



Virtual Wards

The care of hospital,
the comfort of home.



This booklet tells you what you can
expect if you choose to receive your
hospital care at home in a Virtual Ward.

What is a Virtual Ward?

A Virtual Ward is an option for some patients to receive the care they need at home instead of in the hospital. Virtual Wards support patients to receive virtual care, monitoring and treatment in their own home. This is possible because of technology. You will stay under the care of the hospital team while you are a patient in a Virtual Ward.

Who is the Virtual Ward for?

Your care team may suggest Virtual Ward care to you if:

- ▶ you are in hospital with certain cardiovascular or respiratory conditions
- ▶ your care team feels that your condition can be safely managed at home with the help of remote monitoring.

What are the benefits of receiving care in a Virtual Ward?

Receiving hospital care in the comfort of home may:

- ▶ lessen your risk of a hospital-acquired infection
- ▶ lower the costs and inconvenience of travelling to the hospital for family or carers
- ▶ lower your chance of needing another in-patient hospital stay in the near future
- ▶ improve your recovery. Being at home in a familiar environment, where you may have friends, family or pets can help improve your mental and physical health
- ▶ improve your satisfaction with the care you receive.



What happens if I am suitable for the Virtual Ward?

Your care team will tell you and your family or carer about being a patient on a Virtual Ward. You and your family or carer can ask any questions you may have.

You will have a choice to be a patient in a Virtual Ward. If you do not want to be a patient in the Virtual Ward, you will continue to receive care in the hospital in line with your agreed care plan.

Once you are a patient in the Virtual Ward, you can change your mind at any time. Speak to your Virtual Ward team if you want to go back into hospital.

What happens if I choose to move to the Virtual Ward?

Before you leave the hospital

Care plan: Your care team, including your consultant, will agree a personalised care plan with you before you leave the hospital. Your family or carer can be part of this conversation. When you are in the Virtual Ward, you are under the care of the hospital. The Virtual Ward team will tell your GP that you will be going home to receive care in the Virtual Ward. You do not need to contact your GP yourself.

Monitoring kit: You will receive a Virtual Ward “monitoring kit”. The kit contains a tablet computer with a Virtual Ward app and the following devices:

- ▶ a blood pressure monitor
- ▶ a device (pulse oximeter) to measure your heart rate, oxygen level and breathing rate
- ▶ a thermometer to measure your temperature.



Depending on your health condition, you may also receive a weighing scales, an ECG monitor or a peak flow meter.

The Virtual Ward team will show you, and your family or carer, how to use the tablet, app and devices before you leave the hospital. They will also tell you what measurements to take and how often you need to take them.

Planned check ins: The Virtual Ward team will agree with you how often they contact you. They will contact you by video or phone call, as agreed. It is important that the Virtual Ward team can contact you when they need to.



When you are at home

Monitoring kit: Each device in the Virtual Ward “monitoring kit” also comes with instructions. You should read these carefully before you start using the kit. There are also some videos that explain how to use the devices. They are saved in the app on your Virtual Ward tablet.

Measurements: The Virtual Ward team will tell you what measurements you need to take. You will need to measure your vital signs, such as your blood pressure, temperature and pulse. The measurements are automatically sent to the Virtual Ward team. Your measurements are only visible to the Virtual Ward team and those directly involved in your care. If you are having difficulties with the technology, you can enter the measurements manually. If you forget to do this, you will get a call or a message to remind you. Your Virtual Ward team will be able to see your health information and vital signs on their computer system straight away. They will monitor your

health remotely 24 hours a day while you are in the Virtual Ward.

Questionnaire: You will need to answer regular health questionnaires in the Virtual Ward app on the tablet. The information you enter is automatically sent to the Virtual Ward team. If you forget to do this, you will get a call or a message to remind you.

Planned check ins: The Virtual Ward team will contact you by video or phone call, as agreed. They will also contact you if they are concerned about your vital signs or answers to the questionnaires. You can talk to the Virtual Ward team about any change in your health or personal circumstances that may affect your care on the Virtual Ward.

Contacting the Virtual Ward team: You can contact the Virtual Ward team at any time by phone. See the contact details on the last page of this leaflet. You can also request a call back using the message function in the Virtual Ward app.

What if my care plan needs to be changed?

Changes to your care plan can be made without you having to return to hospital. For example, your medication may be changed or extra equipment may be sent to help you with your recovery.

If you need to go to the hospital for tests or treatment, the Virtual Ward team will direct you to the dedicated Virtual Ward Clinical Hub. The hub is a room in the hospital. Once your tests or treatment are complete, the Virtual Ward team will support you to return to the Virtual Ward at home as soon as it is safe to do so.

Can I leave my house while receiving care in the Virtual Ward?

It is recommended that you stay in the area of your home. If you need to leave your house for any reason, you should discuss this with the Virtual Ward team.

Can I stay with a friend or family while I receive care in the Virtual Ward?

You may stay in a friend or family member's house while you receive care in the Virtual Ward. You must let the Virtual Ward team know where you will be staying and how to contact you throughout your stay. You should let your Virtual Ward team know before you leave the hospital. If this changes during your treatment, let the Virtual Ward team know.

How long do I stay in the Virtual Ward?

You will stay in the Virtual Ward for as long as you need hospital care. How long you stay in the Virtual Ward depends on your health condition and the care you need. Many people are discharged in less than 7 days.

What happens when I am discharged?

When you no longer need hospital care, you will be discharged from the Virtual Ward. Your Virtual Ward team will let you know when you are being discharged from the Virtual Ward.

When you are being discharged, follow these steps to return your kit.

1. Put all of the devices back into the clear plastic bags that they were sent in.
2. Put those bags inside the large brown "Return Bag" envelope provided.
3. Wait for a Doccla (Technology Provider) Customer Services agent to call you. They will arrange for the kit to be collected.

The Virtual Ward team will tell your GP and any other relevant healthcare providers about your care in the Virtual Ward and any changes to your medication.

What are the risks of receiving care in a Virtual Ward?

The Virtual Ward service is new in Ireland. Virtual Wards work well in other countries, which is why we are introducing them here.

There are plans and processes in place to ensure the Virtual Ward service is as safe as possible for patients. Some examples are below.

- ▶ **What happens if your condition gets worse while you are in the Virtual Ward?** The monitoring kit will alert the Virtual Ward team to any changes in your condition or if your treatment is not working well. If this happens, the Virtual Ward team will contact you.

If you or your family or carer are concerned about your symptoms worsening, you can contact the Virtual Ward team. You can contact them by phone. See the contact details on the last page of this leaflet. You can also

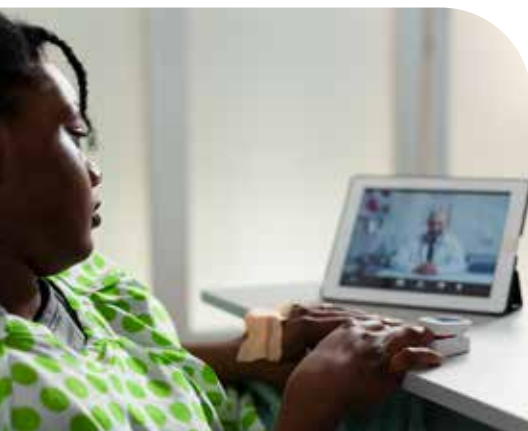
request a call back using the message function in the Virtual Ward app. The Virtual Ward team will clinically assess you and advise you what needs to happen.

- ▶ **What happens in an emergency?**

The Virtual Ward is not an emergency service. If your health gets worse very quickly, you are seriously ill or feel your life is at risk, you should always call 112 or 999.

- ▶ **What happens if you have technical issues with the monitoring kit?**

The Virtual Ward team will be aware if your kit is not working properly and will contact you. If you have a technical problem or need support using your monitoring kit, contact Doccla Customer Services on 01 223 8858. Some devices use batteries. If you see a device's battery is low, call Doccla Customer Services and they will send you new batteries.



Data privacy

You will be able to see all of your own personal information and health data from your Virtual Ward stay on the Virtual Ward app. This data will be stored on an approved cloud and encrypted in line with best practice. Data will only be shared with your healthcare team to manage your treatment and care. Please see the privacy notice available from the Virtual Ward team for more information.



Contact details

**The Virtual Ward is not an emergency service.
If you need emergency care, call 112 or 999.**