



States of
Guernsey

Media Release

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Compulsory testing of birthing partners is among new safety measures for expectant parents attending the PEH to help safeguard all hospital services

Following a number of instances of visitors attending the hospital with COVID-19 symptoms, extra safety measures have been put in place for maternity services.

Birthing partners that are intending to accompany expectant mothers to Loveridge Ward are now required to have a COVID swab every 96 hours from one week before the due date. Both expectant mother and birthing partner are also being asked to self-isolate or at the very least minimise social contacts as much as possible during this time.

These new measures are due to birthing partners being among the very small number of people that are currently able to visit the hospital for non-clinical reasons.

At today's media briefing, President *for* Health & Social Care, Deputy Al Brouard confirmed that there had been issues caused by visitors that had attended the PEH when knowingly symptomatic.

'We are trying to protect the whole hospital to minimise the risk of any services being compromised by infection and then potentially not being available for the whole Bailiwick. In such an eventuality in the UK, patients could be re-directed to another hospital, but we only have one hospital. We need to protect our PEH,' said Deputy Brouard.

One birthing partner can still currently attend labours, non-theatre births and postnatal stays in Loveridge Ward, so long as all the new guidelines are strictly followed.

Birthing partners will be screened on entering the hospital and must have an admission swab and daily swab throughout their stay. They will also have their temperature checked regularly. And once they have arrived, they must remain on the ward for the duration of their stay – they are not free to come and go. Smokers will be offered nicotine replacement therapy and meals and refreshments will be provided on the ward. There will be the option for a birthing partner to sleep on the ward if need be.

Additional guidelines to be strictly adhered to our outlined in full below.

- Birthing partners who have been identified as a close contact of a positive case, or symptomatic case awaiting a test result will not be permitted to attend the unit.
- The wearing of face masks is compulsory throughout the time they are in the maternity unit. Disposable gloves must be worn until receipt of a negative result from their admission swab. Non compliance with this requirement will result in being asked to leave the unit by the midwife in charge.
- Birthing partners must not to come to the ward if they have **any** symptoms of COVID. If symptoms develop during their stay, they must inform the midwife in charge and immediately leave the ward, isolate and contact Public Health for advice. The midwife in charge will assess any breach of PPE and take action in conjunction with public health and infection prevention advice.
- Those not in side rooms will need to use the visitors bathroom, where they will need to use the provided wipes for facilities. Masks must be worn.
- Birth partners cannot stay throughout the induction process, but will be invited in when labour is establishing and can support during the postnatal stay.
- Birth partners will not be able to attend antenatal appointments, scans or theatre until deemed safe by hospital management and public health.

Deputy AI Brouard added: ‘We would not have made the difficult decision to implement these measures if we did not feel they were completely essential. We will only keep these measures in place as long as necessary.

‘We have a very passionate maternity team that are so sympathetic to how difficult and distressing these current restrictions can be. They are 100% committed to helping women and families have the best birthing experience possible, whatever the circumstances. It is what gets them out of bed in the morning, and the middle of the night. They are here for you 24/7.