

2 November 2020

Fact Sheet for family and friends of National Spinal Injury Centre patients on adult wards

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that we have had to introduce a number of changes to ensure that we can keep our patients and our staff safe. We'd like to thank you for your support and understanding and want to reassure you that we are continuing to provide the best possible care for your loved ones. We've tried to answer some of the questions you may have below:

Q Are visitors allowed in the NSIC?

A Unfortunately, no. Given the increasing infection rates, the NSIC has had to take the difficult decision to re-introduce a **no visiting policy** to keep patients and staff safe. This is particularly important for patients with spinal cord injuries as they are at high risk. Exceptional circumstances will be considered in the following cases for patients:

- with a learning disability, cognitive impairment or autism
- with communication challenges including hearing or visual impairment
- for whom English is not their first language
- with mental health problems
- who are nearing the end of their life.

Q How can I keep in contact with my relative/friend?

A Patients are free to use their own devices to contact family and friends. For those that don't have their own device, or aren't able to use it, we have a number of tablets available for patients to use if they are able, or for a member of staff to use on behalf of our patients. Please contact us to let us know if you need any help with this.

Family and friends can also send a letter to a loved one via a dedicated email address bht.lettertoalovedone@nhs.net. Anyone wishing to use this service should send their message in an email or as a Word attachment. One digital photograph can be included within the email which will be printed in colour. The Trust will print out each letter, pop it into an envelope and deliver it to the patient to whom it is addressed to keep and re-read as they wish.

Those using the scheme are asked to include their loved one's full name, date of birth, postcode, and NHS number (if this is known). The Trust cannot enter into a discussion about a patient's health or ongoing treatment via this email address.

Letters received before 10am from Monday to Friday, will be delivered on the day. Those received after 10am will be delivered next day. Letters received over the weekend will be delivered on the following Monday.

All letters will be treated as confidential. If a patient is unable to open or read a letter we will ask their permission before opening or reading letters out to them.

Q If we can't visit, how is my relative/friend going to get the essential items they need e.g. toiletries?

A Rest assured, we will make sure we meet all their personal care needs whilst in hospital e.g. toiletries and laundry essentials.



Q Is there any other support available for families who aren't able to visit their loved ones?

A We offer a Family Counselling service to support the sometimes difficult feelings associated with spinal cord injury, as well as the current situation, and this can include any potential impact of not visiting.

The counselling service offers an opportunity to talk through feelings, concerns and difficulties that may arise, in a confidential and non-judgmental setting. Sessions are offered as a free of charge provision. Due to current restrictions sessions are via telephone or virtual.

Please feel free to make use of this service by contacting the Family Counsellor Kim Broom - Phone: 01296 315858/Email: Kim.broom1@nhs.net or by making contact via the Psychology Team Phone: 01296 315823/Email: bht.nsicpsychology@nhs.net

You can also access emotional, spiritual and religious support through our chaplaincy service. Please contact our lead chaplain, Lindsay van Dijk, either by email at lindsay.vandijk@nhs.net or by phone on 07557 633289.