

Guidance on Locking Doors at Night (MHS 22.1):

While locking doors is a customary practice, it is always done with careful consideration of the patients' rights and needs. Regular reviews and risk assessments are conducted to ensure that the practice remains necessary and appropriate, the following protocol should follow any decision to lock doors on open mental health wards in NHS GG&C.

1. **Risk Assessment:** Before locking doors, a thorough risk assessment should be conducted to evaluate the potential risks to patients, staff, and visitors.
2. **Decision Making:** The decision to lock doors should be made by the Nurse in Charge, in consultation with colleagues, based on the current risk assessment.
3. **Notification:** When doors are locked, it should be clearly communicated to all relevant parties, including patients, staff, and visitors. A sign should be placed on the entry/exit door indicating the time and date the door was locked.
4. **Documentation:** Proper documentation is essential. This includes completing a Door Locking Recording Form and maintaining records of the decision and the reasons for locking the doors.
5. **Emergency Access:** Staff must have the means to unlock doors quickly in case of emergencies. This often involves carrying keys or having access to electronic unlocking systems.
6. **Regular Review:** The decision to keep doors locked should be reviewed regularly, especially during shift changes, to ensure it remains necessary and appropriate.
7. **Compliance with Regulations:** Any locking mechanism used must comply with safety standards and regulations, such as those outlined by the Mental Health Act and other relevant guidelines.
8. **Special Considerations:** Certain units, like psychiatric intensive care units (PICUs) or dementia units, may have specific guidelines due to the unique needs of their patients.

Locking doors on mental health wards at night serves several important purposes:

9. **Safety and Security:** Doors are locked between the hours of **10pm to 7am** to ensure the safety and security of patients, staff, and visitors. This is particularly important in dementia wards, and other areas where patients might pose a risk to themselves or others as it helps prevent patients from leaving the ward unsupervised, which is crucial for those at risk of self-harm, suicide, or absconding.
10. **Nighttime Routine:** It helps maintain a calm and secure environment during the night, which can be beneficial for patients' rest and overall well-being.

This protocol may vary depending on the local ward environments, and the specific needs of the patients, and with the agreement of the Local Management team. Generally, the above guidelines are to be observed: