

13 April 2023

## **PHA'S MARCH 3RD GUIDANCE ON IPC REGARDING RESPIRATORY ILLNESS**

**Did you receive a memo via email from PHA addressed to Trust Medical Directors, Trust Directors of Nursing and RQIA dated 3 March entitled 'Infection Prevention and Control measures for respiratory illness (including SARS-CoV2/COVID-19)'?**

**What steps have been taken as per the email to cascade this information to your staff?**

Please see the corporate communication below which notifies both acute and community settings

# Corporate Notification



## **Mask wearing policy change**



In line with Public Health Agency guidance, Belfast Trust will begin to phase out the wearing of face coverings in hospitals and facilities from today, Thursday 16 March 2023.

**13 April 2023**

This is **NOT** the outright removal of masks, this plan must be followed by staff and relevant risk assessments in place.

Where Clinical Areas have risk assessed that a mask **MUST** be worn please respect this request.

**Non – clinical settings (admin buildings, office spaces, laboratories etc.)**

*Arrangements for face coverings/masks*

- No longer required on entry to Trust facilities/corridors
- Should be considered in an emergency situation
- Support service users/staff who wish to continue wearing face coverings

*Risk Assessment considerations*

- Level of interaction with patients/ visitors/ public/ other staff members
- Vulnerability of individual staff members
- Risk/ consequence to service provision e.g. small specialist teams

**Patient and service user facing areas (including service users own home, community settings & clinical settings)**

*Arrangements for face coverings/masks*

- Risk assessment must be applied

*Risk Assessment considerations*

- Vulnerability of patient group/ staff members (eg Haem/Onc/Renal Transplant /Respiratory Wards-this list is not exhaustive).
- Risk/ consequence to the service e.g. specialist teams
- Ventilation of the ward/ area
- Triage arrangements for symptomatic patients

[You can see more details on the risk assessment considerations here.](#) This includes the Trust's In-patients Management Plan, including Testing and Outbreak Management.

The Trust will monitor the impact of this and reserve the right to reintroduce face coverings in the case of outbreak.

Risk Assessments should remain under constant review and any change communicated clearly.

The Risk Assessment is void were a patient has suspected/ confirmed respiratory illness. Appropriate respiratory precautions must be applied.