

Visiting healthcare inpatient settings during the COVID-19 pandemic

5 June 2020, Version 1

This guidance supersedes and replaces the NHS ‘Visitor guidance’ dated 8 April 2020. The national suspension on visiting imposed under that guidance is now lifted. Visiting shall instead be subject to local discretion by trusts and other NHS bodies.

The health, safety and wellbeing of our patients, communities and individuals and teams remain our absolute priority.

This guidance provides advice on how NHS organisations may choose to facilitate visiting across healthcare inpatient settings (including mental health, learning disability and autism, children and maternity). Further information on visiting on maternity wards can be found on the [Royal College of Midwives website](#).

This guidance is consistent with NHS advice on [compassionate visiting arrangements at end of life](#) and [wider government advice on social distancing](#).

Practical considerations to support visiting

- **Before visiting** the visitor should contact the clinical area to discuss appropriate arrangements.
- **The number of visitors at the bedside is limited to one close family contact** or somebody important to the patient. However, where it is possible to maintain social distancing throughout the visit, a second additional visitor could be permitted in circumstances including partners of women in labour and a family member for individuals receiving end-of-life care.
- **Visitors should be informed in advance** about what to expect when they see the patient and, be given practical advice about social distancing wearing personal protective equipment, handwashing and risks associated with the removal of gloves to hold hands.
- **Visitors must wear masks or face coverings at all times.**

- Anyone showing [symptoms of coronavirus](#) should not visit, even if these symptoms are mild or intermittent, due to the risk they pose to others. This is important for [infection prevention and control](#). If you display symptoms of coronavirus you should self-isolate at home and organise a test, members of your household should also self-isolate for 14 days.
- **Other people who are in attendance to support the needs of the patient**, for example a familiar carer/supporter/personal assistant, should not be counted as additional visitor. Patients may be accompanied where appropriate and necessary to assist with the patient's communication and/or to meet the patient's health or social care needs. Where possible patients should contact the ward or department in advance to discuss local considerations and make appropriate arrangements.
- **Where a face-to-face visit is not practical** then virtual visits (examples are included in Appendix A) should be supported and facilitated.