

St George's Carer Guideline

This document provides information about the help and support available to carers who help our patients while they are in hospital.

Carer Guideline

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1. Introduction and purpose

The Carer Guideline has been developed to provide information about the help and support available to carers who help our patients while they are in hospital. It also provides details about local organisations which may be able to provide information on legal rights and entitlements; give advice; and provide details of services and support available to help people cope with their caring role.

We value and respect the commitment that carers give to those they care for, and understand that carers are experts by experience in the needs of the person they look after.

We also recognise that carers may need a break from their caring responsibilities while the person they care for is in hospital and will need to take time out to look after themselves too.

Both SGH and ESTH have a multidisciplinary, multi-agency Carers Steering Group, chaired by the Group Associate Director Patient Experience and Engagement. Supported by the wider Patient Experience Team, to drive forward a robust action plan focused on improving the experience of carers.



2. Definitions

NHS guidance defines a carer as follows:

'A carer is anyone, including children and adults who look after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.'

Unpaid carers do not have to be 'registered' with a particular body or organisation to be recognised as a carer, nor are they defined by their age as carers can be very elderly or even as young as primary school age children. They may not necessarily be the spouse/partner of the patient or a relative; however they are often a family member.

Young Carers are under 18 years old and provide care to someone – usually a family member – who has an illness, disability, mental health condition or problems with drugs or alcohol. The support they provide can be both physical and emotional and the person they care for would struggle to cope without this support.

Information for young carers who visit our hospitals can be found on the Trust's website as well as our Information Hub, located at the main reception. Information is also available in the Carer Ward Pack held on each ward. Please ask a member of staff and they can provide copies if needed.

Paid carers or support workers are employees from residential homes or organisations who, as part of their role, may sometimes support patients to hospital appointments and/or inpatient stays. They are likely employed by the organisation or home that the patient lives in.

Whilst we acknowledge the contribution made by these individuals, this carers guideline is aimed to provide information and support aimed at unpaid carers and young carers.

3. John's Campaign

John's Campaign highlights the vitally important role carers play in the lives of people living with dementia. The campaign was launched by Nicci Gerrard and her friend Julie Jones following the inpatient experience of Nicci's father John who had Alzheimer's disease. Before being admitted to hospital, John led a full life and was mobile, continent, could eat and drink by himself, speak about the past and take part in activities around the home. After five weeks as an inpatient, John had become immobile, incontinent,



was in need of 24 hour care and barely recognised family and friends. John's family strongly believe this was predominantly due to him being in the unfamiliar hospital environment without support and company of the people he knew well around him. Even though staff were kind, respectful and helpful they simply did not have the time to spend with John talking to him, encouraging him to eat and keeping him attached to the outside world.

We are committed to recognising, welcoming and involving carers in the care of those they care for. We want our patients to receive the best care possible and aim to work in partnership with carers, ensuring patients stay connected and comfortable during their stay.

4. Support on the ward

We expect to deliver all aspects of support on the ward within this section, however, please be aware that at particular times these guidelines may require adaption. The nurse in charge on the ward will be able to advise you of any adaptations in place.

Visiting – We aim to allow open visiting in all wards. You can speak with the nurse in charge on the ward to discuss any concerns regarding visiting, so that you can be with and support the person you care for at times you are able to.

In the event of an infection risk, visiting will not be allowed on wards/bays that are closed, except in exceptional circumstances such as End of Life Care.

Mealtimes (food and drink) – Good nutrition is essential for the wellbeing of patients and carers and the Trust has protected mealtimes so that eating and drinking is not disturbed or interrupted by ward rounds and other distractions. Some patients may benefit by being assisted during protected mealtimes by their carer, and with the agreement of the ward staff this would be welcomed. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide food from the ward meal trolleys for carers or to store food on the ward or in the ward kitchens.

It is important for you to also make sure you have regular breaks, but if you are unable to leave the ward, you will be included in the tea/coffee refreshment rounds. Please note that due to food safety risks, ward staff cannot reheat food that has been brought in from home, therefore we discourage you from bringing in hot meals for the person you care for.

Personal care – In partnership with nursing staff some patients prefer to be given intimate nursing care by their carer, rather than an unknown member of staff. This may be especially relevant if the patient has dementia or a learning disability. Should this be the case, and if you are able to do so, you should continue to do so with the supervision, support and assistance of nursing staff. The nursing staff are accountable for the nursing care on the ward, so should be assured that you are able to help in a safe and effective way. The type of care you will give, and your need for help or assistance should be discussed, agreed and documented by staff. You may be used to using equipment, for example moving and handling equipment or feed pumps. However, in a hospital setting you should discuss any use of equipment with the nurse in charge.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) is a key priority, and we have a zero-tolerance approach to healthcare associated infections (HCAIs). We have strict policies in place to ensure we provide a safe environment for patients, staff and visitors. There are several IPC measures in place across the Trust to help us reduce the risk of infections to both our patients and their carers.

Please check with the nurse in charge on arrival to the ward if any infection control precautions are in place.

Patient clothing – Wherever possible, patients are encouraged to wear their own clothing to promote dignity, individuality and wellbeing. There are no laundry facilities in hospital, but ward staff can provide you with specially designed laundry bags which enable you to safely transport any soiled linen for washing at home. You do not have to handle any of the laundry prior to washing, as you place the entire bag in the washing machine, therefore eliminating any risk of cross infection and reducing any unpleasant odours.

5. Recording carer details

Staff will be proactive in seeking to identify carers on the wards and ensure that this information is recorded and shared as appropriate. On admission the patient will be asked if they have an unpaid carer. This information, along with the unpaid carer's contact details, will be added to the patient's electronic health record.

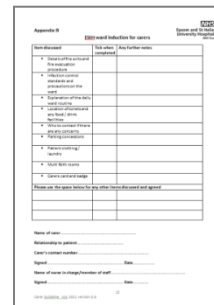
6. Carer Passports: Learning Disability ‘This is Me’ and Dementia ‘REACH’ Passports

These documents often accompany patients who come from residential or care homes and outline the needs, likes and dislikes of patients with either a learning disability (This is me My care Passport) or dementia (REACH out to me) who may struggle or be unable to communicate these by themselves.



If there is no such document present it may be helpful for you to complete one of these to help staff understand any needs when you may need a break away from the ward.

The **carers ward induction form** is designed to ensure that the ward routine, standards and safety measures are communicated and understood. The carers ward induction forms part of the carer passport and is also signed by the carer and nurse and kept in the patient notes.



7. Communication and information sharing

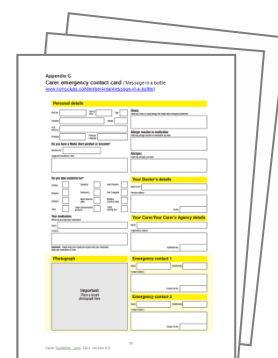
We teams recognise the value of carers and families as an important source of knowledge about the person's life and needs. With the patient's consent, the hospital will include the views and wishes of the family and carer in discussions about the care being given or proposed and discharge planning. If there is doubt about the person's capacity to consent, the principles of the Mental Capacity Act will be followed. The Trust will take into account your own willingness and ability to care.

Staff will work to ensure that the carer and all health and social care practitioners involved in someone's care planning, particularly around hospital discharge, are in regular contact with each other. This is to ensure the transition is coordinated and all arrangements are in place.

For carers who are willing and able to care, we will provide information as appropriate about the diagnosis and treatment plan for the person being cared for, as well as a complete list of their medicines when they transfer between hospital and home. A relevant health or social care practitioner should discuss with you how you can manage the 'cared for' condition after their discharge from hospital.

8. When a patient is a carer

Carers are legally entitled to have a carer's assessment of their own needs carried out by their local authority. Part of this



assessment includes a discussion about contingency plans that are in place for the person they care for if they are suddenly unable to provide help. Many carers carry an emergency contact details card with them to alert emergency services that someone depends on them to ensure their safety.

If you haven't put this in place yet we would advise that you do so. As part of the admission process, staff should ask, even if an emergency admission, if the patient is a carer.

9. Concessions

In certain circumstances, you may be eligible to receive parking concessions as a family member or next of kin. Claim forms are available from ward and are processed by the ward staff. For more information a quick guide to the Concessions Policy can be found in this pack.

Refreshments on the ward – you may be offered or can ask for tea or coffee from the ward host/ess during usual planned patient refreshment rounds. You are not permitted to access or enter the ward kitchen areas or to prepare or store food and drink in these areas.

If you would like any of the documents mentioned here please ask staff on the wards and they can provide you with printed copies.

10. Staff with caring responsibilities

We recognise our staff may have caring responsibilities, which if support or advice is needed to please contact Alica Erauncetamurquil, Children and Carers Manager on either phone: 02087251060 or email: Alicia.erauncetamurquil@stgeorges.nhs.uk

11. Sources of support for carers

Carers Contact Sheet

A list of Carer Centres can be found on the Trust's website, in the Carers Ward Pack and in our Information hub, located at the main reception.

Chaplaincy services

Our Chaplaincy Department is made up of a range of faith leaders and a team of chaplaincy volunteers who visit wards weekly. They may be able to provide comfort when coping with illness, distress, grief, or long term ill health. If you would like to talk to someone from the team, ward staff will be able to contact the Chaplaincy Department. There are also multi-faith rooms and chapel at St George's on the Ground Floor of St James Wing. Which are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Further information can be found in the [Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care](#) page of the Trust website or calling the team directly on 020 86721255.

Patient Advice and liaison Services (PALS)

PALS is available to provide carers, patients and visitors with confidential, on-the-spot help and advice and can be a port of call for support and also provide important information for you about our services. PALS can be contacted via the following methods:

Phone: 020 87252453

Email: pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

The PALS teams aim to resolve problems quickly if you have not been able to speak to staff on the ward to help with any concerns you may have.

The St George's, Epsom and St Helier Hospitals (GESH) Carers Forum

We are committed to hearing, and respecting acting on the voice and experience of carers. We have a Carer Forum which is a small community of current and former carers who come together to provide information and support; share experiences and ideas; and to work in partnership to help shape the services we provide. The carers forum meets quarterly, and applications to join and be part of this group are welcomed. For more information please contact the Patient Experience Team on 020 8296 4326 or email patientexperienceteam@stgeorges.nhs.uk.

12. Organisations offering further support and information

Carers First Merton

Tel 0300 303 1555

Email hello@carersfirst.org.uk

Website www.carersfirst.org.uk

Wandsworth Carers Centre

Tel 020 8877 1200

Email info@wandsworthcarers.org.uk

Website www.carerswandsworth.org.uk

Wandsworth Young Carers Project

Tel 020 88718530

Email youngcarersproject@wandsworth.gov.uk

Website www.wandsworth.gov.uk

Further information can be found on the Carers Contact Sheet, in the Carers Ward Pack or via the intranet.