

Dear Colleagues,

Update to the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual COVID-19 addenda on physical distancing in Health and Social Care

This letter notifies staff and managers of an update to the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual COVID-19 addenda on physical distancing in Health and Social Care.

We are aware that current COVID-19 guidance on physical distancing is restricting health and social cares' ability to remobilise effectively.

Two metre physical distancing within the general community, healthcare and residential settings was introduced at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic as a mitigation measure to prevent transmission of the virus between individuals.

Following the roll out of the successful vaccination programme, expansion of testing and the use of face coverings by the general public, physical distancing is no longer obligatory in the general community.

Having considered recommendations made by the COVID-19 Nosocomial Review Group (CNRG), the various Scottish IPC COVID-19 addenda on physical distancing in Health and Social Care have been reviewed and updated by NSS NHS Antimicrobial Resistance Hospital Associated Infection (ARHAI) and Public Health Scotland.

Health and care settings house some of the most clinically vulnerable in society and whilst the COVID-19 pandemic remains a threat, it is recommended that physical distancing remains, although reductions from 2 metres to 1 metre can now be advised in some areas. It should be noted that COVID-19 is still a threat and as a result this is not a return to pre pandemic 'business as usual'.

From the

Chief Medical Officer
National Clinical Director
Deputy Chief Nursing Officer
Chief Dental Officer
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Director of Primary Care

31 August 2021

DL (2021) 28

For action

NHS Scotland Chairs,
NHS Scotland Chief Executives,
HR Directors,
Medical Directors,
Nurse Directors,
Primary Care Leads,
Directors of Pharmacy,
Directors of Public Health,
Directors of Dentistry,
Optometric Advisors,
All Independent Contractors
(Dental, Pharmacy, General
Practice and Optometry),
Infection Control Managers.

Enquiries

Scottish Government
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Officer
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Guidance on physical distancing for each setting has now been updated for inclusion in each of the 3 COVID-19 addenda which detail;

- a. [Physical distancing for acute settings](#)
- b. [Physical distancing for care home settings](#)
- c. [Physical distancing for community health and care settings](#) including primary care and care at home and building-based day services. Please see the [Scottish COVID-19 Community Health and Care Settings IPC Addendum](#) for a full list of services.

A summarised breakdown of the changes to physical distancing guidance in acute settings, community settings including care at home and care homes can be found in Annex A. Please note, this summary is intended as a reference tool and does not include the full set of guidance for each setting.

Staff are being asked to maintain a 2m physical distance in areas where fluid resistant face masks (FRSM type II) are not in use (e.g. canteens, changing rooms). This will reduce the loss of large staff numbers during any potential contact tracing.

The updated guidance sets out the minimum level of physical distancing in each particular setting. Where clinical teams or services decide that they wish to maintain 2 metres physical distancing, they are able to do so within their own governance arrangements.

In order for risk to remain low in healthcare and residential settings, whilst also recommending a reduction to physical distancing, it is essential that all staff, patients and visitors adhere with other Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures which remain in place to mitigate risk, including but not limited to; extended use of facemasks and face coverings, twice weekly LFD testing, continued admission screening for COVID-19 and optimising ventilations across health and social care settings.

Awareness of IPC measures

To increase awareness of IPC measures, we would like to highlight the 'Kind to Remind' toolkit (Annex B) which supports staff to remind their colleagues when they drop their guard. Staff should be encouraged by their organisation to use this resource.

Staff and patients are also encouraged to complete their COVID-19 vaccination course to further help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Maintaining a physical distance of 1 metre or more as well as adherence to further IPC measures helps mitigate against the risk of transmission via pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals. Physical distancing will continue to be reviewed regularly over the winter and any changes will be informed by COVID-19 prevalence, and nosocomial transmission data of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

Whilst COVID-19 remains a threat, the guidance on 2m physical distancing in health and social care settings may require to be reintroduced.

The UK Respiratory Guidance is expected by early October. Whilst recognising the likely increase in service demand over the winter months, this guidance will aim to minimise the risk of harm from respiratory pathogens including, but not exclusively, influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus to patients, staff and visitors during a time of increased activity within health and social care settings.

The reduction to 1 metre or more physical distancing will be a further step to support the remobilisation of services, reduction in waiting lists and a more balanced approach to the current levels of harm associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the unintended consequences of control measures.

We would be grateful if you could ensure that your colleagues are made aware of the updated guidance in this letter.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you and all your valued colleagues for your resilience and ongoing commitment to delivering as much clinical care as possible to your patients in such challenging conditions.

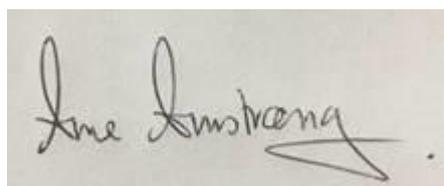
Yours sincerely,



DR GREGOR SMITH
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER



PROFESSOR JASON LEITCH CBE
NATIONAL CLINICAL DIRECTOR



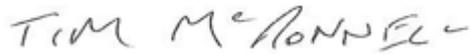
ANNE ARMSTRONG
DEPUTY CHIEF NURSING OFFICER



ALISON STRATH
INTERIM CHIEF PHARMACEUTICAL OFFICER



TOM FERRIS
CHIEF DENTAL OFFICER



TIM MCDONNELL
DIRECTOR PRIMARY CARE

ANNEX A

Summary of changes to physical distancing guidance in Health and Social Care settings



COVID19 - HAI -
Table_changes to phy:

ANNEX B

“It’s Kind to Remind” communication assets

Please see below the updated ‘It’s Kind to Remind’ toolkit



21-22 - Test and
Protect - Healthcare V