

9th July 2020



██████████
Via email

E-mail: ██████████

Dear ██████████

Official Information Act (1982) Request

I write in response to your Official Information Act request, dated 23 June 2020. You requested the following information:

- **The protocols the DHB had/ have in relation to access for support people of patients in the public hospitals within your DHB region during Level 2 lockdown (between 14 May and 8 June), and Level 1.**

For context, CM Health Services provide health and support services to more than 569,400 people residing in South Auckland, both in hospitals and community settings, along with some regional and supra-regional specialist services (Burns, Plastics and Orthopaedics). Some services are provided to our community by other DHBs for the entire Auckland region. Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient/ ambulatory and community-based models of care.

We employ more than 7,500 staff; we see more than 118,000 presentations at the Middlemore Hospital Emergency Department each year and over 2,000 visitors daily to Middlemore Hospital

Context to visiting during COVID19 National Alert Levels

The New Zealand response to COVID-19 included a four-phase national alert system, as directed by the NZ Government. The second period at alert level 2 was from 14 May to 08 June. At the time of writing the country remains at Alert level 1. Normally, visiting policies are the decision of local DHBs. This is to ensure that visiting arrangements are fit for the local circumstances of each hospital. During Levels 4, 3 and 2 the Ministry of Health set the policy for visiting to align with the national alert levels that restricted movements within communities. The current status, in Level 1 is that we revert to locally determined visiting policies that are fit for local circumstances but must also take into account COVID19 precautions.

The safety of our community, our patients and staff has been our utmost priority as we work to maintain infection prevention and control and prepare for potential surges of COVID-19 throughout the on-going global pandemic. We aim to achieve a balance between managing the large numbers of people visiting our sites and infection disease prevention and control risks, ensuring patient and staff safety and the need for patients to have the support of their family/whanau. In addition, hospital occupancy is high during winter months (1 June – 31 September) where reducing risk of infectious disease spread is of high importance. We continue to review our visiting policy whenever there is a change in the status of the national levels. Please refer to the appendix for the full details of our policy during Level 2 and Level 1.

Level 2: Our Level 2 policy permitted patients to have one Key Support person who was from the same family/whaanau (bubble), for compassionate reasons. Patients requiring palliative care could have up to three visitors at a time. Children under 15 were not permitted during this level. Family meetings and carer educational sessions to support safe and timely discharge were also possible on a case by case basis. Outpatients were able to have a support person with them for appointments.

Level 1: At National Level 1 we introduced more flexibility to our visiting policy and procedure which means patients can nominate a key support person who can be with them between 8am and 8pm. Visits outside of these hours are considered on a compassionate basis on request to the Charge Nurse or Charge Midwife manager of the ward.

General visiting hours are between 2pm and 8pm. Patients may have up to two visitors at any one time during visiting hours. These visitors are in addition to the key support person. If more than two people want to visit, this must be rotated to minimise the impact of crowding and noise on other patients.

No children under 16 years may visit unless approved under compassionate grounds. If a child is approved to visit, they will be counted as one of the two visitors per patient.

Some services, because of patient safety and space limitations, have different arrangements which are specified in the attached policies. All visitors, including repeat visitors, are screened on entry and only those with a negative result to screening questions are permitted entry to the wards.

Managing the number of people visiting and entering the Counties Manukau Health sites is important to keep our environment safe for patients and staff and to provide contact tracing if required.

The visitor's guidelines for Level 1 are also available on our website.

<https://www.countiesmanukau.health.nz/for-patients-and-visitors/visitors-and-family/>

I trust this information satisfactorily answers your query. If you are not satisfied with this response you are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau DHB website.

Yours sincerely



Fepulea'i Margie Apa
Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health