

# **Welcome to the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU)**

**Information for parents and families**

Your child has been admitted to PICU because he or she needs close observation, monitoring and/or respiratory (breathing) life support. There are other wards besides PICU within the paediatric unit – Pinckney Ward, Nicholls Ward, Jungle Ward, Frederick Hewitt Ward, PSDU (the paediatric step down unit), the children’s emergency department (A&E) and the children’s outpatient unit. Your child may have come from one of these wards to PICU, or may go to one of these wards during their stay.

**At the entrance to all wards you will see a photo board with pictures of the staff your child may come into contact with. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of staff caring for your child.**

## What happens on PICU?

At the start of each daytime and night time shift, the nurse in charge will evaluate the needs of all of the children on PICU. He/she will then allocate an appropriately trained nurse to look after your child. It may be that the nurse looking after your child is also caring for other children on the unit. He/she will let you know who you can call if you are concerned about your child whilst the nurse is looking after another patient.

The doctors in charge of your child’s intensive care will be available to speak to you during the daytime, or by

involved in your child’s care meet to discuss your progress) occur three times daily at the following

- 8.30am
- between 11am and 1pm
- 5pm

You should expect a visit from medical staff in bed space after the 8.30am and 5pm meeting and a medical ward round between 11am and 1pm round. It is held away from the child’s bedside for medical professionals only. Your child’s nurse will be present when they are discussing your child.

The nursing and medical staff will update you for your child’s care as discussed in the ward round. The nursing staff will also alert you to any changes in your child throughout the day.

## When are meal times?

Children’s meal times are as follows:

Breakfast	8am to 9am (or when your child wakes up)
Lunch	Midday
Dinner	5pm

Please ensure that any food brought in is labelled with your child's name and the date that it was brought in, as we are legally required to dispose of food after a certain period of time.

Snack boxes are available for children – please speak with your nurse who can arrange for one to be ordered.

## Rest and wellbeing

We have a quiet period between 12pm and 2pm. During this time we keep lights and activities to a minimum. Visitors are also kept to a minimum and we request that they adhere to the quiet period as well.

## Are there teachers or play leaders on PICU?

Play leaders will visit your child if he/she is well enough. There is a parent's information board in the parent's area which offers more information and answers to any further questions you may have about this element of your child's care.

There is a school room located on the 5th floor outside Fredrick Hewitt ward, which is staffed by teachers and teaching assistants. If your child is well enough, he/she can attend the school during term time. Please speak to your

may wish to talk to someone about your thoughts, feelings, or you may prefer to get some practical advice. If you are talking to or supporting your child and/or their family, you think you would find it helpful to speak to a psychologist for any reason, please ask your

**The chaplaincy team** is here for everyone – you do not have to be religious to use this service. Some people value the opportunity to talk to someone about what is happening to them or their child, and how the changes they are facing. The team includes members of the Church of England, Free Church and Roman Catholic, Muslim and Jewish chaplains. The Spiritual Care Centre is located on the ground floor of Grosvenor wing and is available 24 hours a day as a place for quiet reflection.

The chaplaincy service for paediatrics is co-ordinated by Reverend Claire Carson. Please feel free to contact her on **8725 3285** (between 9am and 5pm) for further information. Outside of these hours, please ask a member of the nursing team to contact Reverend Carson. It is possible to contact other denominations through the chaplaincy team.

**Interpreters and Language Line** are available if you would like more information about your child's care in a language not your first language. Please speak to your nurse who will arrange this.

Lanesborough wing.

Meals and snacks are available from 7:30am to 7:45pm.

Meal times are:

- breakfast – 7:30 to 10am
- lunch – 11:45am to 2pm
- supper – 5:30 to 7:45pm.

Parents should make sure they are eating and drinking themselves to keep up their strength and stop from becoming dehydrated. There is a microwave and fridge for you to use if you need to bring in food from home.

Breastfeeding mothers are entitled to free food, please ask your nurse, healthcare assistant or reception clerk for meal vouchers.

There are drinks and food machines in the canteen and in the lift areas of Lanesborough wing. There are also sandwich boxes for patients which you can ask the ward staff for.

**Whistlestops:** this shop is at the main entrance to the hospital and sells magazines, stationary, confectionery and a small selection of toiletries. Opening times are Mon-Fri 8am to 8pm, Sat 9am to 7:30pm and Sun 9am to 6pm.

**Marks and Spencer's:** is situated in the main entrance and sells food, snacks, flowers and has a cafeteria.

**Bank:** there are cash machines in the main entrance next to Whistlestops and in the medical school on the ground

obtaining a swipe card and a locker key from nurse, healthcare assistant, or the ward receptionist. You will need to pay a £5 refundable deposit for the key. Please remember to return the card and key when your child leaves the unit so as not to create a problem for other parents wishing to access the area. You will be refunded to you when you return the card.

The nurse caring for your child will encourage your child to drink and rest during your child's stay on PICU. It is important, as it will help to restore your energy and get you well for when your child is more awake and ready to move to a general ward. You are welcome to bring your own food to eat in the parents' room or parents' lounge but we ask that parents do not bring hot food into PICU.

Breastfeeding mothers are entitled to a meal trolley or patient food trolley, which will be collected for you by ward staff. If the food from the trolley is not suitable for you, it can be obtained from the Ingredients Restaurant (located in the Lanesborough Wing). Snack boxes are also available. Breastfeeding mothers, should this be preferred, should ask your child's nurse, healthcare assistant, or receptionist if you require a meal or snack box.

**Discounts for parents**

You will be offered a car parking form entitling you to reduced-rate parking for one car, at either £8 or £10 per week. The parking form can be obtained from your child's nurse, healthcare assistant, or the ward

You can visit your child at any time and stay on the ward for as long as you wish. However, for safety reasons, we cannot have parent beds in the clinical area.

There are two parents' rooms near the ward and there are also facilities on Jungle Ward. The nurse in charge of the night shift will help you with your sleeping arrangements. Please respect any decision made as to where you are asked to sleep, as there is high demand for accommodation from all units within the hospital.

You may also be able to stay at Ronald McDonald House which is located within the hospital grounds and provides free 'home away from home' accommodation for families while their child is in hospital. These rooms can be organised during working hours, however please be aware there can be a long waiting list and preference is given to families who live further away. Rooms are allocated by the Ronald McDonald house manager. Please speak to your nurse or receptionist for more information.

## Are visitors allowed?

Parents are welcome at any time during the day or night, however, visiting may be restricted if your child has an infection which could be spread to others or if your child needs protection from infections.

Family and friends are also welcome between the hours of

paediatric psychologists. Please speak to your nurse if you think this would be helpful.

Due to limited space on the unit, we only allow one person to sit at your child's bedside at any one time. We ask that all visitors are considerate of other children on the ward who may be very poorly. TVs, musical devices and other noisy equipment should therefore be used at a low volume or with earphones, particularly after 8pm. Mobile phones may be used on the unit to text but photography is restricted to outside the unit.

## What about security?

On admission you will be asked to choose a password which you should quote when phoning the unit to see your child. This password, which should only be given to you by parents, ensures that information about you is only ever given to the correct people.

PICU and all paediatric wards are protected by a security system. To enter the ward, you will need to press a buzzer at the door and make yourself visible on the security camera. A member of staff will ask you who you are visiting. They will then release the door for you from the nurse's station.

When you leave the unit you will need to press a green exit button to the left of the door to release the door. For the safety of everyone on the ward, please

hands and/or using the alcohol gel every time you enter and leave both your child's bed space and the ward.

If extra infection control considerations are in place for your child, the nurses will also request that you wear an appropriately coloured apron when you are at your child's bed space.

## What will my child need in hospital?

We try to keep life on the unit as normal as possible for the children. Unfortunately some illnesses and their treatments can be very disruptive. In these cases, little reminders of home, such as favourite toys, music, photos and books can be helpful. You may also bring any special comforters that your child uses at home.

We would also ask that you bring in the following items:

- Nappies (if your child uses them).
- Barrier cream, such as Sudocrem® or Vaseline®.
- A wash bag containing toiletries such as soap/shower gel, a flannel, toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo and a hairbrush.
- Clothing, especially clean socks, underwear, loose fitting shirts, shirts, shorts and night clothes (loose clothing is more comfortable and easier to fit over drips and monitoring equipment).
- Slippers or shoes with non-slip soles – these are for when your child recovers and becomes more active.

Small amounts of change might be useful for from the hospital shop, but please do not bring valuables or large amounts of cash. We will have a disclaimer agreeing that St George's is not responsible for any loss or damage to your property.

## Privacy and dignity

The children's department at St George's Hospital is dedicated to ensuring that children of all ages have a high level of privacy and dignity. We try to create a safe environment for your child. This includes placing your child on a ward with other patients of the same age group. Although we try to consider all of these things, your child's clinical condition and needs may take priority.

You will be asked to sign a form to confirm that your child's privacy and dignity issues have been discussed with you. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to discuss them with your nurse or the nurse in charge.

## Getting better

We will encourage you to help out with your child's care when they begin to get better. Please let us know if you have any concerns about any elements of your child's care that you are unsure about. We have recently opened a new four to five bed **Paediatric Step Down Unit (PSDU)** on the 5th floor. This unit offers continuing care and observation from the ward until your child begins to get better. Your child will be able to return to their room when they are ready.

would like to receive further information about this, please speak to the nurse in charge of your child's care.

If your child stays at St George's, the ward that he/she is transferred to will depend on his/her needs.

- **Pinckney Ward** is primarily for children needing isolation (care away from others) because of the risk of infection.
- **Nicholls Ward** is primarily for children who are having/have had surgery or with neurological and neurosurgical conditions.
- **Jungle Ward** is for children needing day surgery/treatment only.
- **Frederick Hewitt Ward** is for children with medical conditions.

the nursing team. Even though the ward and often very busy, we are always happy to answer questions. Alternatively, you can contact the I **020 8725 1932** or **020 8725 2431**.

Information about contacting parent support groups, websites or national helplines is available in the room. If the information you require is not available, speak to your nurse who will be happy to help.

## Notes

Once your child is on the ward, the same rules apply with regards to having no more than two visitors at any one time and no hot foods or drinks at your child's bed space.

## What happens when my child is well enough to go home?

After your child is discharged from hospital, they may be required to attend a follow-up appointment at the Dragon Centre (the children's outpatient department) or at your local hospital. You should be given an appointment for this before leaving the hospital. If you do not receive an

or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### **NHS Choices**

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)