

Freedom of Information Request: Our Reference CTMUHB_407_21

You asked:

I am writing to you on behalf of the human rights in childbirth charity Birthrights, regarding the changes you have made to visiting arrangements in maternity services from the 10th September, reflecting wider changes to visiting within your hospitals in response to rising levels of COVID.

Whilst we understand rising COVID cases are challenging, you will be aware that all individuals have a right to family and private life under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. This includes the right to be together as a family around the time of birth. This right can be restricted but only if the restriction is necessary to achieve a legitimate aim such as protecting the health of others, and crucially if the restriction is proportionate.

There is now significant evidence about the adverse impact of visiting restrictions during the pandemic (see this analysis for example, by health economist Rachel Hunter about the mental health cost of visiting restrictions on pregnant women/birthing people). Just this week the Health and Safety Investigation Branch have published a report into stillbirths in England between April and June 2020. The report concludes that, unlike in other industries, NHS providers appear to have no system in place to enable them to weigh up any increased risks of COVID transmission against any unintended clinical consequences of changes they make to services in order to reduce the risks of COVID transmission. This is a safety issue.

We would therefore be grateful if you could send us as a matter of urgency the risk assessment/s that underpinned your decision to exclude partners from inpatient antenatal and postnatal wards, and from outpatient appointments and any non-routine scans. Please send us the minutes of any meetings discussing these decisions. Finally, please confirm that your local Maternity Services Liaison Committee was 2 involved in the decision making process.

Please regard the above as requests under the Freedom of Information Act although given the number of families affected right now we ask for a response by close of play on the 29th September, so that we can consider whether to take formal legal advice.

Our response:

Please find attached, an extract from the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board *Gold Command* Operational Resilience meeting held on the 8th September 2021 – post meeting notes of the decision making process (including risk assessment analysis) of the change to visitor guidelines for the whole health board including the maternity service, where the decision was made. (Attachment 1)

Please note that the Health Board Maternity Service Liaison Committee has the title 'My Maternity, My Way'. Extracts from the meeting where visiting restrictions were discussed, have been provided below:

- 'My Maternity, My Way' Birth Partner sub group meeting held on the 14th September 2021 – showing full discussion, sharing with partners of the

change to the visiting guidelines within maternity, the rationale for the change and co-producing a plan for how to best support implementation

3	Visiting	- Discussed how members felt RE change in visiting. - Members understood reasons for change. - Felt that would prefer option of have virtual appointment with partner and that this should be consistent. - Felt no visiting postnatally would be the most difficult and we discussed reasoning for this and they asked for ways to encourage bonding between birth partner and baby. - Members feel that they want to be able to have 'open' discussions around their concerns, even if not present. - Midwife/receptionsist could explain on arrival to appointment that can call partner during consultain, this could be 'Face time/phone call'. - Partners need better support to bond.
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Please find below further extracts from the minutes of meetings held where visiting arrangement restrictions were discussed:

- **Covid 19 meeting (25 August 2021)**

175/21	Visiting Guidance DB confirmed that CTMUHB have maintained its status for visitors. The only changes made were as recommended by WG for Maternity and Paediatrics. Process for managing visitors remains the same – restricted to one person to a blocked 30 minute booked session. DB recommended the reinforcement of PPE. SM also suggested that visitors that undertake lateral flow tests carry this out prior to visiting rather than following the visit.
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- **Covid 19 meeting (1 September 2021)**

199/21	Visiting Guidance CT informed the group that visiting will be discussed today in gold. From an all Wales position, it has been made clear that the decision around visiting sits with each individual HB. CT also advised that staff need to make sure that they are screening visitors prior to them attending the ward. From discussions, it was noted that there is no standardised COVID questionnaire. BC/SM agreed to develop one. As the guidance has changed for contacts of COVID cases in the general population, some visitors may not be aware of the restriction of visiting patients in hospitals/care homes. Self-isolation: PD shared the link to the WG guidance. https://gov.wales/self-isolation
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- **Covid 19 meeting (8 September 2021)**

223/21	Visiting Guidance Visitors questionnaire Please see attached visitors questionnaire that has been developed by BC, the guidance has been sent out to the group for comments and have been incorporated in to the questionnaire. checklist for visitors.docx DB has completed an SBAR for visiting for Gold today which is at 4.00pm today, GD will take the SBAR to the meeting.
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- **Covid 19 meeting (15 September 2021)**

248/21	Visiting Guidance Checklist for visitors checklist for visitors.docx GD has informed the group that visiting for the HB has been changed to red for all sites, this was signed off last week.
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