Ellern Mede

Ellern Mede Ridgeway

Family and carer booklet





About Ellern Mede Group

Founded in 2000, Ellern Mede has over 25 years' experience as a trusted mental healthcare service. We provide bespoke inpatient treatment for individuals with complex mental health needs and overlapping conditions, including eating disorders, emotional dysregulation, trauma and neurodivergence. Our mission is to support meaningful and sustainable recovery from even the most complex mental health conditions.

About Ellern Mede Ridgeway

Ellern Mede Ridgeway Hospital provides specialist inpatient care for children and young people with complex needs, including eating disorders and disordered eating.

Treatment is delivered across three wards, each offering a different level of support to meet patients at their current stage of recovery and help them progress towards greater independence:

- **Lask ward (High Dependency unit):** Provides enhanced support, monitoring, and stabilisation for patients with higher clinical complexity or risk.
- **Nunn ward (General unit):** Offers a structured therapeutic programme for patients who are medically and psychologically stable enough to engage in treatment.
- **The Cottage (Step-down unit):** Supports increased independence and prepares patients for the next stage of recovery.

Transfers between wards are based on individual needs and risks and are discussed with patients and families to ensure the right level of support at the right time.

'I will be forever grateful for all the team at EM for believing in me when times got tough and making me smile every day.'

-Former Patient



Why has my child come to Ellern Mede?

Children and young people come to Ellern Mede when they need a level of care and support that is best provided in a specialist inpatient setting. This may be because their mental health needs have become more complex, or because they require closer support to help them feel safe and stabilised.

An inpatient admission offers time and space for careful assessment, therapeutic support, and structured care delivered by a specialist team. It allows your child to receive consistent support while we work together to understand what is contributing to their difficulties and what will help them move forward.

Throughout your child's stay, we work in partnership with families to develop an individualised care plan that supports recovery and helps prepare for a gradual and supported transition back to home, education, and community services.

Who will support my child?

At Ellern Mede, your child will be supported by a multidisciplinary team of experienced professionals who work closely together to provide safe, coordinated care.

The team may include nurses, doctors, psychologists, therapists, dietitians, teachers, and support staff. Each professional brings a different area of expertise, but treatment is always planned and delivered collaboratively, with regular communication between team members.

Your child will have named members of staff, such as a Consulant Psychiatrist who help coordinate their care. Families are recognised as an important part of the care team. We are committed to working in partnership with you, keeping you informed, listening to your views, and involving you in decisions about your child's care wherever possible.



How will my child's views be heard?



At Ellern Mede, we encourage young people and their families to be involved in decisions about care wherever possible. Your child's views can be shared in several ways:

- Care planning and reviews, through conversations with the team or written input
- MDT and CPA meetings, by attending, contributing in writing, or being supported by someone they trust
- PILRIMP planning, which helps young people have a voice in how they are supported during times of distress
- Community meetings, where young people can share feedback and have their say.
- Independent advocacy, with support from an Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA)

What sort of activities are available for my child?

Your child will be encouraged to explore a range of activities to balance their time between treatment, therapy and education. These may include: weekly dance lessons, meditation, movies, swimming, yoga, video games, art, crafts and drama.



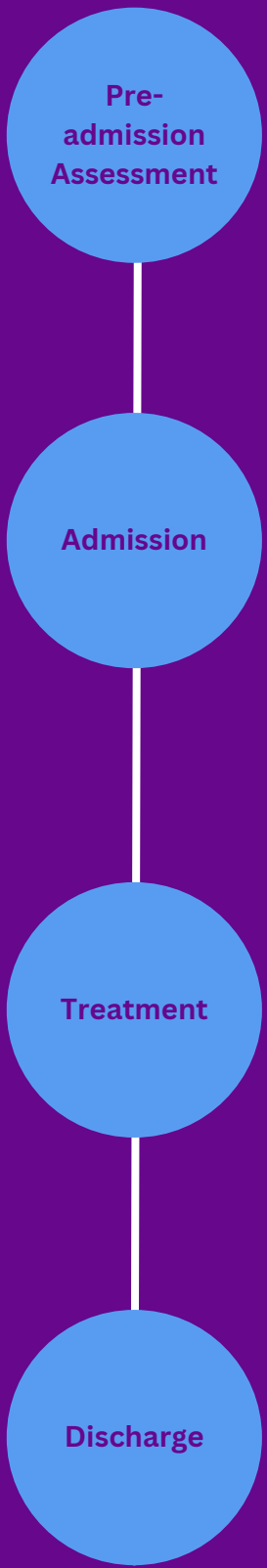
When patients are ready there are social outings to places such as the local cinema, shops or restaurants. If your child has a special interest or hobby we will encourage and support them to continue with this throughout their time at Ellern Mede.

Parents and families are also supported with social meals and cooking activities when this is appropriate as part of treatment plans.



Your child’s care pathway

Your child’s care pathway will be personalised to meet their individual needs.



Pre-admission assessment

You and your child will meet the Consultant Psychiatrist, who will have reviewed your child’s referral in advance. This meeting gives your child the opportunity to share how they are feeling, while the team talks with you about admission goals, treatment options, and what support may be needed.

Admission

Following admission, further assessments help the team build a clear understanding of your child’s needs. This includes developing a biopsychosocial formulation (a shared understanding of emotional, physical, and social needs), identifying appropriate therapies, planning nutritional support, and considering what family support may be helpful. For some children, this stage may include periods of closer observation to help keep them safe.

Treatment

During admission, staff focus on supporting your child’s safety and recovery. A dietician will support meal planning, and the therapy team will work with your child to help them understand their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and to develop new coping skills. Progress is reviewed regularly through weekly MDT reviews and CPA meetings every 10–12 weeks, with families involved where appropriate.

Discharge

From the point of admission, we work closely with you, your child, and community teams to plan for discharge. Our aim is to build the right skills, confidence, and support to help your child transition safely and continue their recovery after leaving hospital.

What is a person-centred approach?

A person-centred approach means we take time to understand your child as a whole person, not just their diagnosis or symptoms. We recognise that every child's situation is different, and care should be shaped around their individual needs, experiences, and strengths.

We work in partnership with your child and family to develop a shared understanding of what has led to their difficulties, what may be maintaining them, and what will best support recovery. This approach helps ensure care is personalised, flexible, and responsive as your child's needs change over time.

What is a formulation assessment?

A formulation assessment is a multidisciplinary, biopsychosocial assessment that helps the team understand your child's individual needs, strengths, and risks in a joined-up way.

The formulation is developed with your child, your family, and, where appropriate, community professionals. It considers emotional and mental health needs, physical health, development, relationships, neurodevelopmental factors, and the impact of past experiences or trauma. This helps the team understand how different needs may overlap and influence one another.

The formulation guides care planning throughout admission and helps develop a clear and realistic plan for recovery and discharge. A summary of the formulation is usually shared at the first CPA meeting and reviewed regularly to make sure support remains appropriate as your child progresses.

Reviewing your child's treatment

Regular reviews take place to ensure a collaborative approach to personalizing your child's care and treatment plans

Weekly MDT review meetings
Your child's progress and treatment plans will be reviewed with the whole team weekly, ensuring alignment with individual recovery goals and discharge plans. MDT meetings also include input from patients, families and community teams. Patients can give written input weekly and are invited to join the meetings on a fortnightly basis along with family members and members of the community team. MDT reports are sent to Parents/carers and community professionals every week. This is subject to patient's consent as part of their information sharing agreement.





CPA meetings
'Care programme approach' (CPA) meetings are held every 4-6 weeks, led by the Consultant psychiatrist. Members of the MDT also share a formal report for their discipline to review progress over the review period, taking into account the patient's formulation, admission goals and discharge plans. Family members and relevant professionals from the community team are also invited to join. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend if they wish to do so.

The multi-disciplinary team (MDT)

Our multidisciplinary team (MDT) brings together a range of professionals who work closely together to provide coordinated, person-centred care. Team members meet regularly in MDT reviews (ward rounds) to share updates, plan treatment, and ensure all aspects of your child's health and wellbeing are addressed in a joined-up way.

Hospital Manager
A senior registered nurse who oversees the day-to-day running of the hospital, ensuring services are safe, well-managed, and meet regulatory and quality standards.

Consultant Psychiatrist
Leads medical care, including diagnosis, treatment planning, and medication management, and oversees coordination of care across services.

Specialty doctor / Ward doctor
Supports day-to-day medical care, monitors physical health, and responds to medical needs on the ward.

Psychologist
Provides psychological assessment, formulation, individual and group therapies, and supports the wider team through reflective practice. Ellern Mede has clinical and counselling psychologists as well as trainee and assistant psychologists. They work closely with other team members to integrate the formulation and therapeutic care into all areas of treatment.

Family therapist
Works with patients and families to strengthen communication, relationships, and support recovery within the family system.

Dietician
Assesses nutritional needs and provides individualised meal planning and dietary support to promote physical health and recovery.

Social worker
Supports safeguarding, discharge planning, and access to community resources, working closely with patients and families.

Nursing team
Provide 24-hour care and support led by the Ward Manager. Nurses administer treatment such as medication. Each patient is allocated a key nurse for regular one-to-one support.

Autism team
Led by our Autism lead nurse, the team includes an Autism champion at each hospital. The Autism team can provide autism screening and assessments, advocates for patients with autism and other forms of neurodiversity, and ensures care approaches and environments are personalized, inclusive and supportive.

Healthcare assistants / Therapeutic support workers
Support day-to-day care, safety, routines, mealtimes, activities and emotional wellbeing on the ward.

Occupational therapist (OT)
Supports independence and daily living skills, helping patients engage in meaningful activities.

Activity coordinator
Facilitates therapeutic activities and supported outings that promote wellbeing, confidence, and skill development.

Psychotherapist
Provides individual therapy to help patients explore thoughts, feelings, and experiences, supporting emotional understanding and positive change.

Art therapist
Uses creative activities such as art-making to help patients express emotions, process experiences, and support emotional wellbeing, particularly when feelings are difficult to put into words.

Physiotherapist
Supports physical health, mobility, and rehabilitation where required.



Daily routine

The daily routines for young people in hospital wards are carefully structured to provide a balance of therapeutic, educational, and recreational activities, all tailored to meet individual needs. Each young person has a personalised weekly timetable, which is essential for helping them organise their week and engage effectively with the various programs offered.



A typical day might begin with a set wake-up time followed by self-care activities. Designated times for meals and snacks are clearly outlined to maintain a regular eating schedule. If the young person attends an on-site school, specific times for school lessons are scheduled. Those not attending school may have blocks of time reserved for independent study.



In addition to educational activities, the timetable includes self-directed activities which might involve watching movies, playing card or board games, and arts and crafts. These activities are either conducted independently or with the assistance of staff. There are also a range of individual sessions available, including meetings with psychologists, therapeutic social workers (TSW), autism champions, physiotherapists, and activity coordinators.

Therapeutic groups form a core part of the weekly schedule, with various disciplines running sessions throughout the week. These include the breakfast club run by dietetic staff, sensory groups led by autism champions, post-meal support groups (co-run by dietetic staff and TSWs), and dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) skills groups led by psychologists.

Physical activity and exposure to different environments are also integral to their routines. Young people partake in supervised community walks, which may occur in the garden or local community areas, depending on individual care plans set by the multidisciplinary team (MDT). Additionally, the activity coordinator facilitates weekly trips to local attractions such as theatre, cinema, farm, shopping centres, bowling and swimming offering varied experiences that contribute to their holistic development and rehabilitation.

Structured routines are designed to support the health and wellbeing of young people on the ward, ensuring they have access to a comprehensive range of therapeutic and educational experiences.

Meal times

	Weekdays	Weekends
Breakfast	8:30-9:00am	9:00am - 9:30am
Morning snack	10:30am - 10:45am	11:00am - 11:15am
Lunch	12:45pm - 1.15pm	12:45pm - 1.15pm
Afternoon snack	3:15pm -3:30pm	3:15pm -3:30pm
Dinner	6:00pm -6:30pm	6:00pm -6:30pm
Evening snack	9:00pm - 9:15pm	9:00pm - 9:15pm

All patients are supported during meal and snack times. Support is individualised in line with each person's care plan, needs, and preferences, and may include direct or indirect supervision, staff role-modelling, and facilitated peer support after meals and snacks.

Ellern Mede School

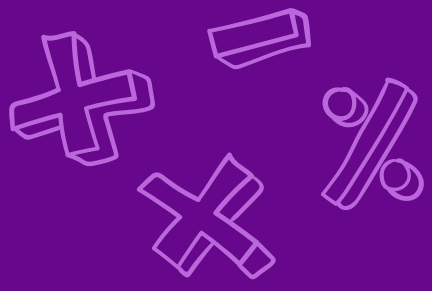
What about my child's education when they are in hospital?

The education of patients continues throughout their stay at Ellern Mede. Ellern Mede School has been rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted on four consecutive occasions (2014, 2018, 2022 & 2024). Having the school on site means that patients can remain engaged in their education. A key teacher is appointed to each young person to oversee their education provision. The key teacher will liaise with the young person's home school and parents to ensure they are fully supported with their education whilst with us. Ellern Mede school is a registered exam centre which means young people can take their GCSE and A' Levels at the school if required.

Ellern Mede School has been rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted.

Subjects which are taught at Ellern Mede Ridgeway School:

- English Literature
- English Language
- Mathematics
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Biology
- Spanish
- French
- History
- Geography
- Psychology & Sociology
- Music
- Art
- Art & Design
- Drama



	Lesson am	Break am	Lesson am	Break pm	Lesson pm
Monday	09:30-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-13:30	13:30-15:00
Tuesday	09:30-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-13:30	13:30-15:00
Wednesday	09:30-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-13:30	13:30-15:00
Thursday	09:30-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-13:30	13:30-15:00
Friday	09:30-10:30	10:30-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-13:30	13:30-15:00

Therapeutic spaces



Sensory room
Our sensory room provides a calm and supportive space for young people during their stay. The room is designed to help young people feel settled, manage feelings of anxiety or overwhelm, and take time to regulate when things feel difficult. The space includes a range of sensory features that can be adapted to individual needs and preferences. It can be particularly helpful for neurodiverse young people, offering a safe environment that supports emotional regulation, comfort, and a sense of security as part of their wider care and recovery.

Quiet spaces and multi-faith areas
There are quiet spaces on the unit which patients can use if they need some downtime, including the Zen den. There are also multi-faith spaces patients can use, with access to spiritual and faith resources.

Places to go for outings

Mill Field
Small local green space within short walking distance, suitable for brief walks and outdoor time

Brent Cross Shopping Centre
Prince Charles Drive, London NW4 3FP

Vue Cinema
Great North Leisure Park, London N12 0GL

Hollywood Bowl Finchley
Great North Leisure Park, N12 0GL

Belmont Farm
The Ridgeway, London NW7 1QT

Clay Pottery Café
Ceramix Clay Café & Art Studio, Unit 20 Sentinel Square, London NW4 2EL

Key Points for Parents



"All About Me" Document
Families and carers may find it helpful to contribute to an “All About Me” document, offering insight into who their relative is outside of illness and what helps them feel understood and supported.

Digital safety- Mobile phone policy
We ask all patients to sign a mobile phone agreement to ensure everyone’s digital safety. Mobile phones are allowed in the hospital. Phone cameras must be disabled and our technical support team can facilitate this. Patients can use social media and will receive psycho-education and support to use this as safely as possible. We ask parents to support us with maintaining parental controls on your child's devices to ensure their safety.

Restrictive interventions and use of restraints
There may be times during a child or young person’s admission when staff need to use restrictive interventions, including physical holds, to keep them or others safe, or to support essential treatment such as nasogastric feeding.
Any use of restraint is always proportionate, reasonable, and necessary, and is used only as a last resort when other approaches have not been effective. Our staff are specially trained to use the least restrictive techniques possible, with a strong focus on de-escalation, safety, and the child or young person’s wellbeing. Ellern Mede uses Timian training, which is accredited in line with the Restraint Reduction Network National Standards. Parents and carers will be informed of any incidents involving restrictive interventions and offered the opportunity to discuss what happened and the support provided.

Planning Visits: Rooms are booked via reception. A visiting protocol ‘Mutual expectations for visits’ will be shared with you. Please coordinate with the ward for availability, and plan visits outside school hours and meal times where possible.

Patient’s leave
Leave away from the hospital progresses gradually, starting with a few hours in the local area.Overnight home leave starts with single night stays. For those who live far from the hospital, an AirBnb may be an alternative to facilitate short overnight leave as part of the discharge process.

Room personalisation
Please note that most patients will share a twin room with another young person. Patients can usually personalise their side of the bedroom. Please note that room changes may be necessary at short notice.

Noise sensitivity
We recognise that some children and young people may be sensitive to noise. If this is the case, please let the team know so we can support this as part of their care. Items such as noise-cancelling headphones may help increase comfort and wellbeing.



What your child should pack

All items are subject to risk assessment and items brought onto the ward are routinely inspected by staff.

- 12 Items of day clothing (jumper, hoody, trousers, cardigan etc)
- 12 pants
- 12 pairs of socks
- 5 bras, sports bras or vests
- 5 pairs of tights or leggings (if worn)
- 10 books (nurses to check suitability)
- 7 T-shirts (including vests)
- 2 pairs of pajamas
- 2 pairs of shoes (no high heels)
- 1 pair of trainers
- 1 pair of slippers
- 1 pair of wellingtons
- 1 dressing gown (no cord)
- Bathing suit for privacy while washing
- 1 regular coat
- 1 waterproof coat
- 1 musical instrument
- Personal comfort items, such as cuddly toys (max 5 medium sized)
- 10 books (nurses to check suitability)

Toiletries (maximum amounts)

- 2 bottles of shampoo
- 2 bottles of conditioner
- 2 shower gel/body washing products
- 2 roll-on deodorants,
- 2 bottles of body spray or perfume (non-aerosol)

In some situations, exceptions may be agreed with the nursing team. If items cannot be kept safely in bedrooms, they will be stored securely in your child's property drawer in the nurse's office or in the property cupboard. Decorations and cards are welcome to help personalise your child's space.

Items to be stored in the Nurses' Office

- 1 mobile phone- (for phones, tablets and devices, camera and internet restrictions apply)
- 1 laptop (to be used supervised in the activity room only)
- 1 tablet or games device
- Chargers, cables and any other risk items
- 1 hair dryer
- 1 pair of hair straighteners

All personal items not listed as contraband (see on next page) must fit entirely within a box measuring 30cm wide, 40cm long, and 15cm high. This includes items such as makeup, nail art supplies, aerosols, toiletries, and similar belongings.

Items to be stored in the Patient's store cupboard

We can also keep a second box (same size as above) and up to 2 bin liners full of clothing, for patients who are unable (due to risk) to have any of the above items in their rooms.

All other items must be taken home by parents. Thank you for your cooperation.



Questions

What should my child bring to Ellern Mede?

We encourage families to bring comfortable clothing, toiletries, and a small number of personal items to help your child feel settled. This might include items such as a favourite book, diary, poster, or soft toy.

Please bring only a small amount of pocket money and avoid bringing valuable items, as space on the ward is limited. We kindly ask parents and carers to help ensure that only essential items are brought in.

For everyone's safety, some items cannot be kept on the ward. These include:

- Alcohol, medication, or chemicals
- Aerosol sprays
- Cameras or devices with cameras (unless agreed as part of a care plan)
- Chewing gum or blu tack
- Glass items, including mirrors
- Sharp objects such as scissors, needles, or pins

Before giving any items to your child, please check with the Nurse in Charge. Staff may need to check belongings to help keep everyone safe. Items that cannot be kept on the ward will be stored securely.

How do I stay in touch with my child?

We encourage parents and other family members to visit patients or to stay in contact via phone or FaceTime. Visiting rooms should be booked in advance via Reception outside of school hours and mealtimes. Please refer to our 'Mutual expectations for visits'.

Who can see my child's medical records?

Clinical reports will be shared with you where appropriate, as well as with the professionals involved in your child's care. Information your child shares in confidence is respected.
If there is a concern about your child's safety that means information needs to be shared, this will be discussed with your child and explained clearly. Your child has the right to request access to their medical records by writing to the Hospital Manager, and staff can support them with this process.
Any other requests to access your child's records require consent from your child and their consultant. You and your child will be informed of any decisions.

Fire safety procedure

Your child will be made aware of the fire policy and procedure. The fire alarm is tested every Friday at 2pm.

Ward guidelines

Hospitals have a small number of guidelines in place to help keep everyone safe and to support a calm, respectful environment.
When your child arrives, staff will explain these guidelines and the reasons for them. This includes expectations around dress code, privacy, and the use of recording or photography, which is not permitted on the unit. We understand that new environments can feel overwhelming, and staff will support your child to settle in and feel as comfortable as possible.

What are my child's legal rights and status?

Your child may be staying in hospital as an informal or formal patient.
If your child is an informal patient, this means admission and treatment have been agreed voluntarily, involving your child and, where appropriate, you as parents or carers.
If your child is a formal patient, this means they have been admitted under the Mental Health Act (MHA) to help keep them safe. The care team will explain what this means and your child's rights, and your child can ask for their status to be reviewed.
Parents or guardians usually have parental responsibility for children under 18 and are involved in care decisions, while young people are also involved as much as possible. If you or your child have concerns about diagnosis or treatment, a second opinion can be requested.

What is a second opinion?

A second opinion is when another consultant psychiatrist reviews your child's diagnosis or treatment plan.

How do I make a complaint?

If you have any concerns about your child's care, you can use the complaints or feedback forms available on the ward, or ask a member of staff for support.
Your concern will be reviewed by the Hospital Manager and the Complaints Team. It will be acknowledged within two working days, and you will be kept informed of the outcome.
If you are not satisfied with the response, you can ask for the complaint to be reviewed by the Managing Director. If you remain unhappy, you can contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. Details are available in the Complaints Leaflet.

Can my child access the internet?

Patients can access the internet via our wifi, however for their safety we have set up restrictions to block any inappropriate content.
We ask parents to support us with maintaining parental controls on your child's devices to ensure their safety.



Doctify

Trusted Reviews
We use Doctify, a trusted and independent healthcare review platform, where patients and families can share their experiences of care at Ellern Mede. This allows you to read real reviews from people with lived experience of our services.

‘EM has delivered professionalism and compassion in equal measure. All staff have been supportive and positive throughout, and have communicated clearly on all topics. Our family has benefited enormously from the services provided by EM and we are deeply grateful.’

‘All the staff are so kind and friendly, very accommodating.’

‘Warm, friendly and always willing to go the extra mile to help. Having a young person struggling is tough, and the team at Ellern Mede Ridgeway recognise this and always make sure any visit is made as easy as possible. I travel to be able to visit our young person, and the reception team will go out of their way to ensure I have a room to use. This has sometimes been at short notice, and they will do all they to accommodate any request. I can’t thank them enough.’

Gallery













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Contact us

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Ellern Mede

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