

## Directorate of Child Health

### Checklist for Clinical Guidelines being submitted for Approval by ABMU Joint Perinatal Forum

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# **Neonatal Visiting Policy**

## **Introduction**

This policy covers visiting on both the neonatal units in our Health Board: at Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend and at Singleton Hospital in Swansea.

The policy reflects the importance of parents being able to be with their baby/babies as much as possible whilst ensuring that babies on the units are protected from infection. It also helps to ensure that the safety, confidentiality, privacy and dignity of our babies and families are respected.

## **Visiting Policy**

All parents and visitors must access the Neonatal Units via the main entrance, which has a secure door, using the bell and intercom.

Parents and visitors should remove outer clothing (coats/jackets) before entering the clinical areas (the rooms where babies are cared for). They can leave coats in allocated areas on both units. It is best not to bring valuables but if they do, they can store them in a locker. All parents and visitors must wash their hands and forearms in the sinks and rub with alcohol gel at the main entrances and on arrival in the clinical rooms. Parents and visitors must also wash their hands after each visit. The baby's allocated nurse should show parents and visitors how to do this. Instructions on how to do it are also on the wall above each sink.

Both units have a period of "quiet time" for all babies each day between the hours of 1pm to 3 pm in Princess of Wales, and 3pm to 5pm in Singleton, when staff try to avoid disturbing babies unnecessarily. Parents remain welcome at this time.

## **Singleton Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)**

The Singleton unit is a neonatal intensive care unit, and there are some babies on the unit who are very ill and very vulnerable to infection. Mild infections carried by visitors could cause severe infections in these babies, unless strict precautions are taken to

avoid the spread of infection.

The number of parents/visitors at the cot side is restricted to 2 or 3 people at a time.

Parents and visitors must not enter the cot spaces of any other baby in the critical care rooms and should stay at the side of their baby's cot/incubator in the special care nursery. It is important to respect other people's privacy so parents and visitors must not take photos of any baby other than their own.

No items of equipment should be touched unless this is necessary to carry out the care that the baby needs.

Anyone who has signs of illness (e.g. runny nose, cough, high temperature) should not visit the NICU until their symptoms have resolved. Visitors should not cough or sneeze over anything on the unit – they should use a tissue and dispose of immediately in the bins provided, then rub their hands with alcohol gel again before touching anything else. Parents and visitors should ask a member of staff if there is any doubt about whether they have an illness or not. Anyone who has had an illness that involves diarrhoea should not visit until at least 48 hours after the diarrhoea has settled.

Anyone who has chicken pox should not visit the unit until all the chicken pox blisters have formed scabs or have gone completely. Anyone who has been in contact with a person with chicken pox should not visit for 3 weeks after the contact, unless they can be sure that they are immune. We can arrange to test Varicella Zoster antibody tests you if they are not sure.

**If anyone has visited the unit and has then developed chicken pox it is very important that**

**the nurse in charge is informed about this.**

After 8.30pm we ask all visitors to leave so that parents have some time together just with their baby.

### Siblings (Brothers and Sisters)

We want families to enjoy the arrival of their babies together and will try our best to make it possible for the immediate family members to visit. However we also have a responsibility to keep our babies safe from infection.

Children are particularly prone to infections and to carry viruses which can be transmitted to our babies. For several years, Singleton NICU did not allow children to visit the NICU at all unless there were exceptional circumstances, and we found that with this rule in place, fewer babies on the unit became unwell with infections. However there are significant benefits to families when siblings are allowed to visit, and in response to feedback from parents, we now allow some brothers and sisters of babies to visit. All of the rules above apply to children. At Singleton, siblings' visiting is as follows:

1. Siblings who are children of 14 years and above may visit at any time, but must be supervised by parents.

2. Children who are over 5 but under 14 years are allowed to visit the special care nursery at the following times:

- Thursday afternoon between 2pm and 7pm
- Saturday afternoon between 2pm and 7pm
- Sunday afternoon between 2pm and 7pm

3. Children who are less than 5 years old are not allowed to visit the Singleton NICU.

4. Children must be closely supervised by an adult at all times – the maximum number should be 2 adults and 2 children at the cot side at any time. They must wash their hands and rub with alcohol gel both before and after visiting in the same way as adults. They must

be kept within 1 metre of their sibling's cot, away from the cots of babies who are not their siblings.

It is particularly important that children who have any signs of illness or who have any contact with chicken pox do not visit – see rules on illness in visitors above.

Twin/triplet siblings who have already been discharged home separately may still be allowed to stay in the family unit while their mothers room in with the twin who is still an inpatient. This is necessary to establish feeding. The discharged twin should not have any signs of infection.

## **Princess of Wales Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU)**

Siblings can visit at most times but only briefly (up to 30 minutes) as this is an unsuitable area for small children. See above rules in regard to signs of illness, chickenpox contact, handwashing, keeping away from other babies' cots, touching items of equipment.

As the nurseries are small in the SCBU, we also restrict visiting to 1 parent or 2 parents, plus 1 visitor, keeping to a maximum of 3 at a cot side. After 6.30pm we ask all visitors to leave so that parents have some time together just with their baby.

Children who are not siblings are not allowed to visit either unit

### **Other Supporting Adults**

We can allow up to 2 named adults who can come into the unit to help parents care for their baby when parents are unable to come to the units. This can only happen with the consent of parents, and should only be allowed if their help is required.

### **Exceptions to the Above Rules**

There may be times when visiting will need to be restricted further – for example if a baby has a particularly severe illness or infection from an unusually resistant organism or a virus, which could potentially spread from one baby to another. These situations require barrier-nursing and a specific plan discussed with a member of the infection control and prevention team. This may mean that extra precautions or safeguards are necessary such as segregating the baby or cohorting babies with the same infection in a separate room. Under these circumstances, it may be necessary to restrict visiting to parents only.

Likewise if there are epidemics of infection in the community we may restrict visiting to parents only.

### **Other family members cuddling babies**

Only parents should cuddle their baby in the high dependency and intensive care areas. If the baby is in the nursery and is well and stable, grandparents or other named persons may, with parents' permission, cuddle their baby.

### **Ward rounds**

Parents may stay for ward rounds but in order to respect the confidentiality and privacy of other families on the unit they should wear the noise-cancelling headphones that are available at the cot side.

### **Asking Parents to Leave the Unit**

This should not normally happen, however circumstances that may require this include a baby in the same room needing a specific procedure or treatment that demands extra space or privacy. Clearly if any visitors become aggressive, threatening or violent towards any other persons on the unit they should be asked to leave. We should not hesitate to telephone the police if any visitor shows this behaviour.

### **Other Responsibilities for Parents & Visitors to the units**

Parents and visitors should look after their own belongings at all times. Thefts are rare on the unit but have been known to happen. The health board cannot accept liability for visitors' own property brought into the hospital.

We expect visitors to respect staff who are implementing this policy. Staff members can refuse admission or ask visitors to leave if their behaviour compromises the care or safety of any patient, member of staff or other visitor.

A zero tolerance policy will be operated in respect of violence or threat to safety. Visitors displaying threatening or abusive behaviour, including offensive language, will be required to leave.

### **Evaluation and Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored by:

- The Patient Experience Development Group
- Patient questionnaires
- Suggestions, Compliments and Complaints
- The Fundamentals of care audit

- The BLISS audit

## **Information for Parents on the Neonatal Visiting Policy (effective from May 2017)**

### **Introduction**

This leaflet explains our visiting policy on both the neonatal units in our Health Board: at Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend and at Singleton Hospital in Swansea.

As staff members who provide care for your baby (or babies) while on the neonatal unit, we understand the importance to you of being able to be with your baby as much as you would like. We also appreciate the importance of the role of other family members who may be supporting you in caring for your baby.

The reason we have a visiting policy is to enable you to spend as much time as you are able with your baby, to ensure that your baby is protected from infection, and that your safety, confidentiality, privacy and dignity is respected.

### **Visiting Policy**

All parents and visitors must access the Neonatal Units via the main entrance, which has a secure door, using the bell and intercom.

Please remove outer clothing (coats/jackets) before entering the clinical areas (the rooms where babies are cared for). You can leave your coats in allocated areas – please ask the receptionist or nursing staff. It is best not to bring valuables with you but if you do you can store them in a locker in this area. All parents and visitors must wash their hands and forearms in the sinks and rub with alcohol gel at the main entrances and on arrival in the clinical rooms. You must also wash your hands after each visit. You will be shown how to do this by your baby's nurse, but instructions on how to do it are on the wall above each sink.

Please note that both units encourage a period of "quiet time" for all babies each day between the hours of 1pm to 3 pm in Princess of Wales, and 3pm to 5pm in Singleton, when staff try to avoid disturbing babies unnecessarily. Parents remain welcome at this time.

### **Singleton Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)**

The Singleton unit is a neonatal intensive care unit, and there are some babies on the unit who are very ill and very vulnerable to infection. Mild infections carried by visitors could cause severe infections in these babies, unless strict precautions are taken to avoid the spread of infection.

The number of parents/visitors at the cot side is restricted to 2 or 3 people at a time.

Parents and visitors must not enter the cot spaces of any other baby in the critical care rooms



and should stay at the side of their baby's cot/incubator in the special care nursery. It is important to respect other people's privacy so please do not take photos of any baby other than your own.

No items of equipment should be touched unless this is necessary to carry out the care that your baby needs.

Anyone who has signs of illness (eg runny nose, cough, high temperature) should not visit the NICU until their symptoms have resolved. Please be very careful not to cough or sneeze over anything on the unit – please use a tissue and dispose of immediately in the bins provided. Then rub your hands with alcohol gel again before touching anything else. Please ask a member of staff if you are in any doubt about whether you have an illness or not. Anyone who has had an illness that involves diarrhoea should not visit until at least 48 hours after the diarrhoea has settled.

Anyone who has chicken pox should not visit the unit until all the chicken pox blisters have formed scabs or have gone completely. Anyone who has been in contact with a person with chicken pox should not visit for 3 weeks after the contact, unless you are sure that you are immune. We can arrange to test you if you are not sure.

**If anyone has visited the unit and has then developed chicken pox it is very important that the nurse in charge is informed about this immediately.**

After 8.30pm we ask all visitors to leave so that parents have some time together just with their baby.

#### Siblings (Brothers and Sisters)

We want families to enjoy the arrival of their babies together and will try our best to make it possible for the immediate family members to visit. However we also have a responsibility to keep our babies safe from infection.

Children are particularly prone to infections and to carry viruses which can be transmitted to our babies. For several years, Singleton NICU did not allow children to visit the NICU at all unless there were exceptional circumstances, and we found that with this rule in place, fewer babies on the unit became unwell with infections. However there are significant benefits to families when siblings are allowed to visit, and in response to feedback from parents, we now allow some brothers and sisters of babies to visit. All of the rules above apply to children. Siblings are allowed to visit as follows:

1. Siblings who are children of 14 years and above may visit at any time, but must be supervised by parents.
2. Children who are over 5 but under 14 years are allowed to visit the special care nursery

("SHIPS" in Singleton) at the following times:

- Thursday afternoon between 2pm and 7pm
- Saturday afternoon between 2pm and 7pm
- Sunday afternoon between 2pm and 7pm

3. Children younger than 5 years are not allowed to visit the unit.

4. Children must be closely supervised by an adult at all times – each child should be supervised by one adult (maximum 2 adults and 2 children at the cot side at any time). They must wash their hands and rub with alcohol gel both before and after visiting in the same way as adults. They must be kept within 1 metre of their sibling's cot, away from the cots of babies who are not their siblings.

It is particularly important that children who have any signs of illness or who have any contact with chicken pox do not visit – see rules on illness in visitors above.

Twin/triplet siblings who have already been discharged home separately may still be allowed to stay in the family unit while their mothers room in with the twin who is still an inpatient. This is necessary to establish feeding. The discharged twin should not have any signs of infection.

### **Princess of Wales Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU)**

Siblings can visit at most times but only briefly (up to 30 minutes) as this is an unsuitable area for small children. See above rules in regard to signs of illness, chickenpox contact, handwashing, keeping away from other babies' cots, touching items of equipment.

As the nurseries are small in the SCBU, we also restrict visiting to 1 parent or 2 parents, plus 1 visitor, keeping to a maximum of 3 at a cot side.

After 6.30pm we ask all visitors to leave so that parents have some time together just with their baby.

Children who are not siblings are not allowed to visit either unit

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

*Why are there such strict rules in place?*

We wish to protect your baby/babies from any risk of infection. Babies, especially those who are ill or who have been born prematurely, are at high risk of both getting an infection, and of becoming very ill after getting an infection. These rules are in place to ensure that this risk is minimised.

*How can I minimise the risk of infection to my own baby?*

Neonatal Guideline v2017.1

Chapter 13 Operational Procedures

Valid until 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Breast milk has been shown to dramatically reduce the risk of severe infections in babies, and we will always encourage you as mothers to breast feed, or to express breast milk to give to your baby. You should always observe the rules of hand washing in the unit, and keep your hands and arms bare below the elbows. The nurse caring for your baby will help you know when and how your baby can be safely touched and cuddled. It has been shown that when parents take an active part in the care of their baby as we do with family integrated care, infections may be less likely. So please don't feel that you should stay away from your baby or not touch your baby.

*Can I bring another adult in to help me with my baby's care?*

Yes, you can. Please speak to the nurse caring for your baby. We can allow up to 2 named adults who can come into the unit to help you, and to help care for your baby when you are unable to be here. This can only happen with your consent as parents, and should only happen if it would help you to look after your baby. These named adults will be issued with special ID cards to enable them to visit your baby when you are unable to be there. Please ask your baby's nurse for details.

*Are there times when these rules are changed?*

There may be times when these rules will need to be stricter – for example if a baby has a particularly severe illness or infection, or if there is potential for a more resistant virus or germ to spread from your baby. Sometimes this requires your baby to be “barrier-nursed”.

This means that extra precautions or safeguards are necessary. It may even mean that your baby needs to be transferred to a separate room. Occasionally this is necessary for a group of babies. In these cases we will make a specific plan with the help of experts in infection control, and will let you know how it affects visiting. If there are epidemics of infection in the community we may ban all children visiting for a while and restrict visiting to parents only

*Can anyone other than parents cuddle our/my baby?*

We recommend that only parents cuddle their baby to reduce the risk of infection, however if your baby is in the “SHIPS” nursery and is well and stable, grandparents or other named persons may, with parents' permission, cuddle your baby.

*Can I stay with my baby during ward rounds?*

Yes – but please respect the confidentiality and privacy of other families on the unit (as you would expect them to respect yours) by wearing the noise-cancelling headphones that are available at the cot side.

*Will I ever be asked to leave the unit as a parent?*

Not normally. Circumstances that may require this include if a baby in the same room needs a specific procedure or treatment that demands extra space or privacy. Clearly if any parents or visitors become aggressive, threatening or violent towards any other persons on the unit we will ask them to leave, and will not hesitate to telephone the police if any visitor shows this behaviour.

### **Other Visitor Responsibilities**

Please look after your own belongings at all times. Thefts are rare on the unit but have been known to happen. The health board cannot accept liability for visitors' own property brought into the hospital.

We expect visitors to respect staff who are implementing our visiting policy. Staff members can refuse admission or ask visitors to leave if their behaviour compromises the care or safety of any patient, member of staff or other visitor.

A zero tolerance policy will be operated in respect of violence or threat to safety. Visitors displaying threatening or abusive behaviour, including offensive language, will be required to leave.

### **Evaluation and Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored by:

- The Patient Experience Development Group
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