**Infection Prevention Control Guidance – Communications Toolkit**

**Introduction**

The Government has confirmed that while COVID restrictions will end in many settings in England on 19 July 2021, Public Health England’s [infection prevention control guidelines and hospital visiting guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control) remain in place for staff and visitors across all health services, for the protection of both staff and patients.

Staff, patients and visitors will also be expected to continue to follow social distancing rules when visiting any care setting as well as using face coverings, masks and other personal protection equipment.

The IPC principles in the guidance apply to all health settings\* (including the independent/private sector) and are underpinned by the best available evidence.

*\*NB. This guidance does not apply to**Adult Social Care**settings in England. Separate guidance for adult social care settings has already been provided and continues to be relevant.*

**Sharing information locally**

This toolkit provides consistent messages and template assets to support local teams to communicate current IPC measures both internally and externally. As NHS communicators, you are best placed to consider how best to do this; you can use the provided assets or develop your own based on the key messages.

Key internal teams to be considered for dedicated communications include security, administrative, and clinical booking teams to ensure that IPC measures for patients are understood and communicated appropriately.

National stakeholder bodies such as trade unions, royal colleges, ALBs and patient groups have been briefed by the national team and we will continue to update these groups as needed.

**Contacts**

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**Key messages**

* COVID-19 is still with us, and the safety of NHS patients, visitors and staff is our top priority.
* In line with Government guidance, everyone accessing or visiting healthcare settings must continue to wear a face covering, unless they are exempt, and follow social distancing rules.
* This applies to all health services including hospitals, GP practices, dentists, optometrists and pharmacies, to ensure patients and staff are protected.
* NHS teams will continue to take other infection prevention and control measures to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other infections in health and care settings.
* It is important for the public to continue to play their part when visiting NHS and care settings to help protect our staff and patients, particularly those who may be more vulnerable to infections.
* **IF NEEDED**: Decisions on what measures are taken across wider society are for government based on the advice they receive. It is important for the public to continue to play their part when visiting NHS and care settings to help protect our staff and patients. It is also important to make sure that you receive both doses of your vaccinations, as getting vaccinated is the best thing you can do to protect you and your loved ones from coronavirus.

**Key links**

* You can read the infection prevention control guidance in full at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>
* The IPC measures recommended are underpinned by WHO guidance and the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (NIPCM) practice [guide](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance) and associated literature reviews.

**Media**

The NHS nationally has issued a media release to make clear the position from Monday 19th July.

This can be found here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/07/nhs-patients-staff-and-visitors-must-continue-to-wear-face-coverings-in-healthcare-settings/>

**Creative assets**

The first updated creative assets to support local services will be available from 4pm, 16 July (in digital and design formats) on the [Campaign Resource Centre](https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/nhs-resources-facilities/resources/nhs-IPC-resources/). Further resources, including for specific settings, will follow.

**Template resources**

The sections below contain key messages written for different audiences and can be lifted and dropped into a range of communications and channels as needed. Please feel free to amend or use these however best meets the needs of your service and intended audience/s.

**Bulletin/Website Copy (100 words)**

**Infection prevention control guidelines to remain in place**

The highest priority for the NHS remains the safety of staff, patients and visitors.

While COVID restrictions will end in many settings in England from 19 July, everyone accessing or visiting healthcare settings must continue to wear a face covering (unless they are exempt) and follow social distancing rules.

Public Health England’s infection prevention control guidelines and hospital visiting guidance are therefore set to remain in place for all staff and visitors and across all health services including hospitals, GP practices, dentists, optometrists and pharmacies to ensure patients and staff are protected.

Read the infection prevention control guidance in full at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

**Suggested social media**

**Short copy:**

Patients, visitors and staff must continue to wear face coverings unless they are exempt and follow social distancing measures in healthcare settings.

**Long copy:**

While COVID restrictions will end in many settings in England from 19 July, everyone visiting hospitals, GP practices, dentists, optometrists and pharmacies must continue to wear a face covering and follow social distancing rules, unless they are unable to do so for medical reasons.

This will help to ensure the safety of our patients, visitors and staff, especially those who are more vulnerable to infection.

**Response to patient query about public health measures**

Dear XXX,

Thank you for your email regarding the public health measures at our service.

We would like to reassure you that it is safe to visit [insert service name] and we are doing all we can to ensure we offer the very best care and support, in the most safe and convenient way possible.

As you will know, the Prime Minister has confirmed that public restrictions [will/have] [be/en] significantly eased on 19th July. It should be noted that the Government's 'COVID-19 Response: Summer 2021' guidance states *"Health and care settings will continue to maintain appropriate infection prevention and control processes as necessary and this will be continually reviewed. Guidance will be updated based on the latest clinical evidence this summer."* You can find this online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-summer-2021-roadmap/covid-19-response-summer-2021#contents>

In line with the Government’s announcement, Public Health England’s infection prevention control guidelines and hospital visiting guidance will therefore remain in place for all staff and visitors and across all health services, including hospitals, GP practices, dentists, optometrists and pharmacies to ensure patients and staff are protected.

Staff, patients and visitors will therefore be expected to continue to follow social distancing rules when visiting any care setting as well as using face coverings, masks and other personal protection equipment. The full guidance can be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

We are working extremely hard to provide safe care to our patients within the guidance.

We hope that this helps clarify why these measures are in place.

**Pre-appointment text message**

Dear [patient name], your appointment is on [insert date and time]. In line with official public health advice, measures remain in place across all healthcare services to protect patients, visitors and staff. Please ensure you bring a face covering and wear it when you arrive, unless you are exempt.

**Text to registered patient list**

From 19 July face coverings will still be required when entering [insert name of service], unless you are exempt. In line with official public health advice, measures remain in place across all healthcare services to protect patients, visitors and staff.

**Answer machine message**

Thank you for calling [insert service name].

We are here to help you.

Our opening hours are [insert]

If you need urgent care that cannot wait, please call NHS 111 or visit 111.nhs.uk

In line with official government advice, public health measures remain in place in all healthcare settings to protect patient, visitors and staff from COVID-19.

If you need to come for an appointment, please remember that social distancing remains in place, and to wear a face covering when you enter the building unless you are exempt due to a medical condition.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

* Is this guidance consistent with WHO guidelines?

The content is consistent with the measures outlined in WHO guidance “[IPC during healthcare when coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is suspected or confirmed: Interim Guidance, June 2020](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own)”.

* Who is the guide for?

Everyone who works in the NHS, and Independent Care Sector no matter what their role, has an important role to play in preventing the spread of infection.

This guidance does not apply to Adult Social Care settings in England given existing guidance for adult social care settings has already been provided and continues to be relevant.

* Which parts of the NHS have to use the IPC guidance?

This guide applies in England\*, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The IPC principles in the guide apply to all health care settings including all hospitals, GP practices, dentists, optometrists and pharmacies.

* What can staff do at work to help protect themselves?

The important things at work are: wear a facemask, undertake regular hand hygiene, frequently clean and maintain a clutter free environment, keep a social distance of 2 metres whenever possible. If you need to wear additional PPE, you will be advised where and when, and receive appropriate training.

* What should staff do if a patient or visitor refuses to wear a mask?

The safety of both staff and patients is of paramount importance and **face coverings or facemasks** should be worn by patients/visitors, in-line with government guidance. We expect that all patients/visitors, unless they are exempt, will follow these recommendations.

However, some people cannot tolerate wearing a facemask or covering and other measures such as taking all reasonable steps to identify practical working solutions with the least risk to all involved can ensure that care is still delivered safely. Care should not be denied to those unable to wear a face mask or covering.

* What is the guidance for vaccination settings?

The guidance states that:

In some clinical outpatient settings, such as vaccination/injection

clinics, where contact with individuals is minimal, the need for single use PPE items for each encounter, for example, gloves and aprons is not necessary. Gloves and aprons are recommended when there is (anticipated) exposure to blood/body fluids or non-intact skin. Staff administering vaccinations/injections must apply hand hygiene between patients and wear a sessional facemask.

 **ENDS**