

CHILD CONTACT

The State Hospital recognises the need to help families maintain their relationships throughout the time a patient is in the care of the Hospital and is therefore committed to supporting you to visit as a family, where this is in the best interest of the child (under the age of 16).

The State Hospital Child Contact policy and procedure provides a framework which ensures that children are safe and that their interests are paramount in relation to decisions made which may affect them. This includes when children visit the Hospital's Family Centre, when patients are outwith the Hospital (suspension of detention) and all other form of contact which children may have with patients, including telephone contact, exchange of gifts and photographs, third party information exchanged, and any other form of contact between patient and child.

Persons who are aged 16 or over but have delayed development or are regarded as being particularly vulnerable for any other reason, may also have their individual circumstances considered as part of contact decision-making processes.

Applications relating to very young children from the age of 0-3 years may be subject to additional scrutiny depending upon their stage of development.

Application for child contact

All requests for a child to visit or to have contact with a patient require to be assessed by a social worker. A separate application is required for each child. As well as ensuring that the proposed contact would be in the child's best interest, this process also identifies any risks which may arise from contact with the child.

Application packs can be obtained from and must be returned to:

Social Work Service
South Lanarkshire Council
The State Hospital
Carstairs
Lanark ML11 8RP Telephone: 01555 840293

You can also find application packs in the Carers' Reception and the Family Centre.

Please note that the parent / guardian and any other accompanying adult **must be** an approved visitor in their own right.

What happens next?

- We have a discussion with the patient to decide whether the application can be progressed.
- A social worker may conduct local authority checks where appropriate. If the child is involved with local children and families services, we will contact the allocated social worker for background information which will contribute to our assessment.
- A social worker will meet with the patient to discuss the application.
- A social worker will plan to meet you, your child / children, and any other proposed accompanying adult(s) at your home to discuss the assessment.
- An assessment report will be completed by the social worker and sent to the clinical team. The completed assessment will be retained on the Hospital's electronic patient record system.
- A social worker will inform you, any other proposed adult, and the patient, in writing of the outcome.

Review process

All child contact arrangements are reviewed on a six monthly basis to ensure that continued contact is appropriate for the child. As part of this process, a social worker will be in contact with you to update the original assessment.

Child visiting experience to the Family Centre

All children must be authorised to visit and be accompanied by an authorised parent / legal guardian or other authorised adult. All child visits take place within the Family Centre, a dedicated building which provides families with as much privacy as possible. Due to the size of the visiting area, the number of visits taking place are limited and managed through a well established booking system.

When you visit for the first time, we will tell you about the process which needs to happen before you can start your visit. This includes checking your identification and the child's passport photo, and giving you photographic passes submitted as part of the application process. You will then be escorted to the Family Centre for your visit.

All family visits will be closely supervised. Children will be subject to the same security procedures as adult visitors.

To maintain a safe and secure environment for our patients, visitors, volunteers, and staff, many items are excluded from the Hospital or have restrictions to their entry. Please refer to the "list of prohibited items" which is provided by Security and is available on the State Hospital's website.

If you would like any more information or have any queries about this process, please do not hesitate to contact the Social Work Service for further information.

October 2023