



## OPEN VISITING TIMES POLICY

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<b>Date EQIA completed:</b>	All policies must be Equality Impact Assessed – 2.6.17
<b>Documents to be read alongside this policy:</b>	Any documents this should be read with including supporting procedures/written control documents
<b>Purpose of Issue/Description of current changes:</b> New policy introducing a more flexible and open approach to visiting in acute and community hospitals for all relatives and carers	

<b>First operational:</b>	June 2017				
<b>Previously reviewed:</b>	date	date	date	date	date
<b>Changes made yes/no:</b>	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes/no	Yes/no

### PROPRIETARY INFORMATION

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<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.0 Policy Statement	3
2.0 Scope	3
3.0 Aims and objectives	3
4.0 Roles and Responsibilities	4
5.0 Visiting Times	4
5.1 Communication and Information	4
5.2 Protected Mealtimes	5
5.3 Number of Visitors	5
5.4 Special Considerations	5
5.5 Staff Availability During Visiting Times	5
5.6 Infants, Children and Young People Visiting	6
5.7 Preventing Infection	6
6.0 Monitoring	6
7.0 Appendices	7
Appendix 1 Open Visiting Poster	7
Appendix 2 Visitors Charter: An Information Guide	8

## **1.0 Policy Statement**

BCU Health Board is fully committed to implementing a person centered approach to the delivery of health care for patients, and their families/carers who access our services. The Board believes that responding to the needs of our patients/visitors will further enhance the development of a person-centered healthcare service.

Our staff are committed to responding to the needs and expectations of patients and they understand the invaluable role that the patient's family, carer, friends and relatives make in the patients' recovery. These are the people who know the patient best and those who, simply by their presence, can help to reassure patients in times of uncertainty, anxiety or vulnerability.

The variety of visiting times and practices that currently exist across our acute and community hospitals can be confusing for patients and visitors, particularly as they are often required to access services on different sites. The Board therefore recognises the need to extend visiting hours across inpatient areas to help families and carers support, where appropriate, the delivery of care.

The Health Board supports John's Campaign which is the right of a carer to stay with an individual with dementia in hospital. For someone with dementia, having a loved one by their side during their stay in hospital can be reassuring and comforting and involving a family carer from admission to discharge is proven to give better quality of care and improved outcomes. Wards across acute and community hospitals are adopting this campaign and the development of an open visiting hours policy will support the implementation of the campaign.

The open visiting policy will allow more flexible visiting in acute and community hospitals for all relatives and carers.

## **2.0 Scope**

This policy applies to all of our acute and community inpatient areas within BCU Health Board.

It is acknowledged that by moving away from restricted scheduled visiting to a more flexible approach, that patients' family/ friends may feel more able to be involved and participate in the patients care, thus helping the patient to get the most benefit from inpatient care and make their discharge more seamless whilst ensuring any continuing care needs are addressed.

In specialist areas such as critical care, high dependency unit, coronary care unit, maternity units, paediatrics units, special care baby unit and mental health unit's some restrictions may apply, which will be communicated to patients and their relatives

## **3.0 Aims and Objectives**

The policy is designed to move away from the traditional scheduled and restricted visiting arrangements in favour of a more open and flexible approach with extended visiting times.

It is acknowledged that ongoing dialogue and communication between the ward or department manager, staff and visitors is required. Clinical staff should use their professional judgment when applying discretion and flexibility to meet visitor / relatives and patient need.

#### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of all staff to support and promote person centered patient care and the implementation of open visiting times.

The ward or department manager is required to ensure that the policy related to their specific service area is implemented and that relatives and patients are informed of the open visiting time arrangements. Wherever possible this discussion should be had with the patient and their carer during the admission process.

Visiting times within acute and community hospitals are open, with the overall responsibility for ensuring patients and client needs during visiting times are met, remaining with the ward/department manager.

#### **5. Visiting Times**

Flexible visiting promotes an environment in which the patient establishes visiting parameters that best suit individual circumstances. The ultimate goal is to meet the psychological and emotional needs of the patient and those who comprise the patient's support system through flexible visiting. A visitor is defined as anyone who the patient determines is significant to their well-being and whose presence would enhance their time in hospital.

##### **5.1 Communication and Information**

Signs should be clearly displayed at the entrance to the unit / ward. Leaflets should be available to all visitors and patients.

An Open Visiting information poster (See Appendix 1) is available to place adjacent to the ward visiting sign. It is important that this is explained clearly to the patient and their relatives, ideally on admission. A Visitors Charter information leaflet is also available to distribute to patients and relatives (see Appendix 2).

The open visiting schedule offers flexibility for relatives and patients. It is of importance to explain clearly that visiting is open although there is no obligation to stay for the full duration of the visiting time, which allows the patient for adequate rest and recuperation time. Person centred health care recognises the important role caregivers and families / friends play in the lives of patients and staff should discuss with family / friends and caregivers the role they would like to play in helping to provide care to their relative while in the hospital. Some may see hospitalisation as a respite of sorts from their daily responsibilities, while others want to retain an active role.

Staff should inform both patients and their relatives that where possible healthcare staff will work around the visiting time to optimise the flexibility. However when this is

not possible and patients require care, treatments or examinations during visiting time, which may interrupt their visiting, visitors should be advised of this beforehand where possible. Visitors should also be informed that during visiting times, they may be asked to leave the room or ward if staff need to attend to the patient.

Staff should also inform visitors that in order to maintain patient confidentiality visitors will also be asked to leave during medical ward rounds. There may also be times where patients are required to leave the ward to go for tests or scans. Staff should advise visitors that where possible they will be given notice of this, however there may be occasion when visitors attend and patients are not on the ward.

Information about canteens/cafeterias should be made available for visitors to minimise any inconvenience if they have to wait a while before being able to return to the ward.

The BCU Health Board Internet website and Social Media will be used to inform visitors of visiting times

## **5.2 Protected Mealtimes**

Protected or supported mealtimes are in place within the health board, so that patients can have an environment that supports them to get the most nutrition and benefit from the food provided. This means that certain hospital activities and interventions are limited to allow patients to eat their meals without disruption and enable staff to focus on providing assistance to those patients unable to eat independently and without families present to support.

*NB: This does not mean excluding visitors from assisting. It is important to encourage relatives and carers to continue to be involved in the mealtime experience of the patient. This is particularly the case where the patient requires assistance at mealtimes and this is part of the patient's existing or future meal time experience.*

## **5.3 Number of Visitors**

It is recommended that there are only two visitors per patient at any given time. Visitors may need to be reminded politely of the visiting policy and the flexible visiting times and provided with information about canteens and cafeterias.

## **5.4 Special Considerations**

It is recognised that there may be occasions when the number of visitors may exceed two per bed and when visitors may need to stay overnight. Examples of this would be when the patient is at the end of life or patients with cognition problems who are agitated overnight.

Families should discuss all such requests with the nurse in charge who has responsibility for ensuring all patients and client needs are met.

## **5.5 Staff Availability during Visiting Times**

It is important that staff are available to speak with relatives during visiting times. If the shift hand over occurs during visiting time it is important to identify a member of

staff who will be available to speak with relatives if requested. This member of staff should be from the shift going off duty.

### **5.6 Infants, Children and Young People visiting**

Only the children or grandchildren of the patient will be allowed to visit. Visiting of infants, children and young people is at the discretion of the Nurse in Charge. All children must remain under direct supervision from family members at all times. It is recognised that children might be in the position of being a young carer for a relative. In these circumstances they may visit unsupervised and stay for the length of normal visiting.

### **5.7 Infection Prevention**

Infection prevention in hospitals is very important. To help stop the spread of infection all visitors entering or leaving the ward must clean their hands, either by washing at a sink on entrance to the ward, or by using the hand rub provided. Visitors must utilise chairs provided and not sit on beds.

Visitors should be advised that they should contact the person in charge before visiting if they are unsure of the infectious status of the person they are visiting within a hospital setting. They must also be informed of appropriate infection prevention precautions needed when visiting, including any personal protective equipment which may be needed.

*NB: Staff must advise all visitors that they must not visit if they have signs of a cough, cold or diarrhoea / vomiting or have been in contact with an infectious disease, e.g. chicken pox. They should be advised to contact NHS Direct or their GP for advice.*

## **6. Monitoring and Implementation**

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Divisions. Feedback should be made through local line management structures. This policy will be revised formally at the agreed review date.

## 8. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Open Visiting

#### Open Visiting

- Open visiting is now policy within all of our hospitals which means that you can visit most wards at a time to suit you, your family and of course, the patient.
- There are some specialist units such as critical care, high dependency unit, coronary care unit, maternity units, paediatrics units, special care baby units and mental health units where there may be further restrictions, which will be clearly communicated
- There will still be a limit to the number of visitors per bed at any one time, which should be two
- There will also be occasions when, for clinical reasons, we need to ask you to come back later or move to another area of the ward for a short period of time
- A visitor's charter is available from staff on the wards which sets out guidelines which we hope you will adhere to during your visit
- If you have any questions please speak to the Nurse in Charge of the ward or department



## Appendix 2: Visitors Charter: An information guide

<p>Our priority is to provide quality care for our patients. Visiting times are open for all our inpatient areas to enable relatives and carers to feel more involved in the care that we provide in hospital and planning for discharge home.</p> <p><u>Staff will be</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• polite and courteous at all times and support relatives who wish to participate in their relative's care</li><li>• do our best to create a calm and useful environment to help our patients recover</li><li>• use our skills to prioritise the planning of care to our patients and communicate our decisions</li><li>• keep family members and next of kin informed of any information with the patients</li><li>• arrange for you to speak to a member of the medical team</li><li>• do all we can to protect patients from infection; on occasions this may result in restricting visiting or moving patients to an allocated side room</li><li>• work hard to provide a clean hospital</li><li>• give your relatives all the care they need, but we do have to make sure all our patients needs are met.</li></ul>	<p><u>Relatives we would like to invite you to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be polite and courteous to staff, other patients and visitors</li><li>• Please do not visit if you are unwell and do not visit for at least 48 hours after your last episode of diarrhoea and vomiting</li><li>• Please wash your hands on entering and leaving the ward by using the alcohol gel provided and adhere to visiting restrictions that may be in place by the infection prevention team</li><li>• Do not sit on patients beds and use the chairs provided.</li><li>• Allow cleaning staff to undertake daily cleaning of bed areas; where patients are being barrier nursed you may be asked to leave the room so a full clean can be completed which may take up to half an hour</li><li>• Do not use the patient toilets or bathrooms. Please ask a member of staff for directions to the public facilities.</li><li>• Provide your relative with their toiletries, dentures, glasses and suitable clothing and footwear</li><li>• Understand and respect that information cannot be given out unless the patient has given their permission. If you feel you do not have sufficient information please let us know</li><li>• Understand that you may be asked to leave the ward during doctors' rounds if a medical emergency occurs or to ensure confidentiality for other patients is maintained.</li><li>• Please discuss children visiting and any restrictions on visitor numbers with the ward manager</li><li>• Be respectful. Our patients may be poorly so please keep noise levels to a minimum and put your mobile phone on</li></ul>
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	<p>silent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remember that rest is important and allow your relative the opportunity to rest for periods throughout the day.</li><li>• Be respectful of other patient's time and accepted bed time. There will be open visiting however some restrictions may apply and these will be communicated.</li><li>• Do not bring in food for your own or your relatives consumption. The staff will be happy to direct you to the nearest restaurant facility</li><li>• Please do not disturb the nursing staff when they are administering medications</li><li>• Do not smoke or use e-cigarettes within the hospital or hospital grounds.</li></ul>
<p>For general enquiries please contact the Nurse in Charge of the Ward or Department you are visiting.</p>	

**Engagement has taken place with:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date Consulted</b>
Members	Professional Advisory Group	February 2017
Members	Professional Advisory Group	May 2017
Members	Local Partnership Forum	June 2017
Geoff Ryall-Harvey	Community Health Council	June 2017