

Services at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) during this lockdown: information for children, young people and families

England is subject to lockdown and unfortunately this will impact on our services. We know this will be worrying for you. This information from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) explains how we will be working in the coming weeks – to ensure the children and young people who need us most receive care and treatment, and to support other hospitals in the North London area who are experiencing a massive increase in adult patients. We have had to make some difficult decisions but we hope you understand why we are making these temporary changes to how we provide services during these difficult times.

We are continuing to ask those staff who can work effectively from home to do so, and we have invested greatly to make sure they have the right equipment to work safely and efficiently.

We are also offering a COVID-19 vaccination to all our staff – both clinical and non-clinical. We are working to vaccinate the vast majority of our staff as quickly as possible – this offers the best opportunity for us to protect children, young people and families who use our services.

Of course, we are still expecting everyone who comes to the hospital to follow our Hands, Face and Space rules – using hand sanitiser, wearing a face mask and keeping 2m away from people outside your household.

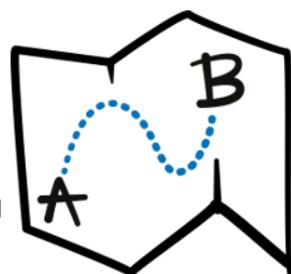
Changes to our visitor policy

We also need to further limit visitors to the hospital. While we understand that this will be difficult for families, it is helping us greatly reduce the risk of infection, keeping you, your child and

everyone else at GOSH safer. This means that from 12 January 2021:

- If your child has an outpatient appointment, only one carer will be allowed into the hospital.
- If your child is staying on a ward for up to 14 days we are asking that just one parent or carer should attend with the child, and for stays of 15 days or more we are asking that the primary carer changes no more than once per week.
- Unfortunately, siblings will not be able to visit.

We know there will be exceptional circumstances where it will be necessary to vary these rules. If you feel this is the case for your family, please contact your child's clinical team to discuss your child's needs directly if we haven't already been in touch – they will then decide what exceptions, if any, can be accommodated.



Changes to outpatient appointments

We learnt a lot from the first lockdown about how our services – particularly outpatient appointments – can be carried out using video or telephone calls. Many families tell us they actually found it helpful not to spend a long time travelling to GOSH for a fairly short appointment.

Our clinical teams are reviewing all upcoming outpatient appointments to see which can safely be carried out virtually instead of face-to-face.

If we think that your child can safely have a video or telephone appointment, we will contact you to let you know. Of course, if your child needs to come to GOSH for blood tests, scans or other tests, we will do this as safely as we can.

Changes to planned inpatient and day admissions

As well as changing many of our outpatient appointments to 'virtual' appointments, we have had to look carefully at the admissions we had planned for the next month or so. Our clinical teams have reviewed every planned admission and unfortunately have had to postpone some for now. We haven't been able to give everyone a rescheduled date just yet, but please be assured, we will be working to get our services back to normal as quickly as possible.

At the moment, we are continuing with planned admissions for children and young people who need us most – we call these patients priority 1 and priority 2. These are patients who are most at risk of harm if they are not seen in the near future. We are also supporting other hospitals in the North London area by taking their patients under 25 years old so they can free up beds for adult COVID-19 patients. Members of GOSH staff are also working at these hospitals to help them cope with essential adult care given the intense pressure on the NHS at the moment.

We are continuing to make sure you receive all medications from GOSH as planned. Our Pharmacy department is sending medications via Royal Mail Special Delivery. We will contact you to discuss your child's specific needs and preferences.

Vaccinations

We are vaccinating hundreds of staff each day in line with Government guidance, so we can protect our patients and families. The vaccines available are not licensed for children and young people under 16 years old, so there are no plans to vaccinate our patients currently. If this situation changes, we will of course let you know.

Supporting our staff and volunteers

The COVID-19 pandemic is something that we haven't faced before, and with each change in restrictions, life can get harder to handle. We are carrying on supporting our staff and volunteers as best we can – giving them access to our Health and Wellbeing Hub where they can get the support they need as well as helping where we can with somewhere to stay closer to GOSH if travelling is difficult.

Supporting children, young people and families

Our clinical teams are still supporting children and young people under their care. You can still contact them in the usual way if you have any questions or you can get in touch via MyGOSH once you have registered – further information is at <https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/your-hospital-visit/mygosh>.

We are also continuing to keep you updated with information as the situation changes – keep an eye on our Coronavirus (COVID-19) hub for the latest news and information – available at <https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19-information-hub>



Further information and support

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (Pals) team can give you confidential advice and support about any issues that crop up while you are visiting or staying at GOSH. Call them on 020 7829 7862 or email pals@gosh.nhs.uk

