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University Health Board

## ABMU Health Board

# Flexible Visiting Times Policy (Acute Hospitals)



This Policy has been screened for relevance to equality. No potential negative impact has been identified so a full equality impact assessment is not required.

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***Approved by:***

***Date Endorsed by:***

***Review Date:***

**Document No:**

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.0 Policy Statement	3
2.0 Scope	3
3.0 Aims and objectives	3
3.1 Visiting Times	4
4.0 Exemptions	4
5.0 Roles and Responsibilities	4
6.0 Definitions	4
7.0 Implementation/Policy Compliance	5
7.1. Visiting Times	5
7.2 Protected Mealtimes	6
7.3 Number of Visitors	6
7.3.1 Special Consideration	6
7.4 Staff Availability During Visiting Times	6
7.5 Infants, Children and Young People Visiting	6
7.6 Infection Control	7
8.0 Monitoring	7
9.0 Equality Impact Assessment	7
10.0 Getting Help	7
Appendix 1 Visiting Times Signage	8
Appendix 2 Patient and Relative Information Poster	9
Appendix 3 Patient Information Leaflet	10-11
Appendix 4 Equality Impact Assessment	12-15

## **1.0 Policy Statement**

ABMU 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 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. ,.

## **2.0 Scope**

This policy applies to all of our acute adult inpatient areas within ABMU Health Board.

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

## **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 flexible approach and extended visiting times.

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

### **3.1 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.

**Flexible visiting arrangements will be between: -**

**12:00noon and 20.30 hours**

This flexible visiting arrangement will be across the entire 7 day week.

### **4.0 Exemptions**

This policy applies to all adult acute inpatient areas.

### **5.0 Roles and responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of all staff to support and promote person centered patient care and the implementation of flexible visiting times. However the Ward Sister and Lead Nurse are required to ensure that the policy related to their specific service area is implemented and that relatives and patients are informed of the flexible visiting time arrangements. Wherever possible this discussion should be had with the patient and their carer during the admission process.

The ABMU Health Board Internet website <http://www.abm.wales.nhs.uk/> will be used to inform visitors of visiting times. The website is a quick way to update the public.

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

### **6.0 Definitions**

**Exemptions:** Free from obligation, i.e. ward areas to which this policy does not apply

**Flexible:** Responsive to change, adaptable, less rigid

**Protected Mealtimes:** A scheme to allow patients to eat their meals without disruption from hospital activities/interventions and enable staff to focus on providing assistance to those patients unable to eat independently and without families present to support.

Carers are encouraged to support with eating and drinking during these times.

**Visiting:** To come and see someone in hospital with view to providing emotional and psychological support. Visitors will also be able to participate in care delivery where appropriate.

## **7.0 Implementation/Policy Compliance**

### **7.1 Visiting Times**

Visiting times should be displayed (see Appendix 1) at the entrance to the clinical area. An information poster (See Appendix 2) 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. An information leaflet is also available to distribute to patients and relatives (see Appendix 3).

The visiting schedule offers flexibility for relatives and patients. It is of importance to explain clearly that visiting is open between the set hours and that there is no obligation to stay for the full duration of the visiting time. However, person-centered health care recognizes 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 hospitalization 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.

## **7.2 Protected Mealtimes**

Staff should enforce the protected meal time scheme so that patients can have an environment that supports them to get the most nutrition and benefit from the food provided.

**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.**

## **7.3 Number of Visitors**

Staff must ensure that there are only 2 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.

### **7.3.1 Special Considerations**

It is recognized that there are occasions when the number of visitors may exceed two per bed and when visitor may wish to stay for longer periods than outlined within the policy, including overnight. Examples of this would be when the patient is at the end of life or patients with cognition problems who are agitated overnight.

In situations where more than two visitors are allowed per patient this must be agreed by the Nurse in charge and be communicated across the team so that all staff members are reacting appropriately.

## **7.4 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.

## **7.5 Infant, 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.

## **7.6 Infection Control**

Infection control in hospitals is very important. To help stop the spread of infection all patients, visitors and staff entering or leaving the ward must use the hand hygiene gel available in dispensers. 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 should also be informed of appropriate infection control precautions, including PPE and hand hygiene, to be carried out when visiting.

**NB** Staff should advise all visitors that they should not visit if they have signs of a cough, cold or diarrhea / 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.

## **8.0 Monitoring**

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

## **9.0 Equality Impact Assessment**

This Policy has been screened for relevance to equality. No potential negative impact has been identified so a full equality impact assessment is not required. The completed screening tool is appended to this document.

## **10.0 Getting Help**

If assistance is required in interpreting the policy please raise queries via local line management structures.

## Appendix 1 – Visiting Times Signage

### Acute Hospitals



Welcome To Ward .....

Our Visiting Times flexible and between: -

**12.00 noon and 20.30 hours**

- You may visit at any time during these periods
- We welcome your presence and input
- Please speak to staff if there is anything that we can do to help with your visiting arrangements

**We only allow 2 visitors per patient at any one time**



### **Information about Visiting Times**

We know how beneficial visits from relatives, carers and friends are to patients, so we want to be flexible about when you can visit. Our aim is to balance this with the patient's need to rest and the need for staff to manage the clinical area safely and efficiently.

### **Visiting Times**

Our flexible visiting arrangements are between: -

#### **12:00 noon and 20.30 hours**

This arrangement offers flexibility for people to visit. You **don't**, however, need to stay for the full length of time as patients will also benefit from rest.

Sometimes staff may ask you to leave the room or ward if the patient requires care, treatments, rehabilitation, tests or examinations during visiting times. Please check with staff to find out if there are any treatments or tests planned. Remember, you can use our cafeteria if you need to wait outside the ward for a while.

### **Protected Mealtimes**

We promote and encourage "protected mealtimes" which supports patients to eat and drink without distractions from hospital activities. Please speak to staff regarding these times as we would encourage you to support your relative/friend with eating and drinking.

### **Infection Control**

Infection control in hospitals is very important. You can help us stop the spread of infection by using the hand hygiene gel when entering or leaving the ward. Apply this by squirting a little gel onto the hands, massaging it in like hand cream and allowing it to dry naturally. There are hand hygiene gel dispensers at the entrance and throughout the ward. If you do not see any or are unsure please ask a member of staff. Please do not sit on beds use the chairs provided.

Please do not visit if you have signs of a cough, cold, diarrhoea or vomiting or have been in contact with an infectious disease, e.g. chicken

pox. If you have any of these contact your GP for advice.

### **Number of Visitors per Patient**

We only allow two visitors per patient at a time. If a patient has more than two visitors, we will ask them to wait outside the ward. We will only allow the children or grandchildren of the patient to visit. Children must be with an adult and be supervised at all times.

### **Mobile Phones**

Please show some consideration to other patients when using your mobile phone.

To protect all patients' privacy, camera phones must not be used to take photographs in any part of the hospital, unless you have consent to do so.

### **Zero Tolerance Policy**

ABMU Health Board has a zero tolerance policy regarding any kind of verbal or physical abuse. Staff may ask visitors to leave if their behaviour disrupts other patients or staff.

### **No Smoking**

ABMU Health Board has a No Smoking Policy. This means no smoking in any NHS building, entrance, doorway, grounds or car park.

**Further Information** If you have any questions please ask a member of staff.

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Sometimes, during visiting times, staff may ask you to leave the room or ward if they need to attend to the patient. The patient may also require care, rehabilitation, treatments, tests or examinations during visiting times, which may affect the length of your visit. Please check with staff to find out if there are any treatments or tests planned. Remember, you can use our cafeteria if you need to wait outside the ward for a while.

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