

8 July 2020

**Response to a request for official information**

Thank you for your request for official information received 23 June 2020 by Nelson Marlborough Health (NMH)<sup>1</sup>, where you seek the following information:

- 1. The protocols the DHB had/have in relation to access for support people of patients in the public hospitals within your DHB region during Level 2 lockdown (between 14 May and 8 June) and Level 1.***

NMH response: Please see attached NMH *Visitor Policy during COVID-19 Pandemic Alert Levels*. This Policy, which was approved in May 2020 provides direction on access by the public to Hospital Campuses and will remain active until the pandemic is declared over by the Ministry of Health.

This response has been provided under the Official Information Act 1982. You have the right to seek an investigation by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or free phone 0800 802 602.

If you have any questions about this decision please feel free to email our OIA Coordinator [OIArequest@nmdhb.govt.nz](mailto:OIArequest@nmdhb.govt.nz) I trust that this information meets your requirements. NMH, like other agencies across the state sector, supports the open disclosure of information to assist the public's understanding of how we are delivering publicly-funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released. If you feel that there are good reasons why your response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Peter Bramley  
Chief Executive**

Encl: NMH *Visitor Policy during COVID-19 Pandemic Alert Levels* (6 pages)

<sup>1</sup> Nelson Marlborough District Health Board

## Visitor Policy during COVID -19 Pandemic Alert Levels

### Overview

This policy serves to protect patients/ whanau / staff and the public through limiting visitors to all patients in our hospital while supporting patients to remain connected with their whānau and loved ones.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction on access by the public to NMH Hospital Campuses during the COVID-19 Pandemic Response

### Policy statement

NMH will align this policy with the values of the organisation and the understanding that NMH staff will act with kindness, discretion and compassion towards all visitors to our facilities.

### Scope

This policy remains active until the pandemic is declared over by the Ministry of Health

#### Includes:

- Public visiting patients within inpatient units
- Partners/support person for birthing units
- Public accompanying people to any outpatient or ambulatory area / clinic
- Public accompanying people presenting to the Emergency Department
- Public accompanying people requiring maternity services
- Non-essential visitors

#### Excludes:

Exclusions will be limited.

Charge Nurse/Midwife Managers can assess requests on a case by case basis. For example, exceptions will be considered on compassionate grounds for end of life care

- This policy excludes patients
- This policy excludes on duty staff, volunteers and contracted workers performing or providing essential services

### Definitions

- **Visitor** – Member of the public not receiving assessment, diagnostics or treatment
- **Patient** – Member of the public receiving / seeking treatment, this includes mental health services users
- **Partner/ Support person** for the purposes of labour and birthing support
- **Non-essential visitors** – e.g. company representatives, external people attending meetings, people not visiting family / whanau, off duty staff.
- **Whanau spokesperson** – the single point of contact for the whanau.
- **High risk area** – Emergency Departments (ED), Intensive Care Units / High Dependency Units (ICU / HDU), Medical Assessment and Planning Unit (MAPU), Aged Care wards, Maternity wards, Delivery Suite, Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU), Oncology (including chemotherapy areas), Renal Outpatient and Inpatient areas, Immunology or other Outpatient areas that have at risk patients.

Issue Number 4

Date Approved 22/05/2020

Date Review 22/05/2023

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## Guiding Principles:

The aim of the visiting policy is to reduce traffic / exposure / spread of COVID -19 in the hospital environment and community.

Visiting hours are 14.30 hours to 20.30 hours daily. It is expected that most visitors will visit during this time period. Exceptions need to be notified by the wards.

There is an expectation that:

- All staff will maintain respectful communication with families / whanau, treating each person with dignity and respect
- All staff will partner with families / whanau regarding this policy
- All staff will work with Maori and Pacific health teams to ensure cultural aspects of care are actioned
- Whanau liaison increases as the response level increases
- Alternative means of communication between patients and whanau / families are encouraged and enabled
- The number of access points to the hospitals will be minimised

With regard to clinic appointments support people / family, these should be limited to those absolutely being required within the guidelines and visiting matrix below. Consideration of the waiting room spaces and inability to physically distance may impact.

## Exceptions:

All requests for exceptions will be guided by principles of kindness, discretion and compassion.

Any exceptions to the visiting policy needs to be considered carefully on the basis of risk of spread versus need to visit. Charge Nurse/ Midwife Managers, Duty Nurse Managers or Senior Clinicians may grant exceptions. However in doing so there is a need to consider the expectation that there would be very limited exceptions to the visiting policy, two instead of one person at Level A & B or one person during no visiting at Level C may be considered. Some examples or reasons for exceptions would be:

- Supporting an end of life patient
- Supporting a child who is an inpatient or outpatient
- A breast feeding mother of an inpatient
- Supporting a birthing woman
- Father supporting a long stay baby in SCBU

In an Outpatient / Ambulatory care setting, exceptions may be considered:

- Supporting for interpretation
- Supporting for mobility
- Supporting for comprehension of information given / received

Visitors with acute respiratory symptoms, a suspect or confirmed COVID-19 case, or who has had contact with a probable or positive COVID case in the last 14 days are not permitted to visit.

Visiting exceptions are for one immediate family member or one support person.

To enable exception or out of hours visiting the CNM /CMM/ DNM is to inform the Enquiries staff at [inquiries@nmdhb.govt.nz](mailto:inquiries@nmdhb.govt.nz) (Nelson site) or ED administration (Wairau site) and provide the name of the visitor in advance of the visitor's arrival at the hospital.

Please remember all visitors need to be screened at the door before they enter the hospital. At that time their names and contact details will be registered. This is to enable any future contact tracing that may be required.

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## Procedure

### Visitors with Symptoms of Respiratory Tract Infection:

Visitors with acute respiratory symptoms or fever must not visit. If a visitor appears unwell, staff should kindly ask them to leave the hospital grounds and advise them to seek health professional assistance.

### Patients Admitted with Suspected or confirmed COVID-19:

Visiting patients who have been admitted with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is only permitted at the discretion of the Charge Nurse/Midwife Manager or senior clinician who is managing the patient and under the supervision of nursing or midwifery staff. The reason for this is to ensure Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) processes are adhered to, and to minimise any risk of avoidable transmission. Other methods of communicating with a patient with COVID-19 should be facilitated as appropriate, such as video conference, Zoom, Skype, Facetime etc. Use of personal devices should be encouraged in the first instance.

Patients / whanau must designate a whanau spokesperson who will be the point of contact for the whanau regarding the visiting policy and any changes to its application. This allows responsiveness as the various levels rise and fall and restrictions are applied or removed.

A poster must be placed on the wall at entry points to instruct visitors to maintain good hygiene, including washing hands on entry and exit. Visitors will be met by an appropriate staff member who will point out the guide for visiting posters which are placed at all entry and exit points.

Before any visitor is allowed to enter an area where there are COVID-19 positive patients, they must be met by an appropriate staff member who will ensure personal hygiene requirements are met, and PPE is appropriately worn. Visitors will be instructed on the correct use of the PPE provided.

### Visitors in Isolation / Self-Isolation:

Anyone that is under isolation requirements will not be permitted to visit.

### Visitors Register:

Names and contact details of visitors will be recorded in a spreadsheet maintained at points of entry. Nominated visitors will be recorded by the ward clerical staff or nursing staff after hours and details sent to the Main entrances by 1400 hours.

### Nominated Visitors:

A nominated visitor is a person who has been identified by a patient / parent/ caregiver or guardian as their visitor. Nominated visitors normally need to be over 16. There can be three nominated visitors assigned to an inpatient at a given time.

If appropriate, patients will nominate a visitor on admission or during their stay. If the patient is unable to nominate a visitor appropriate next of kin, parents, caregivers or guardians will do so, the names of nominated visitors will be recorded by the ward clerical staff or nursing staff out of hours and given to the main entrance staff by 1400 hours. All nominated visitors will be screened on entry to the hospital.

### Specialty Units / Clinics

Specialty Units / Clinics within the hospital may have extra requirements, visitors will be guided by staff to ensure safety is maintained. If existing visiting policies within speciality units is more rigorous than stated in this policy, they should be followed.

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## Gifts, Flowers and Personal items

Personal items such as books, pens, toiletries can be brought by nominated visitors but must not be shared with other patients, whanau or staff. Patients who are immunocompromised, in isolation or in our ICU/HDU/IMCU/SCBU areas should not receive flowers.

## Visiting Matrix

<p>COVID-19 NMH Hospitals</p> <p>State of Readiness</p>	<p>Visitors to high risk areas: See Appendix 1</p>	<p>Visitors with known COVID-19 contact or symptoms will not be granted access and will be directed to seek medical support.</p> <p>Visitors with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be able to enter after being screened and their names and contact details being entered into the register. A maximum of <b>one visitor at a time will be allowed, for one visit per day.</b></p>
<p>Visiting LEVEL A</p>		<p>For Maternity Services: Where there is no suspicion of COVID-19 for either the patient or visitors, Women in labour in a maternity facility will be allowed <b>one support partner</b>, for the duration of the labour and birth. A maximum of <b>one visitor at a time and one visit per day</b> for women in antenatal in-patient or postnatal wards. Support partners can visit on antenatal and postnatal wards between 0800 – 2000 hours. When visiting women in these wards it is important to follow the same Level 3 and 4 precautions such as ensuring hand hygiene and physical distancing of two meters.</p> <p>At Motueka Maternity primary facility the one visit extends to the one support person/partner staying overnight, the partner must stay at the facility and not come and go if staying overnight.</p> <p>No children to visit maternity units.</p>
	<p>Visitors to all other areas</p>	<p>Visitors with known COVID-19 contact or symptoms will not be granted access and will be directed to seek medical support.</p> <p>Visitors with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be able to enter. A maximum of <b>one visitor at any one time</b> may visit a patient at the hospital or accompany a patient to clinic. Patients may nominate three named visitors.</p> <p>Visiting hours between 14:30 to 20:30 hours are adhered to, unless by prior arrangement with the ward</p> <p>Children under 16 must not visit except by prior arrangement</p>

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<p>COVID-19 NMH Hospitals</p> <p>Moderate Impact</p> <p>Visiting LEVEL B</p>	<p><b>Visitors to high risk areas:</b> (ED/ICU/SCBU/HDU/ Maternity/Aged Care or any ward with COVID-19 positive patients)</p>	<p>Visitors with known COVID-19 contact or symptoms will not be granted access and will be directed to seek medical support.</p> <p>Visitors with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be able to enter after being screened and their names and contact details being entered into the register. <b>A maximum of one visitor at a time will be allowed, for one visit per day.</b></p> <p>For Maternity Services: Where there is no suspicion of COVID-19 for either the patient or visitors, Women are allowed <b>one support</b> person from their extended bubble for labour and birth support and <b>one visitor</b> per women per day from their extended bubble whilst an inpatient in an antenatal or postnatal ward. Support partners can visit on antenatal and postnatal wards between 0800 – 2000 hours. No children to visit maternity units.</p>
	<p><b>Visitors to all other areas</b></p>	<p>Visitors with known COVID-19 contact or symptoms will not be granted access and will be directed to seek medical support.</p> <p>Visitors with no suspicion of COVID-19 will be able to enter. A maximum of <b>one visitor at any one time</b> may visit a patient at the hospital or accompany a patient to clinic. Patients may nominate three named visitors.</p> <p>Formal visiting hours are adhered to, unless by prior arrangement with the ward</p> <p>No non-essential visitors</p>
<p>COVID – 19 NMH Hospitals</p> <p>Severe Impact</p> <p>Visiting LEVEL C</p>	<p><b>All areas</b></p>	<p>No visitors to be granted access unless approved by the Charge Nurse/or Midwife Manager or senior manager on shift. A maximum of one visitor or legal guardian that has been screened will be granted access if approved.</p>

## Appendix 1

**High risk Areas:** Emergency Departments (ED), Intensive Care Units / High Dependency Units (ICU / HDU), Medical; Assessment and Planning Unit ( MAPU)Aged Care wards, Maternity wards, Delivery Suite and Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU), Oncology (including chemotherapy areas), Renal Outpatient and Inpatient areas, Immunology or other Outpatients areas that have at risk patients.

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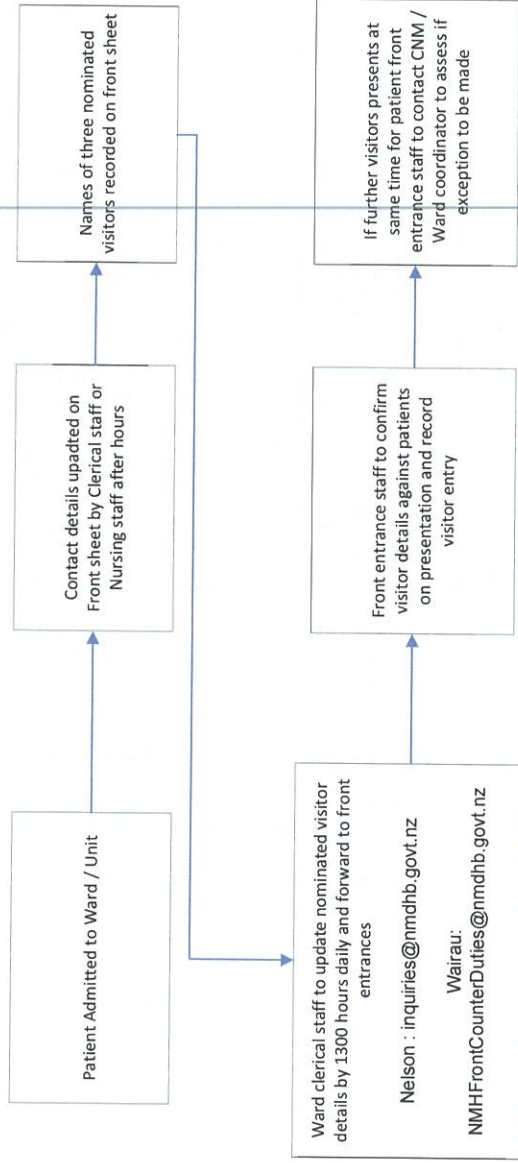
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Appendix 2

COVID -19 Pandemic Visitors Policy – Nominated Visitor Process



May 2020

Issue Number 4  
Date Approved 22/05/2020  
Date Review 22/05/2023

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