

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol/  
Prif Weithredwr GIG Cymru  
Grŵp Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol

Director General Health and Social Services/  
NHS Wales Chief Executive  
Health and Social Services Group



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

NHS Chief Executives  
Directors of Social Services

Our Ref: AG/AH/SB

28 September 2020

Dear Colleagues

### **COVID-19: Mandatory wearing of face coverings in shops and other indoor public spaces in Wales**

In a statement released on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September, the First Minister for Wales, Mark Drakeford, announced new Covid-19 rules to come into effect on Monday 14 September 2020. The new rules included:

- Compulsory face coverings are to be worn in shops and indoor public spaces
- Indoor meetings to be restricted to six people or less from an extended household

Further to my email dated 11<sup>th</sup> September, I am now writing to clarify the position for face coverings in all NHS organisations and health and social care settings across Wales. Heads of profession will be writing separately to colleagues in primary care services.

Hospitals and wider health and social care organisations in Wales have already put in place measures to reduce the risks of spread of COVID-19 and there is also clear advice on the use of medical masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) when managing patients or in contact with residents, within the UK COVID-19 IP&C guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

The social distancing, hand hygiene, frequent surface decontamination and other measures already in place to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 remain absolutely vital and must continue to be reinforced. In addition, Public Health Wales have advised:

- All visitors to health and care facilities must wear face coverings;
- Health and Social Care staff in “indoor public spaces” within the health and social care facility e.g. reception areas / waiting rooms / care home dining areas should wear a Type I or Type II medical face mask;



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- In areas of health or social care where direct care is not being undertaken (non-clinical areas), but where physical distancing isn't always possible and all other controls are not possible, face masks (Type I or Type II) / face coverings should be worn by all staff – this is for “source control” – protecting others from you;
- You should wear a face mask/covering in corridors and other public spaces in hospitals where it is not always possible to observe physical distancing measures. However, it will be for the Health Boards to decide locally on whether staff should wear face coverings OR face masks in these areas;
- Staff who do not work within a clinical or care area (e.g. offices, call centres, shops, canteen staff within hospitals) should not be required to wear a medical face mask on the premises, when 2m social distancing measures are in place;
- Staff are not required to wear a medical face mask during mealtimes in staff restaurants or when in changing rooms. Physical social distancing is essential during these times. During breaks and where possible consideration should be given to facilitating the use of outdoor spaces, which provide a safer alternative than enclosed indoor spaces. Alternatively, consideration should be given to staggering of staff breaks; and
- We advise that in **all clinical or care areas** of health and social care that staff including visiting staff e.g. porters, should wear a face mask (Type IIR – FRSM) at all times. When providing direct care, staff should continue to wear appropriate PPE in line with the UK IPC remobilisation guidance (low, medium and high risk pathways).

It should be noted that staff working in clinical areas must remove their PPE correctly, decontaminate their hands before leaving the clinical area, then use a new, clean face mask when moving through communal areas or through areas where mitigating measures are not possible to maintain. This is based on clinical advice from Public Health Wales that social distancing cannot always be maintained in health and social care settings and that we anticipate an increase in prevalence of COVID-19 cases and nosocomial transmission becoming a significant and growing risk. Further advice on these points can be found in the UK Infection, Prevention and Control (IP&C) guidance.

Guidance in relation to the new measures, including reasonable excuses for not wearing face coverings, can be found at: <https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-public>.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Andrew Goodall CBE**