

Our commitment to our visitors

## Visiting patients in our community hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (KCHFT) recognises the importance of relationships between patients, their families, friends and carers and supports visiting in our community hospitals.

Processes have been put in place in each of the hospitals to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and we are asking all visitors to contact the wards where their loved one is being cared for to make arrangements to visit. To help keep everyone as safe as possible there will be only one visitor per person. However, in exceptional circumstances and where social distancing is possible, the ward may allow up to four visitors. This should be discussed and agreed when planning your visit.

### Important information

In line with Public Health England guidance and to keep patients and staff safe, anyone who is self-isolating or who has been confirmed COVID-19 positive, must remain in self-isolation and cannot visit our hospitals. If you are visiting a loved one who has tested positive for COVID-19, there is an increased risk of infection to you, however, this is minimised by following the advice in this leaflet.

**If you want to visit, please contact the ward in advance to discuss what you need to do.**

Where a visit to your loved one is not possible, our hospitals are supporting patients' families to make virtual visits using devices available on the wards.

### What to expect at a visit during the COVID-19 pandemic

#### Before arriving at the hospital

During your visiting arrangement call to the ward you will be told where to go and who to ask for on arrival.

It is a good idea to write down any questions you have before arriving at the hospital in case you forget what you want to ask.

To help our patients stay in touch with loved ones during their stay, we are encouraging use of mobile phones and tablets. If you are taking a mobile phone or tablet with you for the patient to use, you can only do so if you are leaving it with them.

Please wipe down the device with anti-bacterial wipes before sealing in a suitable plastic bag, with the patient's name clearly written on a piece of paper. On arrival at the hospital, you can give the bag to a member of staff who will make sure further infection control procedures are followed before passing on to the patient. You can bring in cards/letters for loved ones too.

You should drive, or be driven, to the hospital to minimise the risk of exposure to others. Our car parks are currently free, but please ask a member of staff if this is still the case when you arrange your visit.

Please bring as few belongings with you as possible to minimise the risk of infection. There are facilities on the ward to enable you to arrange video calls to friends and family, if you wish to do this. Please ask a member of staff who will help you.

### Arriving at the hospital

Please wear a face covering when you approach and enter the building and while you are walking to your destination inside. Please use the hand sanitiser provided at the entrance to, or located within the hospital, the wards will also have sanitiser available on arrival at the ward.

We practise social distancing in the hospital – by keeping two metres apart – and you will be asked to keep to this during your visit. On the ward, you will see this is not possible when we are delivering care to patients and that staff are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) because of this, which protects patients and them.

### Arriving on the ward – Personal protective equipment (PPE)

When arriving at the hospital please wear your own face covering. When you arrive on the ward you will be given appropriate PPE which will include a face mask, apron and gloves. Staff will advise you where you can wash your hands, and show you how to put on the PPE. If you are unclear, please ask the staff member supporting you.

### Reassurance during your visit

We will do all we can to protect and support you during your visit and will advise you of any additional risks. For example, if your loved one is receiving end-of-life care, you may wish to hold their hand and remove your glove. You will be given advice about this, so you can make a decision knowing the risks and how to do this as safely as possible.

Our staff will advise you on how long you will be able to stay with the patient and this will be decided on a case-by-case basis in the best interests of the patient.

Please do not remove PPE if you need to leave your loved one's bedside. Please ring the patient call bell and the staff member can escort you to an area where you can remove your PPE and wash your hands. If you need to use the ward facilities, please follow this process, and staff will be able to escort you to a bathroom, and advise accordingly.

If you are ready to leave your loved one, again, please use the patients call bell, and a staff member will advise you on where and how to remove your PPE.

Please wash your hands for at least 20 seconds on leaving the ward and carefully follow all instructions you are given.

### After your visit

Please do not visit other patients or areas of the hospital.

You do not need to self-isolate following your visit, as your risk from virus transmission will have been minimised by wearing the appropriate PPE you were provided with and hand washing.

**If you feel unwell following your visit and have symptoms – a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature and/or a change to your sense of smell or taste – you and your household must follow the Government's self-isolation guidance.**

### Contact information

If you have any questions before or after your visit you can contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) – the details are below. A member of our team will do what they can to answer your queries.

Code: COVID-19 | Published: June 2020 | 04.11.20

## Do you have feedback about our health services?

**Phone:** 0300 123 1807  
8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday  
**Text:** 07899 903499  
**Email:** kentchft.PALS@nhs.net  
**Web:** [www.kentcht.nhs.uk/PALS](http://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/PALS)

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**  
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust  
Unit J, Concept Court  
Shearway Business Park  
Folkestone  
Kent CT19 4RG

If you need communication support or this leaflet in another format, please ask a member of staff or contact us.



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