

Information and Guidance on Visiting Hospitals for Faith and Belief Community Representatives



This leaflet has been prepared by the NHSGGC Chaplaincy Service in response to requests for information and guidance to assist representatives of faith communities when they are visiting members of their community who are in hospital. It is intended for use by those who are visiting patients in the course of their professional duties as representatives of a faith community (for example, Church of Scotland Parish Ministers, Rabbis, Imams.) For purposes of clarification, the phrase 'faith community' ought to be read as including churches, congregations, faith and belief groups.

Spiritual and Religious Care is regarded by NHSGGC as an intrinsic part of the holistic care provided to patients and to those who care for them. To this end the NHSGGC Chaplaincy Service delivers spiritual and religious care to all people, regardless of faith and belief. Healthcare Chaplains work with other NHS staff to ensure that these needs are met. Local faith community leaders have an important role to play in ensuring that patients who belong to their community have their particular religious needs met.

Spiritual care addresses the fundamental human need to have a sense of peace, security and hope particularly in the context of injury, illness or loss and religious care can be a crucial aspect of this.

1 Patient Confidentiality

The fact that a person is a patient in hospital is a confidential matter and must not be shared with another person without the consent of the patient. To this end, a chaplain (or any other member of NHS staff) cannot confirm that a person is in hospital without their permission. If you know that a member of your community is in the hospital, however, but are not sure which ward they are in, chaplains can assist you to find them.

Personal information about a patient, clinical or otherwise, must come from the patient, their family or representative. NHS staff, including chaplains, are not able to disclose such information.

2 Visiting Patients

It is possible to visit patients outwith the usual visiting times but it is advisable that contact is made with ward staff in advance by telephoning and making arrangements for your visit. Your patient may have an appointment for tests, or be unwell, and so unable to be visited. Many wards have protected times when visits are not possible. Ward staff may first ask the patient if they would like a visit.

Phoning in advance to arrange your visit makes good use of your time: the patient may have been discharged and your journey could be wasted.

Visiting times for wards vary from hospital to hospital and it is best to check what they are with the ward.

3 Emergencies

If you are called in an emergency by a patient's family / carers and asked to visit please check first with the ward staff that it is appropriate to visit. The chaplains may also be able to assist in these circumstances.

4 Arrivals and Departures

When you arrive at the ward to visit, it is good practice to introduce yourself and check that your patient is ready for a visit. Similarly, when you leave it is helpful for ward staff to know that you have gone.

5 Infection Control

It is essential that all visitors to hospitals adhere to infection control procedures. Please observe the following:

- Use the hand wash before and after your visit.
- Look out for notices requiring the use of gloves or aprons – especially if the patient is in a single room.
- Do not sit on the bed.
- Consented touch can be an important aspect of good pastoral care but carries risks of cross-infection. It is all the more important to clean your hands before and after visiting the patient.
- If you have recently been unwell, or are unwell, please do not visit.
- Flowers are not permitted in many wards due to infection control measures.

6 Healthcare Chaplains

When chaplains meet a patient who belongs to a faith community, they always offer assistance in making contact with its leaders on their behalf. Sometimes patients are more than happy for us to let you know they are in hospital. Some patients, however, ask that we do not make contact and this is always respected.

Similarly, chaplains are happy to receive referrals from faith communities to visit patients. This can be appropriate if the patient is a distance from home (some of the hospitals provide healthcare services to patients from throughout the west of Scotland) or if you are unable to visit due to holidays etc. Chaplains visit wards regularly but there is no guarantee that we will meet your member whilst they are in hospital. A referral guarantees a visit.

Chaplains always appreciate contact with faith community leaders and are happy to give assistance; we can offer you information and support on aspects of spiritual and religious care. If you have any difficulties or concerns with any aspect of your hospital visiting please do contact the relevant chaplain.

The Chaplaincy Service is an NHS Service which works in a 'generic' capacity – that is, the care and support Healthcare Chaplains offer is for everyone, regardless of faith or belief. There are Roman Catholic Priests available to Roman Catholic Patients and designated contact persons for other faith and belief groups.

7 Sanctuaries, Quiet Rooms and Chapels

Many of the hospitals have a Sanctuary, Quiet Room or traditional Chapel. These are available for use by people of all faiths and none, for prayer, meditation and peace; you are welcome to use them if you wish. In some hospitals access is not possible at all times therefore it is best to make arrangements in advance with the chaplains, if possible.

Contact Numbers

Listed below are the principal phone numbers for contacting the Chaplaincy Service in the hospital(s) named.

Glasgow Royal Infirmary
The Princess Royal Maternity Hospital
0141 211 4661

Inverclyde Royal Hospital
01475 504759

Glasgow Western Infirmary
0141 211 2812

Paisley Royal Alexandra Hospital &
Vale of Leven Hospital
0141 314 9561

Royal Hospital for Sick Children at
Yorkhill
0141 201 0595

Dykebar Hospital
0141 314 4211

Gartnavel General Hospital
Beatson Oncology Centre
0141 211 3026

Gartnavel Royal Hospital
0141 211 3686

Victoria Infirmary, Mansionhouse Unit,
Mearnskirk Hospital 0141
201 5164

Stobhill Hospital Site & Parkhead
Hospital
0141 531 5908

Southern General Hospital 0141
452 3221

Leverndale Hospital 0141
211 6695

For general enquiries about Healthcare
Chaplaincy in NHS GGC you may contact
the Head of Chaplaincy and Spiritual
Care:
0141 452 3220