



## Critical Care Unit

# Information for Visitors

This leaflet has been produced to provide you with information and practical advice to help you when visiting your relative or friend in Critical Care (Intensive Care Unit/High Dependency Unit).

### Admission to Critical Care

There are lots of reasons why patients need to be admitted to Critical Care. Some of these reasons are as follows:

- as booked admissions, routinely admitted after surgery that has been complicated or lengthy
- after an accident or medical emergency
- due to deterioration and/or lack of improvement, or lack of response, to treatment on the ward.

Patients are admitted so that we are able to closely monitor their condition and respond quickly to individual needs with the aid of specialist equipment, staff and drugs. Upon admission, your relative will undergo a period of assessment and stabilisation which may take some time to achieve. We understand that this is a very anxious time, but we will ask you to wait in our waiting areas until we have achieved this period of stability, but will endeavour to get you in to see your loved one as quickly as possible.

The equipment at the bed space will seem quite alarming at first and whilst we appreciate how daunting this will be for you, all the equipment that we use is necessary to treat the patient's condition and to keep them safe.

The unit can be noisy at times, and some of the alarms and general noise can be quite frightening. These alarms are tightly managed and are there to inform us of any changes in the patient's condition however small, and do not necessarily mean that there is an emergency. The nurse caring for your loved one will be constantly at their side and can see any changes too.

### Who will be caring for your relative/friend?

#### Doctors

In this Critical Care Unit your relative's overall care will be co-ordinated by a team of anaesthetists who specialise in caring for critically ill patients. Your relative will be continually monitored, assessed and have treatments prescribed by the anaesthetic team. The unit is run by six consultant anaesthetists.

There is always a consultant anaesthetist/intensivist assigned to Critical Care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition, your relative will have a consultant who specialises in the area of care specific to your relative's condition, such as a surgeon or a physician.

## **Nurses**

Whilst your loved one is a patient in Critical Care, they will be looked after by a team of Critical Care nurses. There are three senior sisters who lead a team of sisters, staff nurses, health care support workers, clinical practice educators, admin staff and a ward clerk.

Your relative will be assigned a nurse on each shift. Sometimes this nurse may have to care for another patient depending on the patient's clinical condition and specific needs.

We also have student pre-registration nurses working alongside qualified nurses in Critical Care.

Education, training and development is important to us, so you may see regular teaching happening on the unit. Do not be alarmed; it does not mean that the nurse or doctor caring for your patient is inexperienced. We believe that we are all constantly learning regardless of the depth and level of our experience, and there will be different levels of experience with all disciplines. Each shift will be covered by at least one senior nurse and one senior doctor.

The nurses follow a shift pattern:

- Day shift: 7.30am - 8pm
- Early shift: 7.30am - 3.30pm
- Late shift: Midday - 8pm
- Night shift: 7.30pm - 8am

Please feel free to call nurses by their first names; we actively encourage this and it is important to us that we build a good relationship with the families of our patients, and our care will extend to you too. Always feel free to ask questions at any time, and let us know if you do not understand and want something clarified. We do ask, however, that phone calls are kept to a minimum. The anaesthetists always wish to keep you updated on the condition of your loved ones and a time can be arranged to be updated by the team, and the nurse caring for your loved one will also update you.

## **Uniforms**

We have different uniforms for different grades of staff

- Senior nursing staff and medical staff wear navy blue
- Nursing staff wear a lighter blue
- Domestic staff wear a green tunic.

Nursing staff on a general ward wear different uniforms to Critical Care staff.

Uniforms are currently changing, so this adds to confusion as some staff may wear different uniforms to others of the same grade. Please bear with us, and **do** ask if you are unsure who is speaking to you or your loved ones. Staff will introduce themselves, but please prompt them if they forget.

## **Physiotherapists**

Our physiotherapists are very valuable members of our team who will see your relative on a daily basis, sometimes more frequently, and treat them as required. A key part of the physiotherapist's role is chest physiotherapy and rehabilitation. With chest physiotherapy the physiotherapists will assess the patient's lungs and assist in maximising lung expansion and secretion clearance.

Rehabilitation will include exercises in bed, sitting up on the edge of the bed and getting out into a chair, using bike pedals and even some walking. All of these activities aim to increase muscle strength and improve ability and stamina. Rehabilitation of a patient once their condition starts to improve is vitally important and will aid recovery.

## **Taking part in care**

Do not be afraid to ask to assist with care; although the equipment around the bed can look frightening, we always remember that there is a patient underneath all of the machinery.

Helping with washing and/or feeding will be a huge help to us and will also give you tasks to perform if you are feeling a bit lost.

In Critical Care, the majority of our patients, if they are very sick, will be on an infusion of sedative drugs and have a reduced conscious level. We would always encourage you to talk to your loved one if you feel comfortable doing this. Just because your loved one is unable to respond, does not mean that they are unable to hear. We ourselves will always talk to the patient and explain what we are doing, as well as the time, date, where they are and other details.

You have a big role to play, especially in the rehabilitation stage, in motivating, touching, supporting and talking to your relative. Rest for the patient is very important and a great help to the healing process, so with this in mind, we will limit the amount of visitors and have designated visiting times. Mornings are very busy with doctor's rounds, physiotherapy, washes and procedures, so we generally only allow visitors in the afternoon.

Also, there may be times when you will be asked to leave the unit whilst we carry out certain procedures. We understand how frustrating this is, but we will always do what is in the patient's best interest and strive to maintain patient dignity and the safety of you and your loved ones. Sometimes, it will seem as though you are waiting around for a long time and that your visit is cut short, but please bear with us; your patience is very much appreciated.

## Visiting Times

We are currently operating a pre-booking system for relative visits. Please speak to the nurse in charge or the nurse caring for your relative. More information is available on our website at [www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/visiting-guidance/](http://www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/visiting-guidance/)

## Visitor Facilities

There is a waiting area for relatives straight ahead as you come into the ICU entrance. There are a set of double doors by the main entrance, which are locked, and there is an intercom system. Please press the button and speak to the person answering. Please be patient with us if we do not answer straight away; this will be because we are busy with patients and it is not possible or safe to leave them. Your patience and understanding is much appreciated, but we endeavour to respond as quickly as possible.

We have a small room beyond these double doors where a doctor or nurse can speak to you privately.

## Accommodation

There is, unfortunately, no overnight accommodation within the hospital for relatives.

One of our nurses has compiled a list of possible places to stay if you are not local to the area. This list is small as accommodation frequently changes. More information is available at <http://www.visit-dorset.com>

### Critical Care Unit Visiting; Hotels and Bed and Breakfasts in and around Dorchester:

- **Premier Inn, Dorchester**  
*5 Pope Street, DT1 1GW. 0333 321 9278*  
*Approx 10-15 minute walk to the hospital, next to Dorchester South train station*
- **Best Western Wessex Royale Hotel, Dorchester**  
*32 High West St, DT1 1UP*  
*Approx 10 minute walk to the hospital*
- **The Junction Hotel, Dorchester**  
*Great Western Road, DT1 1UF*  
*Approx 10 minute walk to the hospital*
- **The Sydney Arms, Dorchester**  
*11 Bridport Road, DT1 2NG*  
*Approx 5 minute walk to the hospital*
- **Westwood House Guest House**  
*29 High West St, DT1 1UP*  
*Approx 10 minute walk to the hospital*

- **Premier Inn, Weymouth**  
Gateway Business Park, Mercery Road, Weymouth, DT3 5HJ  
Approx 15 minute drive to the hospital, close to main road

*(Hotels available as of July 2021 – produced by Alice Ling – staff nurse in Critical Care)*

## **Refreshments**

There are no facilities on the Critical Care Unit for making refreshments; however, there are places where you can go:

- The friends of DCH hospital shop, located in South Wing Level 1, open Mon to Fri 08:30 -16:00. This may change depending on the covid situation and whether any lockdowns are in place
- There is a Sainsbury's Local across the road from the hospital (Bridport Road), open 7am - 10pm, seven days a week
- Dorchester town centre is also a short walk away
- Costa Coffee is located on the ground floor of the hospital, just near main reception, North Wing Level 1, currently open 07.00 -16.00. It is closed at the weekend.

Further information can be found on our website at <https://www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/catering/>

We would encourage visitors to leave the hospital for a break and some fresh air where possible. We also advise that you have regular meals and sleep. We know that in these stressful times you may find this difficult, but your health is very important.

## **Toilets**

The nearest toilet for visitors is on South Wing Level 2. Please let a member of staff know if you require directions.

## **Research Nurse**

Our nurse will be visible on the unit and there will be various research trials taking place. You or your loved one may be asked, with consent, to participate. We will give you more information if required. Research plays a vital role in the development of new guidelines and treatments. More information can be found on our website at [www.dchft.nhs.uk/about-us/research-and-innovation/](http://www.dchft.nhs.uk/about-us/research-and-innovation/)

## **Follow-up clinic**

The unit runs a follow-up service called the Critical Care clinic. We will see ex-patients once they are discharged home and review how they are progressing. We can offer appointments at one, three and six months, but we will evaluate on an individual basis. At this clinic we will review how you are doing both physically and psychologically. It is not compulsory, but many patients who have been in Critical Care find it extremely useful.

Along with our follow-up, we have a psychologist assigned to Critical Care who may be able to visit and talk with your loved one as their clinical condition starts to improve. We will highlight those patients who we think will benefit.

## **Delirium and confusion**

There are many reasons why your loved one may exhibit signs of confusion and disorientation. Some factors are the illness they have presented with, drugs such as sedatives and pain relief, lack of oxygen to the brain and infections. It may be very frightening for you to see your relative behave in a manner which is not usual for them. They may also become aggressive, again, against their usual demeanour. Whilst this is not normal for you or your loved one, the staff on Critical Care will recognise this as part of the illness your loved one is going through and will not take any offence.

## **Telephone Enquiries**

**We have two direct line numbers for the Critical Care Unit:**

**01305 255596**  
**01305 255648**

When you phone the unit, we may ask you for a pre-arranged password. This allows us to know exactly who we are talking to when giving out information. There may be times when we are unable to give sensitive and confidential information over the phone. This is to protect and maintain confidentiality which is very important to us.

Our anaesthetic team, as well as doctors from other teams, may contact you to discuss your loved one's condition if you are unable to get to Critical Care, or if there are any changes or procedures which we wish to undertake.

We will usually contact next of kin to give updated information and we ask for two names, addresses and phone numbers, if possible, noting who is to be first contact and whether that person is contactable at any time.

## **What to Bring**

In order to prevent infection, plants and flowers are not permitted on Critical Care. We have limited storage space, but if possible, please could the following be provided:

- Spectacles, hearing aids and dentures - if applicable
- Shower gel
- Deodorant
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Aftershave/perfume
- Brush/comb
- Shampoo/conditioner
- Shaving equipment

You are welcome to bring photographs, greetings cards and personal music systems.

For safe keeping, valuables must be stored in the hospital safe if the patient is unconscious. We ask that a limited amount of valuables are brought in. We would not advise bringing large amounts of cash, bank cards or other valuables in to the hospital. If you decide to take responsibility for your valuables, such as money, bank cards or jewellery, you may be asked to sign a waiver form.

## **Post Box**

There is a post box in North Wing Reception with a daily afternoon collection.

## **Smoking**

Dorset County Hospital is strictly a no smoking hospital. Smoking is not allowed in any part of the hospital premises, including the car parks.

## **Fire**

In the event of a fire, a member of staff will direct you to the fire exit. **Do not** attempt to use the lifts. If you discover a fire, please inform a member of staff.

## **Bus Services**

Regular buses run from Bridport Road (outside the hospital). A timetable is available at the Main Reception in North Wing Level 1.

## **Taxis**

These can be ordered by means of a free phone in North Wing Main Reception. Please also ask one of the nursing staff.

## **Public Telephones**

These are in the Main Reception in North Wing Level 1. Should you need to make an urgent phone call, please let a member of staff know as you will be able to use your mobile phone in this instance.

## **Car Parking Facilities**

There is a car parking permit for visitors visiting a relative in Critical Care, which entitles you to free parking. Please ask a member of staff for information.

## **Hospital Chaplain**

There are hospital chaplains who will visit Critical Care if needed. Please ask the nurse caring for your loved one if you would like them to visit. Your own minister of religion is welcome to visit and this can be arranged. The chapel and chaplains' office are located on South Wing Level 3.

The chapel is open 24 hours, although occasionally there may be meetings in there.

There is also a hospital social worker who will be able to provide advice and help on money matters and many other problems or concerns. Please ask if you would like to see a social worker.

## **Interpreter**

We have access to many interpreters, and can arrange this if required.

## **Patient Experience**

Our patient experience team offer a free and confidential service for patients. The team can help answer any questions about your experience with the hospital, listen to your suggestions, queries and concerns and can offer advice and support for you, your relatives, carers and friends. We also welcome positive feedback and messages of thanks from patients and relatives about your experiences. More information is available on our website at [www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-experience-and-engagement/our-patient-experience-team/](http://www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-experience-and-engagement/our-patient-experience-team/)

## **Transfer of Patients**

There may be times when it is necessary to transfer your loved one to another department for a procedure, or to another hospital for specialist care. All of the equipment required is still used but in a more portable form. We apologise if any procedures are taking place whilst you visit which prevents you from seeing your loved one.

## **End of Life**

Sadly, there will be times when we have reached a point where treatment is no longer effective and we will, in consultation with you, have to make difficult and painful decisions. We know that this is a terrible time in your life and we never get used to making these difficult decisions, but we will endeavour to do what is best for your loved one and our ultimate aim will always be to maintain comfort and dignity.

## **Organ Donation**

We will discuss this fully with you and talk you through the process if this becomes an option. More information about organ donation is available here: [www.organdonation.nhs.uk/](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/)

## **Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

As we all know, everything is working a little differently at the moment and we do not know when we might get back to how things were before. With this in mind, our utmost priority is to maintain the safety of you and your loved ones, and staff too. Visiting will be different, the length of time you can spend with your loved one has changed and we have a booking system. We are unable to have too many people in an area at one time and we hope that you understand our reasons for this. There are certain exceptions to this, and end of life care is one of those exceptions.



You can find the latest information about the impact of coronavirus on hospital services on our website at [www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/coronavirus-information/](http://www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/coronavirus-information/)

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email [pals@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@dchft.nhs.uk)



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