need to be suspended if an outbreak or increased numbers of patients with symptoms of COVID-19 (or other infection) occurs in the healthcare setting.				
Has the patient/service user already received a face-to-face visit from another relative? Visits should preferably be with people from the same household or part of an extended household and ideally be limited to one household/extended household in any given week, however visiting arrangements should take into account individual circumstances				
Is the visitor prepared to undertake an LFT?				

## Appendix 2: Guidance for staff responsible for booking of visits

**This guidance may not be applicable to all sites/situations and decisions should be taken locally to assess the relevance. It is included as an aide memoire and a tool to support decision-making rather than a strict checklist**

	Yes	No	N/A	Notes
<b>Practicalities and location of visit</b>				
Has provision been made to ensure all chairs and equipment are cleaned between visits?				
Can hand sanitiser be provided for the visitor at a fixed point?				
The expectation is that visitors would provide their own face coverings, but in the event a visitor arrives without one, they should be provided with one.				
Can the visit be facilitated outdoors, such as a garden?				

	Yes	No	N/A	Notes
Do staffing levels support outdoor visiting?				
If the visit cannot be facilitated outdoors, is there a separate side room in the healthcare setting which can be used?				
How will the visitor safely journey from the car park through the building to and from the patient's/service user's location?				
For outdoor visiting, consider how the visitor will safely journey from the car park to the outdoor location.				
Is there sufficient signage to the patient's/service user's indoor or outdoor location as well as social distancing reminders?				
Will the visitor need to be escorted to the patient's/service user's indoor or outdoor location?				
Have any other visits been arranged at the same time in the side room or outdoor location?				
Is there facility for a designated, well sign-posted "visitor toilet" near to the visiting location?				

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Notes</b>
How will visitors of different patients/service users be managed to prevent too many visitors at one time in a location?				

### Appendix 3: Essential Messages to Convey to All Visitors

<b>This guidance may not be applicable to all sites/situations and decisions should be taken locally to assess the relevance. It is included as an aide memoire and a tool to support decision-making rather than a strict checklist</b>				
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Remind the visitor of the option of other methods by which they can maintain regular contact with their loved one, for example, phone calls, e-mails, social media and video calls.				
Ensure the visitor is made fully aware of what is required with regard to their present health and COVID-19. If they have COVID-19 symptoms they should be self-isolating. All visitors should be made aware that they must stay at home and are not permitted to visit if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> they personally have COVID-19 symptoms,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> are awaiting the outcome of a COVID-19 test</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> are required to self-isolate (including as an identified contact of a positive case under the NHS Test, Trace and Protect Strategy):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> or, if they live with any household members who have COVID-19 symptoms (and who are therefore self-isolating), or have COVID-19 symptoms, are self-isolating and are awaiting the outcome of a COVID-19 test.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> or, they have returned from overseas travel in the last 10 days from a non-exempt country and are required to be in quarantine</li> </ul> </li> </ul>				

Ensure the visitor understands that if they arrive and are assessed by a registrant that they have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 they will be asked to leave immediately.				
Ensure the visitor understands that ward visiting may have to be suspended if an outbreak or increased numbers of patients with symptoms of COVID-19 (or other infection) occurs in the healthcare setting.				
Ensure the visitor understands that agreement for this visit does not mean they may see their loved one every day. Agreement will need to be sought for subsequent visits.				
Ensure the visitor understands the need to maintain the 2-metre social distance from patients/service users, staff and other visitors at all times in the healthcare setting or outdoor location.				
Ensure the visitor understands that they will need to listen and adhere to staff advice on hand hygiene and infection control precautions on arriving and leaving the area and the consequences of not doing so.				
Ensure the visitor is discouraged from bringing a young child or toddler along to the visit due to the difficulty of maintaining social distancing.				
Ensure the visitor understands that if they were formerly shielding or are otherwise clinically vulnerable, they should avoid hospital visits. Where a hospital visit is deemed essential, for example to visit a loved one in				

the last days of life, hospitals should provide medical masks.				
Ensure the visitor understands that all visitors aged 11 or over are required to wear a face covering in indoor public areas unless they have a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering. Read further guidance on face coverings and exemptions.				
Ensure the visitor understands that food and drink must not be shared and gifts/flowers are discouraged.				
Ensure the visitor to the outdoor location understands that they may not enter the healthcare setting unless they wish to use the designated "visitor toilet".				
Ensure the visitor understands that outdoor visits are weather dependent and may be cancelled at relatively short notice if there is no alternative visiting area.				