

Living with COVID-19: Infection Prevention & Control Update

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this letter finds you safe and well.

As we navigate the winter period and ongoing challenges of COVID-19, Influenza, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and Norovirus we have observed a rise in cases within the general population. To help maintain safety and support best practices, the Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) team has prepared updated guidance:

Patient Testing

- Routine COVID-19 asymptomatic testing is no longer required.
- LFD testing is required only for symptomatic patients.
- Weekly PCR tests for clinically vulnerable patients are no longer necessary as per ELFT local guidance.
- LFD testing before discharge to care homes/hospices is no longer required. Symptomatic patients who test negative for COVID-19 on LFD should undergo a PCR test to rule out other respiratory infections such as Flu and RSV.

Guidance links:

- [Patient Testing Guidance](#)
- [Management Pathway for Service Users with COVID-19](#)

Staff Testing

- Staff with respiratory symptoms and a high temperature are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with others.
- LFD testing for symptomatic staff is not required.
- Isolation for staff is recommended for 5 days; [further guidance can be found here](#).
- Staff do not need to take an LFD test before returning to work.
- LFD test kits can be ordered via the Trust PPE warehouse.
- If you have any symptoms of diarrhoea please ensure you do not attend work unless you are symptom- free for 48 hours.

Mask Wearing



- Blanket mask-wearing is no longer mandatory; however, staff may wear fluid-resistant surgical masks (FRSM) based on personal preference.
- FRSM or FFP3 masks (if fit-tested) should be worn when providing care to patients with respiratory symptoms or confirmed COVID-19 infection. [For more information on FFP3 mask see here](#)
- During outbreaks, all staff must wear FRSM and other PPE as required (e.g., FFP3 masks for fit-tested staff).

- Local services may decide to implement mask-wearing based on risk assessments, particularly in areas with a high number of respiratory infections.

Infection Prevention and Control Measures

- Maintain hand hygiene using alcohol gel or soap and water. In cases of diarrhoea please wash hands with soap and water.
- Disinfect high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, keyboards, phones) with disinfectant wipes.
- Ensure good ventilation by opening windows where possible.
- Wear FFP3 masks (fit-tested) when caring for suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 or during aerosol-generating procedures.
- [Identify and manage clinically vulnerable service users guidance can be found here.](#) Maintain social distancing of at least 1 meter (increase to 2 meters in poorly ventilated spaces) when caring for patients with respiratory infections.
- Where there are two or more cases, please contact the infection control team for risk assessment and review at elft.infectioncontrol@nhs.net [Further guidance on outbreak management can be found here.](#)
- During outbreaks based on local risk assessment staff testing may be advised. LFD testing kits can be ordered via the Trust PPE Warehouse.
- Encourage service- users & staff to stay up to date with vaccinations.
- Review workplace risk assessments to ensure adequate ventilation and support staff at risk of severe respiratory illness.
- Any service user with vomiting or diarrhoea symptoms, isolate the service user to single room with dedicated bathroom and toilet facility. And contact the Infection Control team for further support and advice.

[Find the Infection, Prevention and Control Policy here](#)

[Find the Respiratory Policy \(COVID-19, Influenza RSV\) here](#)

Thank you for your continued dedication to infection prevention, ensuring the safety of our patients, staff, and visitors.

Yours sincerely



Claire McKenna
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We care
We respect
We are inclusive