



Scottish Government

Dear Colleagues

**WITHDRAWAL OF THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):
EXTENDED USE OF FACE MASKS AND FACE
COVERINGS GUIDANCE ACROSS HEALTH AND SOCIAL
CARE, AND THE UNPAUSING OF VENTILATOR
ASSOCIATED PNEUMONIA (VAP) AND BACTERIAEMIA
SURVEILLANCE**

I am writing to you to inform you of a change to the extended use of face masks and face coverings guidance in healthcare and social care settings. This letter also includes detail of the unpausing of ventilator associated pneumonia (VAP) and bacteriaemia surveillance.

**Extended Use of Face Masks and Face Coverings
Guidance in Healthcare and Social Care Settings**

Following a review, the Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care and the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport have agreed to **withdraw** the 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): extended use of face masks and face coverings in hospitals, primary care and community healthcare settings' guidance and the 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): extended use of face coverings in social care settings including adult care homes' guidance.

The outcome of this review recognises that Scotland continues to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and has entered a calmer phase of the pandemic. Now is the right time to withdraw the extended face mask and face covering measures across healthcare as well as social care settings. This is due to the high uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations especially amongst the Scottish population, reduced severity of illness and hospitalisations, and availability of treatments for COVID-19. This follows advice from Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection (ARHAI) Scotland and Scottish Government Professional Clinical Advisors in Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC).

From:
Chief Nursing Officer,
Professor Alex McMahon

Chief Medical Officer,
Professor Sir Gregor Smith

Director for Social Care
Resilience and Development,
Angie Wood

Director for Primary Care,
Tim McDonnell

9 May 2023

DL (2023) 11

Addresses

For action

NHS Scotland Chairs,
NHS Scotland Chief
Executives,
Chief Officers Health and
Social Care Partnerships
Local Authorities
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
Infection Control Doctors
Infection Control Nurses

Enquiries

Scottish Government
Directorate for Chief
Nursing Officer
Email: cno@gov.scot



This guidance will be withdrawn, with effect from 16 May 2023.

In the absence of the extended use of face mask/face covering guidance; health and social care services are advised to follow the infection prevention and control (IPC) guidance on the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for standard infection control precautions and transmission based precautions as detailed in the [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual](#) (NIPCM) and the [Care Home National Infection Prevention and Control Manual](#) (CHIPCM). For further advice please engage with local health protection and/ or IPC teams.

If staff have concerns around the withdrawal of the extended guidance, then they should speak with their employer. Individual occupational health assessments and risk assessments should take place as appropriate.

Please note that the Scottish Government webpages currently hosting each set of guidance (relevant to either healthcare or social care settings) will remain online and contain a position statement, advising that the face masks/ face coverings guidance has been withdrawn. Links to the webpages are below:

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): extended use of face masks and face coverings in hospitals, primary care and wider community healthcare](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): use of face coverings in social care settings including adult care homes](#)

It is important to be vigilant in our response to COVID-19: vaccination is the best protection. It is worth noting that the level of protection may have reduced since a person's last vaccination; therefore booster doses are recommended to help protect the most vulnerable. The spring booster is being offered to people at greatest risk, including adults aged 75 or over, residents in care homes for older adults, and people aged 5 and over with a weakened immune system.

While health and social care workers are not being offered a spring booster, they remain eligible for the primary offer of COVID-19 vaccination. We would encourage all those yet to take up this offer to do so before the primary offer ends on 30 June. Details of the vaccination can be found on [Public](#)

[Health Scotland's webpage](#). Vaccination policy in Scotland is based on recommendations from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), who continue to consider latest clinical evidence on vaccine effectiveness and waning.

The Scottish Government regularly reviews this guidance as the pandemic situation changes and new emerging evidence is received.

Unpausing of Ventilator Associated Pneumonia (VAP) and Bacteriaemia Surveillance.

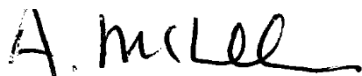
This Director's Letter will also serve as notice to the formal recommencement of VAP and Bacteriaemia surveillance within Intensive Care Units.

This surveillance was paused alongside the other changes to routine surveillance to support the COVID-19 pandemic response.

This was communicated in the previous Director's [Letter](#) in March 2020. Health Boards should now recommence this surveillance as part of their enhanced surveillance programme if they have not already done so.

I hope you find this information useful and as ever, you have my sincere thanks for everything you are doing. I continue to recognise your ongoing commitment to delivering healthcare to the people of Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



PROFESSOR ALEX MCMAHON
CHIEF NURSING OFFICER



PROFESSOR SIR GREGOR SMITH
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER



ANGIE WOOD

INTERIM DIRECTOR, SOCIAL CARE RESILIENCE AND
IMPROVEMENT, SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT



TIM MCDONNELL

DIRECTOR, PRIMARY CARE, SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT