

Supporting the needs and rights of carers - Our commitment to improve patient and carer outcomes and experiences



“When carers are well supported, they can provide better care for the person they care for and report better well-being outcomes themselves”

Ablitt, Jones and Muers (2009)

Across South Tees Hospitals Foundation Trust (STHFT) we strive to consistently deliver high quality care that meets the needs of our patients and their carers in our hospitals and community services.

In placing patients firmly at the centre of everything we do we recognise and value the fundamental role that carers have in securing the health, comfort and wellbeing of the people they care for.

The Trust defines a “carer” as a person of any age who provides help and support to a parent, child, partner, relative or close friend because of their illness, frailty or disability.

Including carers in care and treatment will:

- Offer better outcomes for the patient
- Enable staff and services to ensure they have a fuller picture of patients’ needs
- Provide peace of mind for carers that the person they care for is receiving the best and most appropriate treatment and that they as carers are integral to this
- Promote the wellbeing of the carer

Balancing the needs of the patient and carer against those of the services will require careful management.

In some situations when identifying reasonable adjustments consideration of key patient safety issues such as infection and prevention control, confidentiality, privacy and dignity may take priority. This does not however diminish our responsibility to promote and support the carers role.

Below we outline the standards and interventions our staff should undertake to facilitate an effective partnership between the carer, the patient and the health care professional.

Trust standard and key interventions

together we do the amazing

1. Open access/visiting

Unrestricted visiting

Our staff will facilitate where possible unrestricted visiting to enable carers to maintain and contribute to the care of their relative or friend. This may include access out with normal visiting hours such as at meal times, and at other times of key interventions or tests.

Staff will however need to consider and manage the impact of unrestricted visiting for carers on other patients and take actions that safeguard the safety, confidentiality, privacy and dignity of all. This may include asking carers to wait outside the ward environment during ward rounds, when patients are attending to personal hygiene or during an emergency situation.

Staying overnight

Carers may request to stay overnight either at the bedside or close by. Staff should where possible accommodate this reasonable adjustment. A request to stay by a patients bed can in many situations be accommodated. However staff should consider and explain the need to protect and safeguard the confidentiality, privacy and dignity of all patients and manage any infection / prevention risks

to the patient and carer. In addition staff can signpost carers to local accommodation or to limited onsite accommodation.

Accompanying

Staff should facilitate any requests from a carer to accompany the patient for a test/ intervention such as an x-ray or scan. This is a reasonable request which should in most situations be accommodated. Where there is risk of harm or exposure to the carer an appropriate risk assessment should be undertaken. If the request is unable to be accommodated staff should document the reason for refusal and explain the reason to the patient and carer.

Paid Carers

The Trust also recognises and supports the role and contribution made by paid carers. Staff guidance regarding the role of paid carers during hospital admissions can be found on the intranet <http://stas16/intranet/services-a-z/carers/>

Paid carers may undertake clinical care whilst the patient is in hospital although accountability for that care remains with the registered nurse.

2. Partnerships of care

Communication and sharing information

Good communication between health care staff and carers builds stronger relationships, partnerships and confidence. Our staff must communicate effectively and share relevant timely information with carers.

Nursing staff should on admission identify if the patient has a carer and document within the nursing assessment communication record the level of support and care they provide.

The duty to share information can be as important as the duty to protect patient confidentiality. (Caldicott Principle 7 - refer to IG101)

Confidential information should only be shared if consent is given by the patient, or the carer has a legal right or duty to act on the behalf of the patient with regards to their healthcare. In all other situations the carer should receive non-confidential (relevant information) which will aid the caring role.

Relevant information may relate to current treatment plans, discharge plans and any other information that relates to the on-going care, safety and wellbeing of the patient.

Confidential information is identifiable information such as the diagnosis and/or treatment options.

3. Wellbeing of carers

Practical help and support to offer carers:

- Staff should identify and document at first assessment/contact the support carers give and ensure they have a **Carers Information Card**.
- Staff should undertake to discuss each day with carers the level of support they are able and willing to offer while the patient is in hospital.
- Staff should encourage and signpost carers to their local authority for a carers assessment which they are entitled to by law. <http://stas16/intranet/services-a-z/carers/>
The purpose of this assessment is to ensure a carers own needs are identified, and that the carer is aware of their rights to emotional and financial help and support.
- Signpost carers to carer agencies and community based support groups <http://stas16/intranet/services-a-z/carers/>
- Provide information and directions for carers to access food and drink while in hospital <http://stas16/intranet/services-a-z/carers/>
- Provide information relating to long stay onsite car parking and discounts
- Consider involving the therapeutic care support workers and volunteers
- Promote the facilities available within the chapels and The Holistic Centre at The James Cook University Hospital. The centre offers quiet spaces and access to complementary therapies and other wellbeing projects*.
*A charge may apply for complementary therapy sessions