

# Mobile Communications Policy

This policy supersedes:

**CORP/HSFS 16 v.2 - Mobile Communications - Interference with Medical Equipment**

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**Mobile Communications Policy****Amendment Form****To be completed when reviewing an existing APD**

Please record brief details of the changes made alongside the next version number. If the APD has been reviewed **without change**, this information will still need to be recorded although the version number will remain the same.

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Brief Summary of Changes</b>	<b>Author</b>
Version 3	October 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy title change</li> <li>• Amendment form and contents sheet added</li> <li>• Items re-numbered throughout</li> <li>• 1 - updated references to 'Using Mobile Phones in NHS Hospitals'</li> <li>• 2 - section re-written to take account of above guidance</li> <li>• 14 - additional supporting information on Trust implications</li> <li>• Added new and removed outdated references</li> <li>• Additions and deletions to the list of restricted areas.</li> <li>• Updated list of permitted areas</li> </ul>	Andrew Leverton
Version 2	January 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Item 1 - Reference made to the Department of Health's recommendations in "Use of mobile phones in Hospitals and other NHS premises.</li> <li>• Item 18 - clearer guidance relating to the impact of using Cellular telephones based on the above recommendations.</li> <li>• Items 19 &amp; 20 - separated and numbered paragraphs</li> <li>• Added references</li> <li>• Additions to the list of restricted areas.</li> <li>• Added list of permitted areas</li> <li>• Added appendix showing permitted use sign</li> </ul>	Andrew Leverton

## Mobile Communications Policy

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## Mobile Communications Policy

### 1. Introduction

Information received from the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) as a result of an in-depth study of the problem, has indicated that a wide range of mobile communication equipment can cause interference with sensitive Electro Medical Equipment and could therefore have a serious impact on patient care. This should be balanced with 'Using Mobile phones in NHS Hospitals January 2009, published by the Department of Health, which recommends that trusts should recognise that:

*'The working presumption should be that patients will be allowed the widest possible use of mobile phones in hospitals, including on wards, where the local risk assessment indicates that such use would not represent a threat to patients' own safety or that of others, the operation of electrically sensitive medical devices in critical care situations and the levels of privacy and dignity that must be the hallmark of all NHS care.'*

While the focus is on the usage of mobile phones, other types of communication and recording equipment are widely available and could potentially be used in the hospital environment. Therefore this policy seeks to give advice and direction on how to manage these various technologies while ensuring maximum benefit and minimum risk.

### 2. Cellular (Mobile) Phones (Analogue and Digital)

Mobile phones are now very popular and are commonly used by visitors, sales representatives and contractors as well as staff, and patients. Whenever anyone is in hospital, or receiving social or health care, communication with family and friends becomes an essential element of support and comfort. Communication is much easier today with the widespread use of mobile phones and their integrated functionality such as text messaging and e-mailing.

It's acknowledged these have some potential to interfere with medical equipment at very short range. Their use should therefore be restricted in areas where high-risk equipment is routinely used. These areas are listed in Appendix 1.

Appropriate signs are displayed in all such areas as per Appendix 2.

Medical and Nursing staff should be aware of the potential interference of mobile phones when transporting critical patients between restricted areas, and ensure that any medical equipment in use is monitored more closely during the transfer.

Following guidance issued earlier this year and results of a trust membership survey, **each ward will display a notice indicating when the use of mobile phones on the ward is permitted.** Use of mobile phones outside of these times will be at the discretion of the ward manager. This will allow greater freedom for patients and visitors while giving the ward a degree of control over excessive or disruptive use. Ward managers and staff should encourage the use of day rooms for patients and relatives using mobile phones to reduce the noise pollution in the bedded areas. Phones should be requested to be set to silent to avoid offensive or disruptive ring tones.

**The use of mobile phones in areas where clinical procedures are taking place is not permitted.**

All mobile phones will require periodic charging using a mains powered charger. Mains chargers are classed as portable appliances and must not be used within the trust. Patients, visitors and staff are requested to have their mobile phones charged at home and brought back in if required.

### **3. Wide Area Emergency Services Radios (Ambulance, Fire, Police)**

These are the most likely to cause problems because of their higher power transmitters and lower operating frequencies. **They will only be used in an emergency and never within designated restricted areas.** The emergency services have been informed of these restrictions.

### **4. T.E.T.R.A. (Terrestrial Trunked Radio System)**

The police force have changed their communications equipment from the high power two-way radios that were in use, to a terrestrial trunked radio system. This system operates in a similar way to mobile phones, and as such they have the potential to interfere with sensitive apparatus such as medical equipment. The M.H.R.A. have conducted studies and conclude that T.E.T.R.A. handsets pose a similar level of risk to mobile phones.

Therefore the use of T.E.T.R.A. handsets is permissible on the Trusts premises subject to the conditions imposed for the use of mobile phones.

Where an urgent call is placed for officers to attend an incident in an area subject to the restrictions, these officers must consult with Medical /Nursing staff on entering the area, whose responsibility it will be to ensure that any relevant medical equipment in operation is effectively monitored while the officer is in the vicinity.

#### Transmit inhibit

Modern T.E.T.R.A handsets have a transmit inhibit mode that allows the handsets to receive calls but prevents the automatic periodic transmission of the handset to the base station. To minimise the risk of interference with medical equipment the transmit inhibit function must be activated when entering Trusts premises.

**In the case of emergency services dealing with an on site incident, the risk of interference should be treated as secondary to the risks associated with managing the incident.**

### **5. Hospital Radios for Security, Car Park and Community Personnel**

#### **• Security and Car Park Personnel**

Some short-range radio transmitters are now available without the need for licences and depending on the power output and operating frequency these may be classified as cellular telephones for the purposes of this policy.

These devices may be used subject to the conditions outlined for mobile phone use above. Operating Procedures must be written and adopted by the users of these devices to ensure compliance to the policy.

**The Telecommunications Systems Manager and the Medical Technical Services Manager must approve the introduction of such equipment.**

- Community Personnel

Community personnel may use either handheld radios or mobile phones, consideration should be taken when entering any patient's home where sensitive electronic medical equipment is known to exist and may be in use. Use in close proximity to medical devices may cause interference issues.

**6. Hospital Bleep System ( Two Way Pagers)**

Due to their low transmitting power, these are deemed to be safe to use in all areas.

**7. Computer Radio Local Area Networks (R.L.A.N.)**

These are low powered transmitters used to link personal computers. There is no evidence to suggest that they cause interference with medical equipment and therefore there is no restriction on their use.

**8. Portable Multifunctional Communication Devices e.g. Blackberry**

These are devices that connect to the cellular telephone network and provide telephone, email and data management services via a small Personal Digital Assistant (P.D.A.). As they communicate via the cellular telephone network their use should be subject to the policy covering mobile phones.

Some of these devices automatically switch connection between the hospitals Radio L.A.N. and the cellular network, they must be treated as mobile phones.

**9. Cordless Telephones**

These are low powered devices connected to the internal telephone network. As their power output is low the risk of interference is reduced. The use of such equipment must be dependent on an appropriate risk assessment. **The Telecommunications Systems Manager must approve the introduction of such equipment.**

**10. Loan Equipment**

Patients who are given electronic medical equipment for use outside the Trust's premises should be advised of the hazards of using transmitting equipment i.e. mobile phones, two-way radios, radio controlled toys and models and amateur radio etc. in close proximity to the equipment. This advice should be recorded as part of the equipment training and care package and a local risk assessment carried out.

## 11. Patients and Visitors

Patients and visitors should be made aware of restrictions by such means as patient information leaflets etc. Suggested wording:

### *Use of Mobile Phones on Trust premises*

*In line with current with Department of Health guidelines the Trust has identified restricted area's where mobile phones should be switched off to avoid potential interference with medical equipment. Patients and visitors are therefore asked to switch off their mobile phones before entering areas that are identified by signs.*

*If operating mobile phones in other areas, please use sensitively and with consideration to other patients and visitors. Wherever possible please switch phones to silent mode to restrict noise levels.*

*Please do **NOT** take any photographs using the camera facility as this may inadvertently breach patient confidentiality.*

*Each ward area will have a notice indicating when mobile phones may be used, please abide by these times as they are there to provide privacy, dignity and a peaceful environment for all patients. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.*

## 12. Contractors

Contractors working on the Trusts sites must also be made aware of the restrictions in the use of mobile phones in certain areas. This requirement must be referenced in any contract detail, specification or order raised for work.

## 13. Outside Media Broadcasts

In the event of outside media broadcast requests, the main concern centres on the portable two way radio's used for communication between broadcast staff. Such equipment must be assessed in line with this policy before the equipment is allowed to be used on Trust premises.

Parking of broadcast vehicles that may be equipped with transmitters, must be such that it does not present a risk of interference to medical equipment that may be in use in adjacent clinical areas.

## 14. Implications Arising from the Use of Mobile Phones on Trust Premises

**This policy does not confer the right for staff to use mobile phones in approved areas, staff should be reminded by means of team meetings and local management procedures that the use of personal cellular telephones should be kept to a minimum (preferably emergency only) and be made with due consideration to other staff, patients and visitors.**

Patients and visitors should be reminded in local leaflets and notices to use their mobile phones with due consideration to others. All patients have a right to and a need for, a peaceful environment, both day and night, uninterrupted by a number of ring tones whose noise is disrespectful of their privacy and dignity. In addition some ring tones may be confused with Medical device alarms or be offensive. Therefore, mobile phones must be set to vibrate mode to restrict noise levels and calls should be made or taken outside patient areas.

Ward and department managers must assess the implications of this policy in their own area; carrying out a local risk assessment which will inform how best to manage this policy in their area. This assessment will include but not be limited to:

- Patient Privacy and Dignity**
- Patient Confidentiality**
- Child protection**
- Nuisance**
- Potential for interference with Medical Devices**

**All of the above have legal implications**

Further guidance is available from 'Using Mobile Phones in NHS Hospitals' - January 2009 published by the Department of Health.

#### **15. Camera Facility**

The use of the camera facility available on most modern mobile phones is strictly forbidden on Trust premises, as this could inadvertently breach patient confidentiality.

#### **16. Trust Owned Equipment**

Trust staff issued with mobile phones as part of their work, are reminded that it is against the law to use or operate these devices while driving, unless an approved 'hands free' kit has been installed. See Appendix 4.

**17. References**

- A. *Safety Notice SN 9706 - "Mobile Communications: Interference with Medical Devices ". Medical Devices Agency April 1997.*
- B. *Device Bulletin DB 9702 - "Electromagnetic Compatibility of Medical Devices with Mobile Communications". Medical Devices Agency March 1997.*
- C. *Safety Notice SN 2001(06) – Update on electromagnetic compatibility of medical devices with mobile communications: TETRA (Terrestrial Trunked Radio System) and outside media broadcasts from hospital premises.*
- D. *Information and Communications Technology Unit (ICTU) Guidance note HGN (p) 33 Issue 2 Radio Interference with Medical Devices.*
- E. *The Stewart report- the Governments response to the report from the independent expert group on mobile phones.*
- F. *Using Mobile Phones in NHS Hospitals - January 2009 - Department of Health*
- G. *Standards for Better Health, Core Standard 1 Safety Standard C4b*

**Appendix 1****Restricted Areas**

The following areas on all Trust owned sites have been designated as restricted areas, signs are in place to remind:

All Operating Theatres

Intensive Care Units/High Dependency Units

Neonatal Units / Special Care Baby Units- treatment bays

Coronary Care Units

Maternity Units- delivery rooms

Accident and Emergency Units/ Minor Injuries Units- Treatment rooms

Endoscopy / Urology Units- Treatment rooms

Outpatient Treatment Areas

Rehabilitation Treatment areas

Renal unit

Other areas will be added if appropriate as the Trust develops.

**Permitted Areas**

These are areas where mobile phones maybe used with care and consideration to other hospital staff patients and visitors. These areas are designated with signs as shown in Appendix 3.

Coffee lounges and restaurants  
Stair wells and main corridors  
Foyers  
Main waiting areas  
Wards areas and day rooms subject to local time restrictions

Appendix 2

Appendix A



**SWITCH OFF  
ALL MOBILE  
TELEPHONES**

ref: DoH SAB(94)49

Supplied by QualiTel Ltd



Mobile phones  
and GPRS  
systems can be  
used in this area

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**Trust Policy - Use of Mobile Phones while Driving****Government Legislation**

Government legislation implemented on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003 made it an offence to hold a Mobile phone while driving - unless it can be operated without being held by hand.

The new law prohibits Drivers from holding a Mobile phone at any time even if they are using a Handsfree kit to talk and listen.

Drivers are still required to comply with existing legislation to "have proper control of the vehicle". Drivers can therefore be found guilty of careless or dangerous driving even if they are not holding the handset.

In order to be certain of not committing an offence, drivers should avoid holding or using a mobile device at anytime or for any purpose whatsoever whilst driving.

Anyone caught breaking the new legislation faces a fine and points on their licence. Causing death by careless driving carries a custodial sentence of up to 5 years.

**The Trusts policy is clear: -**

- **Never use a handheld mobile phone when driving.**
- **Abide by the laws, including the Highway Code, governing the use of Mobile phones.**
- **It is the Drivers responsibility to drive safely.**

**Policy Acknowledgement****Trust Policy - Use of Mobile Phones while Driving**

I am aware of the Government Legislation effective from the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003, and understand the Trust policy in relation to the use of mobile phones whilst driving.

Name ..... Signature .....

Department..... Date .....

Please return to: Switchboard Clerical Office, Doncaster Royal Infirmary

Taken from MHRA website