Welcome to the Critical Care Department
Northern General Hospital

Information for relatives and friends
Critical Care Services
About this booklet

We aim to give simple, practical information that will help answer some of the questions that you might have whilst your relative or friend is a patient in the Critical Care Department.

It explains simply what happens in the Critical Care Department, to prepare you for the information you will be given by the staff caring for your relative.

We understand that seeing your relative or friend in Critical Care can be a very frightening and stressful experience. Hospitals and their procedures are unfamiliar to most. All the staff are here to help you and we hope that you will ask any member of staff any further questions that you may have.

About the Critical Care Department

The Critical Care Department is situated on the ground floor (D floor) of Vickers corridor at the Northern General Hospital and comprises three separate units;

- General Intensive Care Unit (GICU)
- High Dependency Unit (HDU)
- Post Operative Surgical Unit (POSU).

GICU is situated on D floor, the ground floor.

HDU and POSU are situated on E floor, the upper level.

There is only one access point to the Critical Care Department; this is on D floor. When you arrive during visiting times you will be met by a Receptionist and a Critical Care Volunteer who will direct you to your relative or friend.
Visiting your relative

When a patient is first admitted to Critical Care it can take a long time to stabilise them and ensure that they are receiving all appropriate treatment and care. If you are waiting to see them, please be patient with us; we will try to enable you to visit as soon as possible and a member of staff will explain what is happening.

We welcome visitors but it is important to ensure that the patients are able to get sufficient rest; please consider this when visiting your relative. Only two people are allowed at the bedside at any one time. If there are more than two visitors, they may wait in the waiting area and swap over at convenient times. Please be aware that Critical Care patients may receive specialist care which can be time consuming. There may be times when you will be asked to wait in the waiting area to allow treatment, investigations or care to take place eg when an X-ray is required.

Visiting Times

- **GICU**: Between 11.00am - 8.00pm each day
- **HDU and POSU**: Between 11.00am - 8.00pm each day

Any visiting outside these times is strictly at the discretion of the senior nurse on duty. If at any time your relative or friend becomes unstable or their condition deteriorates we may contact you and allow you to visit at short notice.

Visitors are asked not to bring children under the age of 12. If you wish a child to visit please ask for advice, as it is at the discretion of the senior nurse on duty.

There is no provision within the unit to stay overnight. For details of places to stay locally contact Sheffield's Tourist Information Centre on 0114 221 1900.
They offer a booking service for a wide range of accommodation. Information can also be accessed on the internet.

**To help reduce the chance of infection please:**

Do not visit if you are unwell, you should be free of symptoms for at least two days before you visit someone in hospital.

Use the hand rub or wash your hands in warm soapy water when entering and leaving the patient cubicle or bay.

Do not sit on the beds as this can encourage the spread of germs. Please use the chairs provided.

**What to bring:**

You are welcome to bring in basic toiletries i.e. toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant and shaving equipment which your relative or friend can use. Storage for patient's personal belongings is very limited on Critical Care and you will probably be asked to take other items home for safekeeping.

**What not to bring:**

Flowers are not allowed within the Critical Care Department because there is an infection risk from the petals and water.

Helium balloons are not allowed because they are a fire risk.

Food that requires heating is not allowed to be brought in as we have no provision for reheating food safely.

**Mobile phones**

It is our hospital policy for mobile phones to be turned off when entering critical care areas. This is to prevent interference with medical equipment; respect the hospital environment for patients and staff and also to protect patient confidentiality. Please do not take photographs.
Telephone enquiries

To contact the Critical Care Department, please telephone:

**GICU**
- 0114 271 4122
- 0114 271 4012

**HDU / POSU**
- 0114 271 5785
- 0114 226 6969

Alternatively please contact the patient's bedside telephone; the nurse caring for your relative or friend will give this number to you.

We ask that family and friends arrange that one or two people telephone for information and then pass it on. This will help our nursing staff to spend more time with patients and less time on the telephone.

To maintain patient confidentiality we will only give general information over the telephone. The medical / nursing staff will be able to give more specific information when you visit.

**Monitoring and equipment**

Within the Critical Care Department, we use lots of different equipment to treat and monitor our patients. These can be quite noisy and they will be connected to alarms which may sound frequently. This is nothing to worry about and the nurse caring for your relative / friend will be able to explain further.
About the General Intensive Care Unit (GICU)

General Intensive Care is an area where patients, whose conditions are life threatening through serious illness or injury, can receive constant monitoring. Patients may need further support during this time and specialist machines and drugs are often used to help with their breathing and circulation. This would not be available on an ordinary ward.

The length of time a patient stays on GICU depends on the extent of their illness or injuries. Recovery times can vary from patient to patient. Unfortunately, in some cases patients do not recover. The nurses and doctors will keep you informed of your relative's progress.

About the High Dependency Unit (HDU)

The High Dependency Unit on E floor cares for patients who require a higher level of care than can be given on an ordinary ward. Patients may require close monitoring and/or specialist treatment such as help with their breathing. The length of stay will vary depending on the patient’s condition. Occasionally patients who are cared for in HDU become increasingly unstable and may require further specialist treatment and be transferred to GICU. Unfortunately, in some cases patients do not recover. The nurses and doctors will keep you informed of your relative's progress.

HDU may also care for patients who are recovering after a stay on GICU, but still require close monitoring before transferring to a ward.
About the Post Operative Surgical Unit (POSU)

The Post Operative Surgical Unit is also on E floor alongside HDU. POSU admits patients who have come into hospital for planned surgery.

Patients in POSU are closely observed and monitored after a planned operation.

Most patients stay one night after their operation. The nursing and medical teams will decide if patients are fit enough to return to the ward the morning after surgery. If closer observation or specialist treatment is still needed, patients will remain on POSU or they may be transferred to the HDU.
Leaving critical care

Your relative or friend will usually be transferred from the Critical Care Department when they are no longer dependent on machines or the other specialist skills of our team. When patients reach this stage in their recovery there is less monitoring and less dependency on the nursing staff.

Where the patient is moved to will depend on the nature of their illness or injuries. Some patients require specialist help to assist their recovery. For example, if a patient has a head injury, spinal injury or burns they may be transferred to a unit which is equipped to deal with their particular needs. Most patients will be transferred to a ward within the hospital.

The more 'normal' atmosphere provided on a ward is an important step towards recovery and rehabilitation. There will be fewer nurses compared to Critical Care, but this is a positive step that your relative / friend no longer requires close monitoring.

The Critical Care Outreach Nurse will visit your relative or friend on the ward when they have been discharged from the Intensive Care Unit. They also visit patients who have been discharged from the High Dependency Unit after a stay of 3 or more days.

The Outreach Nurses will check on the progress that your relative or friend is making and provide you and them with support.

The Outreach Nurses advise the ward staff on any special care that your relative or friend will need when they go to the ward.
Who should I speak to if I have any queries or concerns?

Please speak to any member of staff. If the problem can be resolved quickly we will do our best to put things right.

If you prefer, you can telephone the Patient Services Team on 0114 271 2400. They will be happy to listen to you and put you in touch with the right person to address your concern. The Patient Services Team can also give you further advice on how to make a complaint.

If you would prefer to write to us regarding your concerns you can do so by writing to:

The Chief Executive
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
8 Beech Hill Road
Sheffield
S10 2JF

Audit, research and service evaluation - aiming to improve our service

In the NHS we carry out many audit, research and service evaluation projects. Some of these projects involve using large groups of people rather than individuals. In this instance, your relative's information is made anonymous before we use it. This involves removing anything that could identify your relative, such as their name and address. If we want to use information where they can be identified then we will ask permission of the next of kin. If you do not want us to use this information or want any further details, please ask your nurse to contact the audit or research lead and we will be happy to discuss your concerns with you.