

# Welcome to the general intensive care unit (GICU)

Information for family and friends



We've written this leaflet as a guide to the general intensive care unit (GICU) for relatives and friends. It explains what to expect while your relative or friend is being cared for in the GICU.

We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

For more information about the GICU, please scan the QR code below or visit: [www.uhs.nhs.uk/gicu](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/gicu)



## What is the general intensive care unit (GICU)?

The GICU is a specialist hospital area that provides treatment and close-monitoring for people with severe and potentially life-threatening conditions. The GICU is staffed with specially trained healthcare professionals and contains sophisticated monitoring equipment.

As well as looking after your relative or friend, we also aim to provide the care and support you need during your time here. If you need an interpreter or assistance with communication, ask the ward clerk, the nurse looking after your relative or friend, or the nurse-in-charge.

The GICU is made up of three zones (A, B and C). There is no clinical difference between each zone. They are all mixed-sex bays, but we will endeavour to protect your relative or friend's privacy and dignity at all times.

| Zone | Bed numbers   | Telephone number     |
|------|---------------|----------------------|
| A    | 8 to 15 (A2)  | <b>023 8120 8430</b> |
|      | 16 to 23 (A3) | <b>023 8120 6610</b> |
|      | 24 to 26 (A4) | <b>023 8120 3878</b> |
| B    | 11 to 21      | <b>023 8120 2140</b> |
| C    | 22 to 32      | <b>023 8120 2143</b> |

For general enquiries, call **023 8120 6118**.

## The GICU team

The GICU team is made up of many different health professionals, including:

- doctors
- nurses
- advanced critical care practitioners
- physiotherapists
- occupational therapists
- critical care technologists
- pharmacists
- dietitians
- speech and language therapists
- research nurses
- students
- admin staff
- unit volunteers

Specialist teams will also regularly visit the unit. We will aim to make it clear who we all are, but please ask us if you are unsure.

## Visiting guidelines

### GICU family password

We advise you to set a GICU family password with us. This password is very important as it ensures only those who have been given the password can gain information and updates from us and/or visit the unit. The password can be any word or phrase. Please only share the password with key family members and friends.

We ask that you nominate **one or two key people** to be responsible for calling us for updates. The key people can then share any updates with the wider network of family and friends. To help make sharing updates easier and faster, we recommend downloading a free app called 'CaringBridge' on your smartphone or tablet.

### Visiting hours

Visiting hours are between 2pm and 8pm. Outside of these hours, visiting is at the discretion of the nurse-in-charge.

### Number of visitors

A maximum of two visitors at a time by the bedside.

## Pre-booked visiting

Call our unit in advance to book a visit with your relative or friend, so we know to expect you.

## Virtual visiting

If you are unable to visit your relative or friend in person, please ask us about virtual visiting. We can arrange a video call for your relative or friend on one of our patient iPads at a mutually convenient time.

Please note that for virtual visiting, you will need a smartphone or a tablet on which you will need to download a free app from your device's app store called 'aTouchAway'.

## Safety

For safety and security reasons, entry to the unit is via an intercom system at the main door. If you have been waiting at the main door for some time without an answer, it is likely that the nursing staff are all busy. Please bear with us. It may be your relative or friend that we are attending to. Try the intercom system again after a few minutes.

If you still don't get a response, you are welcome to use the telephone in the waiting room to call us to let us know you're here. If you know which zone your relative or friend is in, please dial the relevant telephone number (see page 3). Otherwise, please call **023 8120 6118**.

It is important that we are aware who is in our unit at all times, so please **do not** enter without specific approval from a member of staff at the time of your arrival and **do not** let others follow you in. This is to protect the privacy of all our patients.

Food and drinks should not be brought onto the unit unless this has been pre-arranged with our nursing staff. Visitors should not eat or drink while on the unit.

## Personal property

Please only bring in essential items for your relative or friend and avoid bringing in valuables (unless you have discussed this with us). Useful items include:

- deodorant
- toothbrush and toothpaste
- body wash, shampoo and conditioner
- shaving equipment
- hairbrush
- communication aids (glasses and hearing aids)

## Gifts

You will be able to display some personal items, such as family photos and 'get well' cards, around the bedside.

To prevent infection, flowers are not allowed in our hospital.

## Infection prevention

To prevent the spread of infections, please:

- use the alcohol gel provided or wash your hands before entering and leaving the unit and also when entering and leaving a side-room.
- use the coat hooks provided to hang up your coats and/or umbrellas (these can be found just before you enter each zone).

Before coming into hospital, please read more about our visitor guidance and current restrictions on our website: [www.uhs.nhs.uk](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk)

## Illness

If you are or have recently been unwell, please let us know when you call us to book a visit.

You should not visit your relative or friend if you think you may have COVID-19 or influenza, or you have any symptoms of diarrhoea or vomiting. Please phone us for updates instead.

## Children

If you have young children who wish to visit, please discuss this with the nurse-in-charge or the consultant beforehand. We can provide you with some activity books to help children understand why their relative or friend is in the GICU. Please ask us for these, as they may still be helpful even if the child is not visiting. These books can also be downloaded from: [www.icusteps.org/information/for-children](http://www.icusteps.org/information/for-children)

We also advise you to let their school or college know of the situation, so support can be offered to them. You may also like to consider virtual visiting with younger children or if you feel your child may find coming in to visit stressful.

## Parking and public transport

If you are coming to the hospital regularly by car, you may find it beneficial to purchase a discounted weekly parking ticket from the Travelwise office. Ask the ward clerk or nurse-in-charge for a completed form to take to their office during working hours. The nurse-in-charge can also give 'next of kin' relatives a discounted single-use parking ticket if you need it the first time you visit.

The roads adjacent to the hospital are served by various bus routes from the local area, including Southampton Central train station and the University of Southampton. For bus timetables, please ask at the main entrance reception desk on C level.

## Hospital facilities

There are many facilities at the hospital, including an information desk, a range of cafés and shops, a cash point, a public pharmacy and a chapel. The chapel and multi-faith rooms are on D level, West Wing.

For relatives or friends of patients with cancer, we also have a Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Centre and a Maggie's Centre if you would like some extra support or information. For more information about these centres, please visit: [www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/cancer](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/cancer)

## While your relative or friend is in the GICU

Please consider keeping a diary for your relative or friend. Once recovered, it is helpful for them to have a timeline of their stay and details of any events at home that they have missed. We can offer support with this.

We respectfully ask that you do **not** take photos of anyone in the GICU (including your relative or friend).

### Spiritual care team

We understand that having a relative or friend in the GICU can be an extremely stressful and worrying time for loved ones. Our spiritual care team offers a wide range of support to all our patients and their friends and families, and are here for you if you need:

- emotional, spiritual or religious care
- a conversation
- pastoral support
- a quiet space for reflection

If you would like one of the spiritual care team to visit you or your relative or friend on the GICU, please ask a member of our team and we can arrange this for you.

For more information about our spiritual care team and how they can help support you, please visit: [www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/your-stay-in-hospital/spiritual-care-chaplaincy](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/your-stay-in-hospital/spiritual-care-chaplaincy)

### Research

Research studies and clinical trials help us to understand health better and develop new ways of treating and managing conditions. As a major site for clinical research, we are proud to provide our patients with some of the best access to new treatments in the UK. With hundreds of studies happening at any one time across a wide range of conditions, we are able to offer many patients the opportunity to

take part in research. This includes experimental medicine trials, which look at the causes of disease, how treatments work and whether they are safe, and trials to test the effectiveness of new treatments to see if they are better than what is currently available.

Our research could not happen without our patients. A member of the research team may approach you or your relative or friend to discuss taking part in a research study.

### Leaving the GICU

Before your relative or friend leaves the GICU, ask a ward clerk for a 'Recovering after intensive care' information pack. Alternatively, you can email the ICU recovery team for a digital copy.

When we transfer your relative or friend to a ward, they will usually be visited by a member of the critical care outreach advanced clinical practitioner (CCOT ACP) team. The CCOT ACP team will review their progress and make sure that the move to the ward goes smoothly within 24 hours of your relative or friend being discharged from the GICU.

### Call 4 Concern (C4C) service

If you are concerned that your relative or friend's clinical condition has worsened (also known as 'clinical deterioration') while they are on the ward, speak to the ward nurse caring for your relative or friend.

If you do not feel your concerns have been addressed, ask to speak to the nurse-in-charge.

If after speaking to the nurse-in-charge you still feel that your concerns have not been resolved, call **023 8077 7222** and ask to speak to the 'Call 4 Concern team'. A member of the C4C team will listen to your concerns and ensure that the correct person assesses your relative or friend's condition, attempting to resolve your concerns within an agreed time frame.



## ICU recovery service (follow-up service)

The ICU recovery team may contact your relative or friend a few weeks after they have been discharged from hospital. The experience of being critically ill can have a significant, long-lasting, physical and psychological effect. The ICU recovery team can provide advice and support, and if appropriate, direct your relative or friend to other agencies. If you need advice or support and have not yet heard from the ICU recovery team, please contact us.

Telephone: **023 8120 6116** (voicemail available)  
Mobile: **07827 978651** (text messages only)  
Email: [icurecovery@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:icurecovery@uhs.nhs.uk)

## Air ambulance aftercare support team

If your relative or friend was treated by an air ambulance team, you may be contacted by their air ambulance aftercare support team. The aftercare support team can provide you with more information about what happened before your relative or friend arrived on the GICU and how they were cared for. They may also be able to offer additional support or signpost you to support services in your local area.

If you would like to get in touch with the air ambulance aftercare support team, you can contact them using the relevant details below:

### Hampshire and Isle of Wight air ambulance

Email: [hemsaftercare@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:hemsaftercare@uhs.nhs.uk)

### Dorset and Somerset air ambulance

Email: [dsaa.support@nhs.net](mailto:dsaa.support@nhs.net)

## Legal advice

If your relative or friend needs any legal advice or assistance while they recover, ask a member of the hospital ward team or contact the legal firm 'Stewarts Law' for **free** advice. They can offer advice about welfare benefits, housing, financial or employment issues. To arrange an appointment with Stewarts Law, email: [lrobinson@stewartslaw.com](mailto:lrobinson@stewartslaw.com)

## Bereavement care

If a patient passes away, we do all we can to support the family. The bereavement care services team, who are based on-site at Southampton General Hospital, will provide additional support and guidance on what to do next. We will provide you with their booklet.

Telephone: **023 8120 4587**  
Email: [bereavementcare@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:bereavementcare@uhs.nhs.uk)

## Donations

With the help of generous donations from previous patients and their families, we have been able to buy new equipment for the unit, such as iPads, fans and rehabilitation chairs.

If you would like to make a donation to the GICU, please visit the Southampton Hospitals Charity website by scanning this QR code or clicking the following link: [southamptonhospitalscharity.org/ways-to-donate/donate-today](https://southamptonhospitalscharity.org/ways-to-donate/donate-today) (please specify that you would like your donation to be used in the GICU).



## Feedback and concerns

We aim to keep improving our services, so we value your feedback. If you would like to give us some feedback, please ask one of our ward clerks for a form. Forms can also be found in the quiet room or you may be asked in person for your feedback by one of our volunteers. We appreciate your comments.

If you have any concerns during your visit, please speak to the nurse-in-charge, the ward leader or one of our matrons and they will address the matter. If your concerns have not been resolved by talking to the department, you can also contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) team.

Telephone: **023 8120 6325**  
Email: [pals@uhs.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@uhs.nhs.uk)







## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

General intensive care unit  
D level  
Centre Block  
Southampton General Hospital  
Tremona Road  
Southampton  
SO16 6YD

Telephone: **023 8120 6118** (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)  
For specific bedside telephone numbers, please see page 3.

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **[www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)**

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