



Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Handbook for Carers in our hospitals

This handbook is for any person who cares for a patient in our hospital. It has been produced in collaboration with carers.

The person you care for is on ward:

The contact number for that ward is:

**The named nurse responsible
for the person you care for and
main contact for you is:**

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Coming into hospital

If you provide physical or emotional support for a family member or friend, then you are a carer and it is important to recognise the role so that you can get the help you need

If you are a carer please let the staff know as early as possible, as sometimes it is not possible for the person you care for to give staff the information that we need.

When someone you care for is in hospital, it can be a very worrying and stressful time. Don't be afraid to voice your concerns to ward staff. If you would benefit from having someone to talk to, there are a number of people who may be able to help.

Speak to the nursing staff on the ward, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are available via phone, email, video or in person, the hospital chaplain, or a representative of Gloucestershire Carers Hub.

If the person you care for has a learning disability you can ask to speak to the hospital learning disability liaison nurse. The ward sister can give you the contact details.

What level of care will I be expected to offer?

It is up to you to decide the level of support you can provide; it can be physical or emotional and can range from a few hours a week to 'around the clock' care.

This support could include:

- › Providing personal care: providing assistance to the person you care for with washing/dressing
- › Helping the person you care for with oral hygiene: mouthcare; tooth brushing/cleaning dentures
- › Assisting the person you care for with eating or drinking
- › Helping to provide support at the end of life
- › Helping to reduce patient anxiety or behaviour which indicates that the person you care for is anxious or distressed
- › Providing reassurance to the person you care for when difficult or painful procedures need to be performed.
- › Reading to the person you care for

If you are not sure, please check with the nursing staff.

If there is more than one person in the family providing support, we will ask the person you care for or family, to agree who is the main carer so that we can communicate with one person. This will help us manage nursing time efficiently. Please also check if there are visiting restrictions in place as we may request that only one family member visits.

How will staff know that I am a carer?

We know that being a carer is a difficult role – please don't hesitate to ask if you need help.

If you tell the staff that you are a carer, we can issue you with a badge so that other staff also know you are a carer.

Alternatively, you may have been given a badge by the Gloucestershire Carers Hub. You may also be given a Carers Passport which you can show staff

You will not have to produce evidence that you are a carer.

What can I expect from hospital staff?

We will always recognise and respect your role, experience and knowledge in caring for the person you care for, whatever your age.

- To be listened to and involved, if the person you care for agrees, in decisions
- To be given enough time for you to think about the care you may need to provide, agree the type of care tasks and amount of support you are able to offer – this is up to you.
- To be given the information and advice you need to help you care safely and effectively.
- To offer a response to your own needs and help to access information about support available to you as a carer.
- That we will be courteous at all times, understanding that the situation is stressful for you and for the person you care for.

What will hospital staff expect from me?

- › That you will introduce yourself to staff
- › That you will make the ward staff aware of relevant information about the person you care for to help them to provide individualised care.
- › That you will help in communicating with the person you care for if they have communication or memory difficulties.
- › That you will provide a contact telephone number for you as a carer.
- › Polite and courteous behaviour, however stressed you are.
- › That you will understand that the person you need to speak to may not always be available.
- › That you do not visit if you are unwell or have an infection, for example a heavy cold or diarrhoea.
- › That if you don't understand something, don't be afraid to ask for it to be repeated, explained or written down.

Can I offer support outside visiting hours?

You may come in outside of visiting hours to offer support. Please discuss the best times for you to come in with ward staff.

Can I support a patient with additional needs?

Carers often feel compelled to stay with the person they care for to comfort and reassure them, but also to ensure their safety and needs are understood and met.

If you wish to participate in the care of the person in hospital because they have additional needs, discuss with the nursing staff on the ward whether it would be appropriate for you to do that.

Do I have the authority to speak on behalf of the person I care for?

If the person you care for is an adult (18 years and over) and is capable of understanding what is happening, they can expect to make their own decisions about the care they receive.

They can also expect that information about them will be treated as confidential by hospital staff and so you may not be told about everything that is happening or consulted about it in advance.

The Mental Capacity Act (2005) is the piece of UK law which governs when and how people other than the individual concerned can make decisions about that individual. It applies to everyone aged 16 years and over.

Ideally, an adult consents to their own care and treatment, but should only be asked to do so if they are capable of understanding the implications of the proposed care and treatment (they 'have capacity').

If a person is not capable of understanding the proposed care and treatment (they 'lack capacity'), then others must be consulted before decisions are made.

The first person who must be consulted is the patient – in the form or any pre-stated wishes. Please tell ward staff if you know of a completed ReSPECT form or advanced decision.

The second group who must be consulted are those who hold Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Wellbeing*.

Please tell ward staff if you hold this and expect to be asked to produce the document and photo-ID to prove you are the person named on the document.

If you do not know of any advanced decisions and do not hold Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Wellbeing* you will still be consulted, but cannot make the decision on behalf of the person you care for.

*There are 2 types of Lasting Power of Attorney. One is for Finance and Property the other is for Health and Wellbeing. You must hold LPA for Health and Wellbeing to make health-related decisions.

What if I have concerns about the care or treatment?

Even without formal authority, if you are the main carer or next of kin and you have any concerns about care or treatment, these should be raised initially with the ward manager/nurse in charge at the earliest possible opportunity. Please see flow chart on page 15.

Can I get help with parking costs?

Yes, the ward can issue a Carers Passport which will allow up to 3 days parking. This can be renewed as required.

Can I get food and drink whilst at the hospital?

Yes, on production of your carers badge or Carers Passport, you may use the staff restaurant facilities that are available on both sites.

Leaving hospital

Will I be consulted before the person I care for is moved to another ward, hospital, or discharged home?

We aim to give you an expected date of discharge as early as possible, although this can change if circumstances change.

You will not necessarily be consulted over change of wards although you should be informed as early as possible.

We will, however, talk to you in advance of any proposed change of hospital site, for example transferring a patient from Gloucestershire Royal to Cheltenham General or to one of the Community Hospitals.

You should always be involved in the assessment for discharge if you are intending to provide care or support.

It may be difficult for you to talk about the level of care you can provide or to share your concerns in the presence of the person you care for so we will try to speak to you separately.

What if I feel I could not cope if the person I care for comes back home?

Before the person you care for is discharged from hospital, there will be an assessment of their needs and sometimes a home visit to see how they cope with everyday tasks.

If community support services are already in place for the person you care for, the main issue for discharge planning is to make sure those services and support will continue as before or are adapted if needs have changed. You will also be involved in this conversation.

What should I expect to be given upon discharge?

The person you care for may be discharged with medication, prescriptions, discharge/aftercare information leaflets, and often a copy of a letter for the doctor. It is a good idea to check with the nurse if any of these things are needed before the person you care for leaves the ward.

What should I do if I, or the person I care for, am not sure about what should be happening once we have left the hospital?

You should be given the details of who to contact if you are not sure about anything.

Concern or query?

Check how to raise a concern or query with our staff, and who to speak to first.

1

Speak to the ward staff

The ward staff are your first point of contact for any matter you wish to raise.

2

Speak to the ward manager

If talking to the ward staff isn't appropriate, you can speak to the ward manager or nurse in charge.

3

Speak to the clinical matron

If talking to the ward manager isn't appropriate, you can speak to the clinical matron.

4

Speak to the PALS team

If you feel you need to talk to someone independent of the ward, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 019 3282 or at ghn-tr.pals.gloshospitals@nhs.net, and they will ensure your concern is addressed with the relevant team.



Useful numbers

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

Phone: 0800 019 3282

Email: ghn-tr.pals.gloshospitals@nhs.net

We are available Monday to Friday from 9–5. Outside of these hours, please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can

Main switchboard

If you don't know the name or number of the person, ward or department you would like to speak to then please call our main switchboard number: 0300 422 2222

We are indebted to Gloucestershire Carers Hub, Gloucestershire Healthwatch, the Staff at Gloucestershire NHS Foundation Trust and especially to the Carers who help develop this Handbook

Our range of patient information leaflets are available on our website:

www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/