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To: Care at Home, Adult Care Homes & Building Based Day Care services, Supported Housing Services
Copied to: Chief Officers Health & Social Care Partnerships
Chief Social Work Officers
Directors of Public health
Chief Executives NHS Boards
Local Authorities
Scottish Care
Coalition of Care and Support Providers (CCPS)
Care Inspectorate

1 September 2021

Dear Colleague

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

This letter notifies social care services – care homes, care at home, supported housing, building-based day services and wider social care community services, of an update on Physical Distancing recommendations.

As you know, two metre physical distancing within the general community, health and social care 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. Within health and social care settings, physical distancing has continued to be recommended.

Review of recommendations

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

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Health and social care settings support some of the most clinically vulnerable in society and whilst the COVID-19 pandemic remains a threat, it is recommended that physical distancing for staff and visitors remains, although reductions from 2 metres to 1 metre can now be advised in some areas for staff including care homes, care at home services, supported housing settings and building-based day services and for visitors in residential settings including adult care homes.

Updated guidance

Full guidance on physical distancing for social care services has been updated for inclusion in each of the COVID-19 addenda which detail;

- [Physical distancing for adult care home settings](#)
- [Physical distancing for community health and care settings including care at home, supported housing and building-based day services](#)

This update supersedes previous guidance on 2m physical distancing in health and social care settings and the Scottish Government and partners are currently working to reflect this update within other relevant guidance documents.

In summary the advice is as follows and further details for each setting can be found in Annex 1:

- Physical distancing amongst staff is now recommended to be reduced to 1m or more when fluid resistant surgical masks (FRSMs) are in use.
- If staff remove their FRSMs for any reason e.g. eating, drinking, changing (eg in staff rooms, changing rooms), or to support residents/ supported individuals are in distress it is advised that 2m or more be obtained to avoid high numbers of staff being identified as contacts should a positive case arise.
- Staff must aim to maintain 1m or more physical distancing from residents/individuals when not delivering care which requires physical contact.
- Residents, and individuals who share living accommodation including supported housing, do not need to physically distance from each other.
- Visitors are recommended to maintain 1m or more distancing from staff and general residents/individuals within care homes and community care settings (however may have touch contact with loved ones).
- Supported people living in their own home, sheltered housing, supported housing or supported shared housing no longer need to physically distance from each other or their visitors, though they should continue to follow [national guidance](#) and legal requirements for face coverings as applicable.
- People who use building-based day services do not need to physically distance from each other.
- Physical distancing may be reduced to 1m between patients/service users and staff on service user transport.
- Staff should follow national guidance and legal requirements for face coverings as applicable when supporting residents or supported individuals in outside environments and public spaces. Staff are advised to maintain physical distance and wear FRSMs where possible in indoor public spaces as an additional measure to protect against transmission.

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

Importance of continuing to support all measures

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'. New cases in Scotland have more than doubled during the last week. This is one of the sharpest rises we have seen during the pandemic. We always knew that cases were likely to rise as restrictions eased. However, the scale of the increase is of real concern. While the vaccination has significantly weakened the link between new cases and serious health harms, it has not been completely broken.

In order for risk to remain low in social care settings, whilst also recommending a reduction to physical distancing, it is essential that all staff, individuals 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 staff testing (where relevant), continued screening for COVID-19 and optimising ventilations across and social care settings.

Staff and those using social care services are also encouraged to complete their COVID-19 vaccination course to further help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Physical distancing will continue to be reviewed regularly over the winter season and any changes will be informed by COVID-19 prevalence, and 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.

We would be grateful if you could communicate this new recommendation to your staff and ensure that they are made aware of the updated guidance.

We would like to take this opportunity to further thank you and all your valued colleagues for your continued resilience and ongoing commitment to supporting people at this challenging time.



Donna Bell
**Director, Mental Health
and Social Care**



Gregor Smith
Chief Medical Officer



Jason Leitch
National Clinical Director



Anne Armstrong
Deputy Chief Nursing Officer

Annex 1- Summary of changes to physical distancing guidance in Social Care settings

***Note – This is intended as an reference tool and does not include the full set of guidance for each setting. Please refer to the guidance in the first instance. This is a note of the minimum level of guidance in each particular setting. Where services decide that maintaining 2 metres is necessary they should be allowed to do so.**

****Please also note that despite a reduction in physical distancing within some health and social care settings, the contact definition of 2 metres will still apply in these settings and the general community. This means individuals whom are within 2 metres of a person who tests positive for COVID-19 will be identified as close contacts and required to follow guidance on self-isolation**

<u>Social care settings</u>		
Location/ circumstance	Who this applies to	Overview of update
<u>Adult Care Homes</u>		
All areas inside adult care homes– where FRSMs (or face coverings for non-direct care staff) are in use	Staff	Physical distancing amongst staff in health and social care settings may now be reduced to 1m or more across all health and social care work settings and all COVID-19 pathways. Physical distancing between staff in health and social care settings and the residents they are supporting may now be reduced to 1m or more.
All areas inside adult care homes – where FRSMs (or face coverings for non-direct care staff) are not in use	Staff	Where staff remove FRSMs for any reason e.g eating, drinking, changing, staff are advised to maintain 2m physical distancing from all staff, residents and visitors.



All areas	Residents/Individuals living in the adult care home/residential setting	Residents/individuals who live in the care home are not expected to physically distance from each other.
All areas inside adult care homes	Visitors	<p>Visitors should maintain 1m or more distancing from staff and general residents/individuals within care homes.</p> <p>When visiting resident in own room, visitors may have touch contact with loved ones (hug/kiss) however are reminded that maintaining 1m or more distancing out with direct touch contact wherever possible will reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory pathogens.</p> <p>Visitors answering yes to any of the triage questions should not visit until they have completed their self-isolation period</p>
Car Sharing	Staff	Car-sharing should still be avoided whenever practical. However where it is unavoidable, mitigations should remain in place including FRSM use, opening windows and maximising distance between those travelling in the car to avoid potential COVID-19 acquisition.
Transport Vehicles	Staff and residents	Physical distancing may be reduced to 1m between supported persons/ service users and staff unless the supported person/ service user are on the high risk pathway in which case 2m physical distancing should be maintained. Staff should continue to wear an FRSM when sharing a vehicle with and the resident should follow legal requirements and guidance for face coverings as applicable.
Outside environments and outings away from the adult care home	Staff	Staff do not need to physically distance from each other, or from residents in outside environments or public spaces. They are advised to follow Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others -



		<p>gov.scot (www.gov.scot) and should follow legal requirements for face coverings as applicable.</p> <p>However, they should continue to wear an FRSM in indoor public spaces as this provides an additional layer of protection to the wearer and maintain 1m or more physical distancing from all staff, individuals in receipt of care/ support and their friends and family, where possible. They should also maintain 2m physical distancing when an FRSM is removed. Staff can continue to be closer than 1m when providing direct care/ support as required.</p>
Outside environments and outings away from the adult care home	Visitors and residents	<p>Residents friends, family or other visitors do not need to physically distance from each other in outside environments, public spaces or within the friends/ family members own home. They are advised to follow Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) and legal requirements for face coverings as applicable.</p>
Care at home services		
Supported persons/ individual in receipt of care within their own home- FRSM in use by staff	Staff	Staff can reduce physical distancing to 1m or more when wearing an Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask (FRSM) in the supported persons own home, and can be closer than 1m when providing direct care/ support as required.
Supported persons/ individual in receipt of care within their own home – where FRSMs are not in use by staff	Staff	Where staff remove FRSMs for any reason e.g eating, drinking, changing, when inside the individuals home, staff are advised to maintain 2m physical distancing from all staff, individuals in receipt of care/ support and their friends and family.
Supported persons/ individual in receipt of care within their own home	Supported persons/ family/ friends/ visitors	Supported persons/ service users do not need to physically distances from friends, family or other visitors within their own home. They are



		advised to follow Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
Car sharing	Staff	Car-sharing should still be avoided whenever practical. However where it is unavoidable, mitigations should remain in place including FRSM use, opening windows and maximising distance between those travelling in the car to avoid potential COVID-19 acquisition.
Transport Vehicles	All	Physical distancing may be reduced to 1m between supported persons/ service users and staff unless the supported person/ service user are on the high risk pathway in which case 2m physical distancing should be maintained. Staff should continue to wear an FRSM when sharing a vehicle with a supported person and the supported person should follow legal requirements and guidance for face coverings as applicable.
Other i.e. providing support in outside environments or public spaces	Staff	Staff do not need to physically distance from the person they are supporting in outside environments or public spaces as per the Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) guidance and should follow legal requirements for face coverings as applicable. However, they should continue to wear an FRSM in indoor public spaces as this provides an additional layer of protection to the wearer and maintain 1m or more physical distancing from all staff, individuals in receipt of care/ support and their friends and family, where possible. They should also maintain 2m physical distancing when an FRSM is removed. Staff can continue to be closer than 1m when providing direct care/ support as required.
<u>Supported housing settings</u>		



Supported persons/ individual in receipt of care within supported housing settings including sheltered housing - FRSM in use by staff	Staff	Staff can reduce physical distancing to 1m or more when wearing an Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask (FRSM) in the supported persons own home, and can be closer than 1m when providing direct care/ support as required.
Supported persons/ individual in receipt of care within supported housing settings including sheltered housing – where FRSMs are not in use by staff	Staff	Where staff remove FRSMs for any reason e.g. eating, drinking, changing, staff are advised to maintain 2m physical distancing from all staff, individuals in receipt of care/ support and their friends and family.
Supported persons/ individual in receipt of care within supported housing including sheltered housing	Supported persons/ family/ friends/ visitors	Supported persons/ service do not need to physically distance from friends, family or other visitors within their own home. They are advised to follow Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
Car sharing	Staff	Car-sharing should still be avoided whenever practical. However where it is unavoidable, mitigations should remain in place including FRSM use, opening windows and maximising distance between those travelling in the car to avoid potential COVID-19 acquisition.
Transport Vehicles	All	Physical distancing may be reduced to 1m between supported persons/ service users and staff unless the supported person/ service user are on the high risk pathway in which case 2m physical distancing should be maintained. Staff should continue to wear an FRSM when sharing a vehicle with a supported person and the supported person should follow legal requirements and guidance for face coverings as applicable.
Other i.e. providing support within public spaces and in outdoor environments	Staff	Staff do not need to physically distance from the person they are supporting in outside environments or public spaces as per the Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others - gov.scot



		<p>www.gov.scot) guidance, and should follow legal requirements for face coverings as applicable.</p> <p>However, they should continue to wear an FRSM in indoor public spaces as this provides an additional layer of protection to the wearer and maintain 1m or more physical distancing from all staff, individuals in receipt of care/ support and their friends and family, where possible. They should also maintain 2m physical distancing when an FRSM is removed. Staff can continue to be closer than 1m when providing direct care/ support as required.</p>
<u>Building-based day services</u>		
All areas	Staff	<p>Physical distancing amongst staff in building-based day services may now be reduced to 1m or more when staff where FRSMs.</p> <p>Where staff remove FRSMs for any reason e.g. eating, drinking, changing, staff are advised to maintain 2m physical distancing from all staff, supported persons and their friends/ families.</p> <p>Staff can reduce physical distancing to 1m or more when wearing an Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask (FRSM) to the individual they are supporting, and can be closer than 1m when providing direct care/ support as required.</p>
All areas	service users/ supported persons	<p>Physical distancing amongst service users of building based day services is included within Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing which can be found at the following link; Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) This states that people who attend building-based day services are not required to physically distance.</p>



Transport vehicles	All	Physical distancing may be reduced to 1m between supported persons/ service users and staff unless the supported person/ service user are on the high risk pathway in which case 2m physical distancing should be maintained. The supported person should follow legal requirements and guidance for face coverings as applicable.
<u>Other community based care settings and residential settings</u>		
All indoor areas – where FRSMs (or face coverings for non-direct health/ care staff) are in use by all staff	Staff	Physical distancing amongst staff in health and social care settings may now be reduced to 1m or more across all health and social care work settings and all COVID-19 pathways.
All indoor areas – where FRSMs (or face coverings for non-direct health/ care staff) are not in use	Staff	Where staff remove FRSMs for any reason e.g eating, drinking, changing, staff are advised to maintain 2m physical distancing from all staff, individuals in receipt of care/ support and their friends and family.
All areas – where FRSMs are in use by staff	Staff to Supported persons/ individual in receipt of care	Staff can reduce physical distancing to 1m or more when wearing an FRSM in the residential home, or in an indoor community care setting and can be within 1m when providing direct care, provided an FRSM is worn by the member of staff. Where an FRSM is not worn 2m physical distancing should be maintained.
Car sharing	Staff	Car-sharing should still be avoided whenever practical. However where it is unavoidable, mitigations should remain in place including FRSM use, opening windows and maximising distance between those travelling in the car to avoid potential COVID-19 acquisition.
Transport Vehicles	All	Physical distancing may be reduced to 1m between supported persons/ service users and staff unless the supported person/ service user are on the high risk pathway in which case 2m physical distancing should be maintained. Staff should continue to wear an FRSM when sharing a vehicle with a supported person and the



		supported person should follow legal requirements and guidance for face coverings as applicable.
Community health and social care settings (including waiting areas)	Patients/ service users	<p>Physical distancing amongst patients/ service users in community health and social care settings (including waiting areas) may now be reduced to 1m or more with the exception of patients/service users with symptoms of a respiratory infection. This will require triage questions to be undertaken on arrival.</p> <p>Some community care areas will receive individuals who are considered extremely clinically vulnerable. In these areas, clinical teams may choose to maintain 2m physical distancing.</p> <p>Where consultations are considered essential for suspected/confirmed COVID-19 patients, they must physically distance by 2m and follow the high risk pathway.</p>
Community health and social care settings (including waiting areas)	Visitors	<p>Visitors should maintain 1m or more distancing from staff and patients within the health and social care facility.</p> <p>They may have touch contact with loved ones (hug/kiss) however are reminded that maintaining 1m or more distancing out with direct touch contact wherever possible will reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory pathogens.</p> <p>Visitors answering yes to any of the triage questions should not visit until after they have completed their self-isolation period.</p>
Other i.e. providing support within public spaces and in outdoor environments	Staff	<p>Staff do not need to physically distance from the person they are supporting in outside environments or public spaces as per the Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying safe and protecting others - gov.scot</p>



		<p>www.gov.scot guidance and should follow legal requirements for face coverings as applicable.</p> <p>However, they should continue to wear an FRSM in indoor public spaces as this provides an additional layer of protection to the wearer and maintain 1m or more physical distancing from all staff, individuals in receipt of care/ support and their friends and family, where possible. They should also maintain 2m physical distancing when an FRSM is removed. Staff can continue to be closer than 1m when providing direct care/ support as required.</p>
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