

9<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear friends and family,

I apologise for the delay in sending this email - sent today in light of yesterday's UK Government announcement to move to Plan B. We were hoping that the virus situation would be under control and stable by now, but unfortunately we are in a different place.

The current guidance for hospitals and care homes is to facilitate visiting where possible, but with risks being assessed.

#### Arrangements for visiting over Christmas

If planning to visit in person, you will need to book in advance by phoning the reception team on 01428 643311 (Monday to Thursday from 10am to 4pm, excluding bank/public Holidays). If requiring our assistance to arrange and facilitate a virtual visit, again please call the reception team.

We will maintain our usual visiting arrangements up to and including Christmas Eve, Friday 24<sup>th</sup> December.

Starting from Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022 we will follow the usual visiting pattern, but include Bank Holidays and weekends as follows:

St Mary's Ward (downstairs):                      each day: 11.00-12.30, 12.30-14.00pm, 14.00-15.30, 15.30-17.00.

St Anthony's Ward (upstairs):                      each day: 11.00-12.30, 12.30-14.00pm, 14.00-15.30, 15.30-17.00.

Each ward will accommodate up to two patient visits during each of these visiting slots, limited to 1.5hrs (in other words, the hospital may have up to four patients being visited at any one time). Visits will take place in patients own rooms, so please limit the maximum size of your party to two people. As explained last week, please arrive 30 minutes early in order to take a lateral flow test. Alternatively, we will accept a negative LFT from earlier in the day with the result recorded on the NHS App.

Unfortunately we will not be able to provide food to visitors, but you are welcome to bring in something to eat and drink.

## Omicron

With a reported doubling of cases in the community every 2.5-3 days, there could be 1 million cases in the UK by the end of the month unless the rate of spread is slowed. Data is still being assessed about the efficacy of vaccine protection against this variant and also about whether Omicron leads to more (or less) severe disease and hospitalisation than the Delta variant.

With the above in mind, a number of factors may affect the proposed arrangements

- 1) Covid infection within the hospital (either patients or staff)
- 2) A directive from UK Government to suspend visiting
- 3) Guidance from health agencies and professional bodies
- 4) A reduction in staffing to safety critical levels
- 5) Infection outbreak control (non-Covid)

We very much hope these won't come into play and it goes without saying that we look forward to welcoming you this Christmas. Holy Cross is already looking festive!

Many thanks for your understanding and support during this pandemic.

Ross

\*ps we are recruiting staff at the current time. If you know of anyone from your extended network who might be interested in working at Holy Cross please direct them to our website <https://www.holycross.org.uk/vacancies/> or invite them to call 01428 643311 to speak with Debbie Freemantle.

Ross White