

Via email only (for onward distribution)

To: Trust Medical Directors
Trust Directors of Nursing
RQIA

3 March 2023

Dear Colleagues,

'Infection Prevention and Control measures for respiratory illness (including SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19)'

I am writing to advise that the *'Infection Prevention and Control Measures for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) in Health and Care Settings'* guidance published in May 2022 has been updated and should be withdrawn from use.

The updated guidance covers infection prevention and control measures to prevent transmission of respiratory illnesses (including SARS-CoV-2) in health and care settings and other settings where care is provided e.g. clients own home. I have enclosed a copy of the updated guidance which can also be found on the PHA website:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2023-03/IPC%20guidance%20for%20Respiratory%20Illnesses%2003.03.23.pdf>

This new guidance recommends a return to the application of standard and transmission-based precautions when dealing respiratory illnesses. **The recommendation for universal masking in all health and social care settings including care homes has been removed.** The use of facemasks (type II or IIR) in patient facing clinical areas for staff, patients and visitors (face coverings) and in non-clinical areas (including client's own home) should be determined on a risk assessment basis.

This guidance will remain under constant review. Should the epidemiological situation change, for example following the emergence of a variant of concern, this will be taken into consideration and the guidance updated and shared with providers.

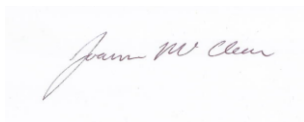
I would be very grateful if you could cascade this information throughout your organisation and ensure the guidance is implemented.

Improving Your Health and Wellbeing



I would like to thank you and your teams for all the work you have done, and continue to do, to reduce the spread of respiratory infections.

Yours sincerely



Dr Joanne McClean
Director of Public Health

Enc

Cc *Dr Lourda Geoghegan*
Maria McIlgorm

