



James Cook University Hospital



Addenbrooke's Hospital

## Things to consider when creating a parent and carer room

### Designing a room

#### ► What do parents need and want from the space?

Have you consulted parents about a possible room? You might undertake a survey, provide a whiteboard or a suggestion box. See our sample questionnaire for some examples of questions which might be asked.

#### ► How can the space be made to feel like a 'home from home'?

Is it possible to install soft lighting, furniture, comfortable seating, bookshelves etc. Could artwork be put on the walls? Can clinical items be replaced with more domestic ones? See our checklist for some suggestions. If framed artwork isn't possible, a good alternative can be murals or decals which can provide bright backgrounds, without a need to hang pictures.

#### ► Are there kitchen facilities to allow parents to make their own food and drinks?

Is it possible to include a dining area, crockery and kitchen appliances including fridges and microwaves?

*Having a space to sit and take a moment didn't make everything better but a cup of tea and a comfy chair just gives your mind a 5 min rest.*

Parent,  
John Radcliffe





### ► Where should the room be located?

Can you identify a space which is near to or on the ward? Parents are unlikely to wish to move too far from their children.

### ► Is there a space where parents can offer one another peer support? How can you encourage parents to do this?

Is it possible to reconfigure a space to allow parents room to chat? Could you offer an information pack which gives parents easy access to what they need to know about the hospital and the local area? Perhaps parents could add new information to this?



### ► What can parents do in the room?

Is there space for a parent to do some work? Is there internet access? Can the parents watch TV, or use a radio? Are there books or art materials on offer? Could newspapers or magazines be delivered to the room?

### ► How can space be maximised?

Often these rooms are quite small – how can space be used most effectively? Some rooms include breakfast bars or foldable desks to ensure the space can be used in as many ways as possible. Consider using colour or lighting to create separate areas. For example, two tone floors could show a distinction between kitchen and sitting areas. Try speaking with an architect or a designer who can advise on possible layout and bespoke options.

### ► Does the room have a window? How can you make it feel airy and homely?



Some hospitals have used lightboxes or artwork which features nature to bring the outside in. Consider adding artificial plants to bring a touch of nature into the room. If the views from the room are not particularly attractive, you could consider using window stickers or film which allow natural light to enter but provide a screen from any less attractive views. Consider the temperature of the room and whether windows can be opened? If not, will parents be able to control the temperature of the room in some other way? Consider lighting that parents can control themselves. Is it possible to add strip lighting below skirting boards or cupboards to provide low light at night?

### ► How will you ensure that parents know about, and can access, the room?

It's important that rooms are open access and remain open and unlocked at all times. How can this be managed? How will parents be told about the room?





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## Who needs to be involved?

### Who needs to be involved in the process?

Have you spoken with the senior staff from the relevant ward? Is the Hospital Executive Board involved? How will the Hospital Charity get involved? Have the Estates Team been consulted?

You might consider setting up a working or steering group to bring all the relevant stakeholders together to ensure everyone's thinking is aligned.

### Who will be responsible for looking after the room?

Is there a dedicated member of staff who is responsible for checking the room? They might need to refill tea and coffee supplies, replace milk or to identify items which need repairing or replacing. How often will the room be checked? Things like cutlery and mugs will always disappear over time. Consider partnering with a local firm, school or community organisation which could collect items for the room.

### Have you involved the Infection Control teams?

Try including the team from the start to ensure that they understand the vision for the room and can help you to realise it. We have found that in many cases it's possible to reach an excellent solution which adheres to infection control rules but also meets the need for a homely and welcoming space. Many hospitals have been able to use fabric or wood furniture after conversations with their infection control teams. Often it's a case of having an open conversation about what you're seeking to achieve.

### How will you work with your hospital's Estates Team?

We have found it is best for the Estates Team to be involved from the outset. Perhaps share these materials with the team to ensure that everyone is on the same page about what is being developed. The Estates Team will be able to offer valuable insights into what is possible in the space available and how long it is likely to take. The Estates Team will also be able to advise on their preferred suppliers which might help you consider items.

### Have you involved your Hospital Facilities Team?

The Facilities Team can support with understanding responsibilities for cleaning the room.

### Who should lead the project?

If possible, it's helpful to have a dedicated individual, either from the hospital charity or from the hospital staff, who can lead on the development of the room. This person can liaise with parents and clinicians to get a sense of what's required, can manage budgets and timelines, and can ensure that the Estates Team are kept updated.

*It's a lot more practical to fetch your own ready-made meals as going to the canteen can be costly if staying for a long period of time.*

Parent, Sheffield



*It's been a very long and difficult time and I can honestly say I would have been lost without the parents' room*

Parent, Birmingham



## Who else can support this work?

You might consider speaking with other hospital teams doing similar projects. They can advise on suppliers they have used, particularly for materials which have a more homely look and feel but which are also infection control compliant. True Colours has a good network of hospitals and would be happy to make introductions.

## Funding a parent and carer room

### What funding will you need for a new room and for its maintenance?

While the sky is the limit, when it comes to refurbishing or developing a room for parents/carers, we have found that it is possible to achieve some exceptional results for under £20,000. It is also important to consider how the room will be maintained – inevitably things will break or need replacing in years to come.

## What will you need?

### What needs to be in place when designing, developing and fundraising for a parent and carer room?

You may wish to consider the following elements:

- Do you need to apply for funding? Have you completed an application form?
  - Do you need to obtain quotes or estimates from preferred suppliers?
  - Have you consulted with architects?
  - Have you undertaken a formal or informal consultation with families?
  - Have you spoken with ward staff about their views?
  - Do you have baseline data on how parent and carer rooms are used at present? How can this inform your plans, and how can it be used to demonstrate impact once the work is complete?
  - Do you have evidence to support the need for a parent and carer room?
- We have produced a guide to the impact of these rooms which might be helpful.