

Forest ward paediatric intensive care unit (PICU)

Information for parents, carers
and visitors

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Welcome to PICU

Welcome to the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) at the Evelina London Children's Hospital. We are a unit that looks after children from babies to young people. We provide care for a variety of different conditions.

Our aim is to provide high quality care for all patients admitted to PICU and support patients and families through this emotional and stressful time.

The information contained in this booklet is to help you when your child is admitted into PICU.

Admission to PICU can cause significant emotional distress to children and their families. You may be worried by what you see, for your own child and other children on the unit. The environment, people, equipment and your child's situation may cause anxiety, and stress. Your child may look different when they are very sick and this can be very upsetting.

We are here to help with any questions and concerns you have, please ask the nurse looking after your child. We understand that you are being given a lot of information in a short space of time and it can be difficult to remember everything. We understand if you need to ask the same question again and if you do not understand something please ask for it to be explained a different way.

Where is PICU?

The Evelina London Children's Hospital is part of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and is located on the St Thomas' site.

The PICU is called Forest Ward and is on the second floor. It is accessible only via the 'Big lift', sign posted from the entrance to Evelina London. Walk past the red glass lifts and then turn left opposite the coffee shop. The lift is signposted from there. Please ask the reception desk if you are unsure and they will be happy to help.

As you arrive on the second floor, there is a set of double doors with an intercom system for access to PICU. Please ring the buzzer and wait for a staff member to open the doors. The doors in PICU are electric and open slowly.

When the unit is busy it can sometimes take a few moments to answer the door. We apologise for this and appreciate your patience in this matter.

Visiting your child and security

We ask you to remove your coats before entering the unit. There are hooks provided, located in the hand washing area (first right through the first set of double doors). No coats or large bags are allowed in PICU, but keep valuables with you.

IMPORTANT: Please use the alcohol gel when entering the unit or wash your hands in the sink.

We encourage you to be with your child as much as you can and parents are given access to the unit 24 hours a day. We also recommend that you take regular breaks and try to sleep at night.

All other visitors may visit between 9am-8pm. For noise, access and infection control purposes we ask that there are only two visitors at a bed space at a time. All parents and visitors must report to the reception desk to collect a visitor's pass which needs to be worn all the time.

At night and on weekends all parents and visitors are required to sign in and out at the Evelina London reception desk. For the safety of your child, we will not let friends or family visit in your absence without your prior permission. Please also let your bedside nurse or the nurse in charge know if there is anyone who you don't want to visit.

We are unable to give out information to anyone who is not a parent over the phone, so if a relative phones for an update we will ask you to take the call or ask the person to contact you directly. We will ask you to provide us with a **password** that you can share with your relatives if you are happy for information to be discussed.

What happens in PICU?

PICU provides specialist and intensive medical and nursing care. A child may be admitted after an operation or transferred from a children's ward or Emergency Department.

Parents have expressed that they have often been surprised and concerned by the equipment and amount of lines needed to treat their child. Your bedside nurse can explain what all the lines and wires are for, and we have found that this helps alleviate anxiety.

When you are ready, we will encourage you to help in your child's care. It can be a daunting but your nurse will help to support you. Your presence and voice helps your child and you can further help them by stroking their hair and holding their hand. They may have been given medications to make them sleepy but they can often still hear you.

If your child is stable enough, we may be able to get them out of their bed or cot to have a cuddle with you, even when they are being nursed on a ventilator.

There may be times, when a procedure is completed on the unit, and although it may not be your child, we will ask all parents and visitors to leave for this time.

Medical equipment

These pages explain more about the variety of monitoring and supportive equipment your child may be connected to. In order to protect the dignity of our patients', we have used a manikin to demonstrate the equipment used.

Monitoring

We monitor heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen levels and other relevant vital signs. These are represented by numbers and waves on the screen. Each of these will be set with individual parameters for your child, so an alarm will sound to alert us to any changes in these numbers. This does not always mean that something is wrong, the monitors are sensitive to movement, and so if your child is moving the alarms may sound. If you have any questions about the monitoring, then please ask your bedside nurse.



Breathing Tube

Children in intensive care may need some help with their breathing. A breathing tube, called Endotracheal tube (ETT), is inserted into the nose or mouth down into the lungs.

The tube might not be very comfortable for your child, but the intensive care team will give them medicines to make them sleepy and comfortable (sedated). While the breathing tube is in place your child will not be able to make any sounds when they speak or cry and they will need assistance to cough. If your child normally has a dummy then they can use this to provide comfort.

Ventilator

Your child's breathing tube will be connected to a ventilator, which supports their breathing. The air/oxygen your child receives goes through a humidifier to warm and moisten it. Your child may need secretions cleared from their breathing tube and lungs, by a procedure called suctioning.



Nasogastric Tube (NGT)

A plastic tube is inserted into the nose and passes into the stomach. Expressed breast milk, formula, or special feed and medicines can be put down the NGT whilst your child is unable to eat/drink orally.

Intravenous and arterial lines

A small plastic tube (cannula) is inserted into a vein to allow medicines and fluids to go straight into the blood stream.

Sometimes we need to insert a cannula into a larger vein in the neck or groin which allows for multiple medicines to be given at the same time and blood samples to be obtained. This is called a central venous line. A small plastic cannula may also be inserted directly into an artery to monitor blood pressure.



Infusion Pumps

Medications that need to be delivered at a set rate are given via an infusion pump.

Your child may receive fluids for hydration, sedative medicines and sometimes drugs to support the heart.



Splints

Depending on the age of your child, children in PICU often have arm splints. These are used to keep their arms straight so they do not pull at their breathing tube or wires.

Although the splints restrict movement they are not uncomfortable and are worn for their own safety and are removed as soon as we are able.

Urinary Catheter:

A small plastic tube is inserted directly into the bladder. This is used to collect urine to monitor how much urine is being passed by your child hourly. It collects in a bag by the side of the bed.



X-ray:

X-rays are often taken daily for children with breathing tubes in place. This checks that the breathing tube is in the correct place and allows us to see the lungs. It also allows us to see that the NGT is in the right place.

Who will look after your child?



Nursing staff

The nursing staff work 12 hour day and night shifts. There is always a nurse in charge on each shift. Each bed space will usually have one nurse to look after them. Depending on the child's needs the number of nurses caring for a child may change.

Medical and Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP) team

We have a large team of doctors and ANPs who will care for your child. The team meet to discuss every child each morning and make a plan for the day. You will be informed of this plan. They perform a lunchtime and evening ward round where they will assess your child and make changes to the plan if needed. You are more than welcome to be present and ask questions during this time, however we do ask that visitors step away.

Some parents find it useful to write down any questions or concerns that they have to help remind them when the doctor is present. There is space at the back of this booklet for you to write notes. The doctors will carry out a handover to the next team at the end of their shift but this is not a ward round.

Physiotherapists

We have a dedicated team of physiotherapists on the unit. They primarily provide respiratory physiotherapy, helping to remove secretions in your child's lungs to improve their breathing, this often makes them better quicker.

Some children may also benefit from movement and the physiotherapy team will ensure these treatments start at the earliest opportunity.

Play specialist

Our play specialist can provide toys, music, DVDs and a variety of different games for your child and their siblings. They can provide emotional support to you, help prepare your child for procedures, familiarise them with equipment and provide distraction therapies.

Dietitians

Most children on PICU are on medicines to make them sleepy and on a breathing machine, which means they can't eat/drink as normal. However, we can give special milk through a tube, straight into their tummy. The dietitian will advise on the best feed for your child.

Pharmacists

A pharmacist visits the unit daily to look at the medicines your child has been prescribed, and order in any special medicines they might need. They are available for any questions you might have regarding your child's medicines.

Infection Control

The hospital has strict infection control procedures to protect all the patients, visitors and staff. Removing coats and washing your hands helps to reduce the risk of infection.

Please ensure that all your visitors are aware of the infection control procedures. Visitors are not permitted to visit if they are unwell. Please speak to the nurse in charge if you are unsure if it is safe for you to visit.

You will notice that staff will perform thorough hand washing before and after any procedures with your child. They will use gloves and coloured aprons, goggles and facemasks. Please feel free to ask staff if they have washed their hands and we may ask you or your visitors if you have washed your hands. There is a bottle of alcohol gel at each bed space and entrances to PICU.

Sometimes we have to isolate children with certain medical conditions. We have cubicles for this with signs on the door to explain who may enter the room. Your nurse will explain further this if it is needed.

Diaries and photos

We will offer you a diary for you to keep a record of your child's progress. Your nurses will be happy to write in this if you wish them too. Parents often find this helpful, and can also assist in explaining this time to your child once they are better or old enough.

You are welcome to take photographs of your child in PICU, which can also help your child when they have left PICU and can be shown to siblings. Please be mindful of other patients and the staffs' privacy when taking photos and only take photos of your own child. If you would like to take a photo with a member of staff you may ask them for permission to do so.

Transfer to ward

Once your child no longer requires intensive care treatment they will be transferred to a children's ward, either in Evelina London or in your local hospital. This transition will only be made once the medical and nursing teams think that your child is ready to move.

If your child is transferred to Evelina London, when they are on the ward your child will be nursed alongside more than one child at a time (your nurse may be caring for your child as well as other children). We will try to help you prepare for this by encouraging you to take over a lot more of their normal care, such as changing nappies or feeding them. You may of course discuss any concerns that you have with the bedside nurse or doctors.

Before your child is transferred we can try to arrange a visit to the ward if you feel this would be helpful.

Please ask for the **When your child is transferred from PICU** booklet if you have not already received one.

Mobile phones

To keep levels of noise to a minimum for our children, please ensure all mobile phones are turned to silent. We ask that if you need to make or take a phone call that you please leave the unit to do so. Texting is allowed.

Facilities

There is an interactive, electronic information screen for visitors near the reception desk, you may find this useful. It contains information on the unit and local facilities.

Parent accommodation

We endeavour to ensure you are able to stay in the hospital with your child however unfortunately we have limited accommodation available within our building. There is a parents' suite of bedrooms on the first floor, and we try our best to ensure that you can stay in one of our rooms or be given a bed on the ward upstairs for the first 48 hours. Rooms are allocated daily and as fairly as possible.

Unfortunately we cannot accommodate siblings in these rooms and we ask you to make other arrangements for them. These rooms can only be used while your child is in PICU and after discharge to the ward they must be vacated.

The rooms are cleaned before 11am daily, so if you have been asked to give back your room key, please can you leave your room by this time.

If your room is cold or there is not enough linen or towels please let your bedside nurse know so that they can arrange for more to be provided.

There is also some accommodation available at **Gassiot House** (just outside the entrance to St Thomas' Hospital) and at **Ronald McDonald House** (www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/ronaldmcdonald) Please ask your child's nurse for more information about accommodation.

We work hard to ensure that we accommodate you as comfortably as possible within our resources.

Visitors and parents' room

We have a visitors' room next to PICU for families to use when visiting, where food and drinks can be prepared. It is also used as a sitting room. There are a small selection of toys in this room for siblings and young visitors. We ask that you keep this area clean and tidy so all visitors to PICU can use it.



There is also a second parents' room in the parents' suite on floor one. This is available for use by all parents. There are comfy chairs where we encourage you to rest.

Breastfeeding room

There is a room dedicated for breast feeding/ expressing mothers. The room is equipped with breast pumps, sterilizers, comfortable chairs and areas to store expressing kits. If you are able to continue



expressing milk please do so, we can store your milk on the unit. Expressed breast milk can be stored for up to three months in the freezer and once defrosted, used for 24 hours. Please clearly label your bottles with your child's name and the date and time the milk was expressed. Labels are provided in the room or please speak to the nurse caring for your child if you need more.

On discharge please ask your bedside nurse for any expressed milk that you may still have in the freezer.

Food and drink

Tea and coffee making facilities are provided in the parents' room, if supplies run out please let someone know so it can be restocked. The parents' room is equipped with a fridge and microwave for use by visitors. Please label any food you bring in with your name and the date and keep the area clean and tidy.

There are two water coolers situated in the unit, please help yourself.

There are coffee shops on the ground and third floors in the Evelina.

In St Thomas' hospital there is a restaurant 'Shepherd's Hall', and Tom's café open Mon-Fri 8am-3pm or a 24 hour café in St Thomas' entrance as well as other shops. Please do not consume hot food on the unit, but we allow hot drinks with lids.

Mothers, who are breastfeeding or expressing milk for their child are entitled to three meal vouchers a day. Ask your nurse for these vouchers.

Support for families

Being on PICU can be a very difficult for families. It can be an incredibly stressful time and parents have described feelings of anxiety, lack of control and anger. These feelings can be difficult to express to family and friends as well as to the staff directly looking after your child. There are a variety of other people who can help you and your family at this time.

Counsellor team

It can help to talk things over in confidence with an understanding outsider. The hospital offers a counselling service which is open to all families. If you would like more information, please take one of the counselling leaflets from the parents' room where you can contact them yourselves. If you feel that you would like someone else to make contact with the counselling service then the bedside nurse will be happy to do it for you.

Liaison health visitor

Hospital health visitors come to PICU Monday to Friday and keep a record of all children that are admitted to hospital. Their job is to link with your local health visitor and can offer practical advice when needed. They also make contact with school nurses to make sure that your child's school is aware of the admission to PICU.

Spiritual health care team

The chaplaincy team can provide support, advice and guidance to help you cope with each day. The Trust's spiritual health care team supports people of all faiths, and those of no faith. Multi-faith chaplains are available to visit you on the ward if you so wish. Ask your child's nurse to contact the team for you.

Social worker

Sometimes our team may feel that referring you and your child to your local social care team may be of benefit to you. Sometimes they can offer you and your family valuable support and advice, especially if your child has complex healthcare needs or a disability.

Hospital school

Evelina London has its own school. It has classrooms for early years, primary and secondary children. Each visit is tailored for the individual needs for the child and teachers may visit children at their bedside if they are unable to go to the school.

Translators

If English is not your first language and you are not confident in speaking English or only speak a little, interpreters are available. We can also use language line, an over the phone translating service. Please let your bedside nurse know if you would like to access an interpreting service.

Parking

We encourage parents to leave their cars at home and use public transport where possible as there is limited parking and it is very costly. If you have been admitted to PICU as an emergency, we can organise for you to receive 24 hours of parking without charge until you find alternative parking. Please ask your bedside nurse to alert our Security Team to your car.

There is some limited parking for parents who are resident in Ronald McDonald House but this should be agreed beforehand.

Congestion Charge

Please be aware that Evelina London falls within the Congestion Zone which operates from 7am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

To pay the congestion charge or for more information ring 0343 22 222 or visit www.tfl.gov.uk

Some things you may need

For you

- Money/bank card
- Mobile phone and charger
- Pay the congestion charge

For you and your child

- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Toiletries
- Hairbrush
- Clothes for yourself and your child
- Underwear and socks
- Nappies
- Dummy if your child has one
- Your child's favorite toy/comforter/book
(labelled with their name)
- Any items of religious importance to you and your child
- Glasses/contact lenses & solutions/hearing aid
- Medication for you and your child
Your child's red book (personal health records)

Further information

Useful Telephone Numbers

PICU Reception 020 718 84500 or 020 718 84501

Bed spaces 1-7 020 718 85888

Bed spaces 8-12 020 718 84504

Bed spaces 13-17 020 718 84505

Cubicle 18 0207 18 89721

Cubicle 20 020 7188 84500 (option 5)

Knowledge and Information Centre

The knowledge and information centre (KIC) is on the ground floor of North wing in St Thomas'. There is public access to computers with internet access. Open on weekdays 8am till 6pm. They have a wide range of leaflets relevant to all hospital stays.

Charities, Support Groups and Funds

If you need further support, please speak to your child's nurse or the nurse in charge, as we may recommend charities, support groups and funds that might be of benefit to you and your family.

Feedback

In order to improve the way in which we look after and support children and families we seek feedback from yourselves and visitors. There are parent surveys at the desk. We would appreciate if you would take a few minutes to fill one out and return it to the nurse or ward clerk.

If you have any concerns then you may speak with the Nurse in Charge, Consultant or our Matron. Please be assured that we will treat all information confidentially and this will in no way affect your child's care.

It is often useful to write down any questions that you may have, please use the space on the back page of this booklet if you would like to.

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

e: letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

St Thomas' Hospital

Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7EH

AMS
Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust

Tel: 020 7188 7188



From the main entrance of Evelina London, walk towards the back of the building. Following the wheel chair signs. Pass through the double doors and take the 'Big lift' up to the second floor.

