

Chief Nursing Officer, Patients, Public and Health Professions  
Directorate

Ros Moore, RGN RNT BSc (Hons) Nursing, MA, Chief Nursing  
Officer



T: 0131-244 2314 F: 0131-244 3465  
E: [ros.moore@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ros.moore@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)



Dear Colleague

**National Infection Prevention and Control Manual for  
NHSScotland –  
Chapter 1: Standard Infection Control Precautions (SICPs)  
Policy**

I am pleased to inform you of the publication of the inaugural chapter of a National Infection Prevention and Control Manual for NHSScotland (HAI Task Force Delivery Plan 2008/11 and 2011 and beyond).

This chapter consists of the Standard Infection Control Precautions (SICPs), which forms the basis of everyday practice in the prevention and control of infection. The SICPs policy replaces the Health Protection Scotland (HPS) Model Policies and continues to take account of the current evidence base.

This letter is to advise NHS Boards of local requirements following publication of the SICPs policy on 13 January 2012.

**Background**

SICPs are intended for use **by all** healthcare staff **in all** healthcare settings **at all times** whether infection is known to be present or not to ensure the safety of patients, staff and visitors to the healthcare environment. They are the basic infection prevention and control measures necessary to reduce the risk of transmission of microorganisms from both recognised and unrecognised sources of infection. There are ten elements of SICPs:

- patient placement;
- hand hygiene;
- respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette;

**From Chief Nursing Officer  
Ros Moore, RGN RNT BSc  
(Hons) Nursing, MA**

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13 January 2012

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**Addresses**

For action

NHS Board Chief Executives

For information

NHS Board HAI Executive Leads  
NHS Board Medical Directors  
NHS Board Nurse Directors  
NHS Board Directors of Public Health  
NHS Board Infection Control Managers  
HAITF National Policy Group  
HAITF National Advisory Group  
HAITF Development and Implementation Group  
Chief Medical Officer  
Health Protection Scotland

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**Further Enquiries**

Carol Fraser  
HAI Policy Team  
Chief Nursing Officer, Patients,  
Public and Health Professions  
Directorate  
St Andrew's House  
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG

Tel: 0131-244 2490  
Fax: 0131-244 3465  
[carol.fraser@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:carol.fraser@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)



- personal protective equipment;
- management of care equipment;
- control of the environment;
- safe management of linen;
- management of blood and body fluids;
- safe disposal of waste; and
- occupational exposure management (including sharps).

All Boards must have a SICPs policy in their Infection Prevention and Control Manual. The aim of introducing this revised HPS SICPs policy is to ensure all Boards have access to current evidenced based SICPs that inform care processes and facilitate consistency.

The SICPs Policy is published as one of three distinct SICPs documents.

1. The SICPs Policy is the practice guide, to be applied by all NHS staff  
<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/haic/ic/publicationsdetail.aspx?id=49785>
2. The literature reviews summarise the available evidence that underpins and informs the practical application of the SICPs Policy and highlight implications for research. It is anticipated that these will be predominantly used by Infection Prevention and Control Teams (IPCTs)  
<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/haic/ic/standardinfectioncontrolprecautions-sicps.aspx?subjectid=00D>
3. A Compliance and Quality Improvement Data Collection Tool, that can be used to monitor and evidence compliance with SICPs as well as identifying, missed critical elements that require improvement  
<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/haic/ic/publicationsdetail.aspx?id=50228>

The SICPs Policy is published in this way to align evidence based practice with monitoring, assurance, quality improvement and scrutiny by:

- providing straightforward practice requirements based on an assessment of the extant professional literature instigating consistency in practice and advice across NHSScotland;
- promoting the application of evidence based (not ritualistic) care processes by staff;
- complementing national improvement programs and providing a focus for the development of local measurement plans to achieve sustained practical

implementation of a small number of critical activities into everyday practice (making the right thing easy to do for every patient every time), thereby reducing variation in practice and improving patient outcomes i.e. reduced Healthcare Associated Infections (HAIs).

As you are aware the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate (HEI) requires evidence of compliance with SICPs application during HAI inspections. It is anticipated that the introduction of the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual and the Compliance and Quality Improvement Data Collection Tool will promote consistency of practice and monitoring across Boards and support the HEI HAI inspection process.

## Action

It is expected that all Boards will adopt the National Infection Prevention Control Manual, with SICPs being the inaugural chapter. Boards should therefore replace existing SICPs Policy(ies) with the HPS SICPs policy.

It is requested that HAI Executive Leads and Infection Control Managers take the required actions within their Board to ensure SICPs are appropriately implemented and compliance monitored. Boards should utilise resources, such as Leading Better Care and Scottish Patient Safety Programme facilitators to support the processes for implementing compliance monitoring in clinical areas as appropriate.

The Compliance and Quality Improvement Data Collection Tool should be utilised by Boards. If Boards already have a locally devised tool to monitor and evidence compliance with SICPs they can continue to use it, ensuring the same level of detail included in the Compliance and Quality Improvement Data Collection Tool. This will ensure that evidence, improvement and scrutiny are aligned to maximise the impact of the objectives set out within the Quality Strategy.

Boards are not being requested to provide SICP compliance monitoring data to the Scottish Government. However, it is expected that; Boards adopt the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual; and maintain local assurance through continuous monitoring in line with the guidance provided in the Compliance and Quality Improvement Data Collection Tool in **all care areas in hospital and community settings by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012.**

Yours sincerely

*R Moore*

**ROS MOORE**  
Chief Nursing Officer