



## Political Visits Protocol

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## HSE protocol on political visits

The HSE frequently receives requests for political parties to visit services and hospitals. The following guidelines may be useful to managers.

- Party Leaders and Oireachtas members' requests to visit HSE services/hospitals are to be facilitated where possible and arranged through the CEO/Chief Officers office. All political parties must be given the same level of access if requested.
- Any impending visits are to be notified to the Hospital Group CEO/CHO Chief Officer and the Communications Office.
- Politicians must be advised that some areas may not be accessible including; high dependency and intensive care units; maternity services; resuscitation areas and areas where patients are very ill.
- The Party Leader is to be greeted on arrival and accompanied by the General Manager and a senior clinical director (if available).
- During an election period, officially declared candidates from the service/hospital constituency may accompany the Party Leader during the visit.
- It must be communicated to the Party that numbers must be kept to a minimum to reduce disruption to patients and to lessen the risk of infection.
- During an outbreak situation for example norovirus, the visitors must be made aware of the restrictions. The visit may have to be cancelled or shortened depending on clinical advice.
- Media representatives (print or broadcast) cannot accompany the party around the service visit; this is the normal policy and relates to patient confidentiality. However media interviews will be facilitated by the hospital or service. Please ensure that there is a suitable room for interviews.
- Unscheduled visits are to be brought to the attention of the Hospital/Service Manager and politicians are to be advised that the protocol is to arrange a visit in advance through the normal channels. If a party leader or senior politician arrives unannounced the Chief Officer or CEO should try to facilitate the visit if possible and if the hospital does not have visiting restrictions due to flu, norovirus etc. This decision is left to the discretion of the local management.