Your rights as an informal/voluntary patient
Patient Information Leaflet

Shining a light on the future
Name
Ward
Your Named Nurse is
Your Hospital Doctor is
Your Care Co-ordinator is
Date of Admission
Time

You have been admitted to hospital because you have agreed with the healthcare professionals caring for you (or you were too poorly to agree) that you need to be in hospital so your mental health needs can be assessed fully and you can be offered the treatment you need.

**What can I expect on admission?**
Staff will respect your privacy and dignity at all times.

During the first 24 hours of your admission, you will be allocated a Ward Doctor/Psychiatrist and a qualified Named Nurse. With your permission, the Ward Doctor will give you a physical examination and arrange any necessary tests you may need. This is to make sure that if you have any physical health needs, you can be offered the appropriate treatment. You will be informed of the results of any tests and treatment options.

Your Named Nurse and Ward Doctor will speak with you to assess your mental health needs and any other specific needs you may have. They may also wish to speak with your carers or relatives and will discuss this with you. Your Named Nurse will use this information to devise a care plan with you. Your care plan will set out the care package you will receive whilst you are in hospital and who will provide this.

If you have a care co-ordinator in the community, they will be part of the care planning process and visit you on the ward.

You will be given a ward booklet which explains most of the things you will need to know about the ward such as visiting times, meal times and items you are not allowed to bring onto the ward etc. If there is anything you are unsure or concerned about, please speak with a member of staff.

**How can I let others know I have been admitted?**
If there is anyone you wish us to inform about your admission, please tell your Named Nurse or the Nurse in Charge and they can arrange for you to contact them or contact them on your behalf. Ward staff will inform other professionals involved in your care that you have been admitted.

**Can I leave the ward?**
As an informal/voluntary patient, you have the right to leave the ward at any time although we do ask that you stay on the ward for the first few days so you and staff can get to know each other. Please note that all external ward doors are locked in the interests of security.
If you would like to go on day leave or overnight leave, you can discuss this with your Doctor or Named Nurse as this should be an arrangement between yourself, ward staff and your carer (where appropriate).

Please be aware that staff have a duty of care towards you, and the Nurse-in-Charge is expected to know where you are at all times. Staff are also required to assess you before you leave the ward. If they have concerns about you leaving the ward, they must arrange a further assessment. The outcome of this assessment will be discussed with you (and your carer where appropriate) and may result in you not being allowed to leave the ward. If you leave the ward without permission the police may be asked to find you and return you back to the ward.

**What treatment will I be offered?**
The treatment you are offered will depend upon your individual needs. You will be involved in deciding what treatment you receive with your Named Nurse and Doctor. This may include therapeutic group work, individual work or medication. As an informal patient, your consent is required before you can be given any treatment.

**Can I discharge myself?**
You have the right to discharge yourself from hospital at any time however we strongly recommend that you speak to your Named Nurse or Doctor before making the decision to leave. This is to ensure that you have any necessary treatment you may require and to enable staff to arrange any follow-up care you may need.

Please remember that staff have a duty of care towards you and are required to assess you before agreeing with your discharge. If they have concerns about you discharging yourself, they must arrange a further assessment. The outcome of this assessment will be discussed with you (and your carer where appropriate) and may result in you not being allowed to leave the ward.

If you wish to take your own discharge against the advice of the Doctor or Nurse, you may be asked to sign a ‘Discharged against Medical Advice’ form before you leave.

**Smoking**
From 2016 neither you nor your visitors are allowed to smoke while you are in the ward, or in any other building on the grounds of the hospital.

The Trust promotes and supports attempts to quit by providing support and advice and access to nicotine replacement therapies. Please talk to your named nurse to access these.

**Searches**
Staff may need to carry out personal and property searches of patients based on clinical need. Should the search be in relation to alcohol or illicit drugs then this may also involve the use of a sniffer dog. Staff can provide you with a leaflet about the Narcotics Search Dog.
People who can support you

• An Advocate
An advocate is someone who acts on your behalf to support you in making decisions whilst you are an informal/voluntary patient.

You may be able to have an advocate, contact the service that covers the area where you live.

For Newcastle area;
Advocacy Centre North, Higham House, Higham Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8AF
Tel: 0191 235 7013  Fax: 0191 230 5640
E-mail: advocacy@cvsnewcastle.org.uk
www.cvsnewcastle.org.uk

North Tyneside area;
Independent Advocacy North Tyneside, 62 Howard Street, North Shields, Tyne & Wear, NE30 1AF
Tel: 0191 259 6662  Fax: 0191 296 3767
E-mail: mail@independentadvocacynt.co.uk
www.iant.org.uk

Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland areas;
Mental Health Matters, Room 207 Aidan House, Sunderland Road, Gateshead Tyne and Wear, NE8 3HU
Tel: 0191 477 8790  Fax: 0191 490 0579
Tel South Tyneside: 0191 493 6914
E-mail: southtyneimha@mentalhealthmatters.co.uk
www.mentalhealthmatters.com

Northumberland;
Spiral Skills, Chevyside, Yetholm Place, Newbiggin Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 4EB
Tel: 0191 271 5353  Fax: 0191 271 4922
E-mail: info.spiral.skills@learningfirst.org.uk
www.spiralskills.org

Sunderland, Co-Durham
Rethink, Room 1D North Sands Business Centre, Liberty Way Sunderland, SR6 0QA
Tel: 0191 510 5051  Fax: 0191 510 5099
E-mail: sunderlandadv@rethink.org
www.rethink.org

• Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
The Patient Advice and Liaison Service is a confidential NHS service which acts independently to provide information and advice about all NHS services and help sort out any problems you may have quickly.
There are PALS Officers in most areas of the Trust. PALS Officers can be contacted in the following ways:

- **South of Tyne:** 0800 328 4397 or 0191 566 7074 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)
- **North of Tyne:** 0800 032 0202 (Mon-Fri 9am-4.30pm)

You can also write to PALS at:

**South of Tyne areas**
Patient Advice and Liaison Service  
Gatelodge  
Hopewood Park  
Waterworks Road  
Ryhope  
Sunderland  
SR2 0NB

**North of Tyne areas**
North of Tyne PALS  
FREEPOST RLTC-SGHH-EGXJ  
The Old Stables  
Grey’s Yard  
Morpeth  
NE61 1QD

Or ask a member of staff to contact the PALS Office on your behalf.

**References**
NTW(C)55pgn - MHA-PGN-04 – Informal/voluntary patient rights - V03 – November 2014
Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (e.g., Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre.
Tel: 0191 223 2545

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