

Covid Update 21st December 2021 emh care and support

Good evening everyone

On 8th December the Government announced 'Plan B' measures are coming into effect due to the highly infectious COVID-19 variant OMICRON. Whilst the vaccination programme had brought some good news about the Covid situation, the news regarding the new variant has meant that we need to continue to take precautions and help ensure our own and others' safety. **Face coverings are again compulsory** in England in shops and settings such as banks, post offices, hairdressers, and public transport, unless people are exempt. Also, people are being advised to **work from home if you can**.

Changes re the new variant based on government advice

The Coronavirus Alert Level has been raised to 4 and we are introducing an increase in testing in high risk Adult Social Care services, to maintain protection levels.

Staff testing will be increased from 2 to 3 lateral flow tests per week as well as the weekly PCR test.

The majority of fully vaccinated health and social care colleagues will be able to continue in their usual role, providing:

- colleagues should not have any COVID-19 symptoms
- colleagues should not have any travel related isolation requirements
- colleagues should immediately arrange for a PCR test, either through their workplace arrangements or via the NHS Test and Trace service, and the result of this PCR test should be negative prior to returning to work
- following the negative PCR result, the colleagues should undertake an LFD antigen test every day for the 10 days following their last contact with the case (even on days they are not at work)
- if a colleague has had a SARS-CoV-2 infection in the past 90 days, they should not have a PCR test and should only undertake daily LFD antigen tests
- on days the colleague is working, the LFD antigen test should be taken before starting their shift, and the result should be negative
- colleagues should comply with all relevant infection control precautions and PPE should be worn properly throughout the day
- where a colleague works with patients or residents who are highly vulnerable to COVID-19 (as determined by the organisation), a risk assessment should be undertaken, and consideration given to redeployment during their 10 day self-isolation period

Where a colleague is partially vaccinated or unvaccinated, they must self-isolate unless they are exempt (because they are under 18, unable to be vaccinated due to medical reasons or are taking part or have taken part in a clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine). If exempt, they should not attend work, or be redeployed to another role for the period of what would have been the isolation period.

If a colleague is providing care to or is in close contact with an individual with a COVID-19 infection and is wearing the correct PPE appropriately in accordance with the UK IPC guidance and How to work safely guidance, they will not be considered as a contact for the purposes of contact tracing and isolation, regardless of vaccination status.

In the case of residents who have been exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case, they should be isolated or cohorted for 14 full days after their last exposure. Do note that asymptomatic and fully vaccinated residents will not require self-isolation if certain additional mitigations are in place.

Further details: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Everything remains under continued review and the current approach in emh is outlined in the table below.

We will continue to act on the government guidance issued and to communicate with you so please, if you have any questions or uncertainties, please email the CRT for guidance. emhcoronavirusinfo@emh.co.uk

Please keep safe.

The table below sets out the approach colleagues should take in each scenario.

Requirement	Our position from 9 December 2021 onwards
Wearing a face covering	<p>Colleague in offices: must continue to wear a face covering when not at a desk.</p> <p>Colleagues/Operatives (including contractors) at emh properties: Existing RAMS remain in place and face coverings must be worn inside a property with other relevant PPE (if necessary) and in vehicles with 2 or more colleagues. Operatives working alone in secure, isolated areas do not need to wear a mask.</p> <p>Residents/Service users: we recommended in communal areas or when close to an emh colleague within their home.</p> <p>Colleagues in care and support must continue to wear the PPE advised for working in social care settings. Full guidance</p>

	<p>is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-to-work-safely-in-care-homes/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-resource-for-care-workers-working-in-care-homes-during-sustained-covid-19-transmission-in-england</p> <p>Signage will be updated. Communications will be issued to residents & service users.</p>
Following the 2-metre rule (COVID Secure measures)	<p>All colleagues must maintain a 2-metre space in the office where practicable. Not all desks will be available to use, please only use desks marked as in use.</p> <p>Colleagues/ Operatives at emh properties: (including contractors) to maintain a safe distance and ensure ventilation where possible. Existing RAMS remain in place and unchanged. If a resident is self-isolating or has tested positive for Covid, then rearrange the visit.</p>
Provision of hand sanitiser and wipes	<p>Please use as appropriate, they continue to be made available.</p>
Working in offices	<p>The offices remain closed</p> <p>Colleagues who are not 'home based working' or have permission from their Executive Director to attend an office site, may work in the offices. The Care and Support office at Holmewood remains open and colleagues are required to work safely, following the guidance. Colleagues are required to wear a mask for the duration of their shift except for when eating or drinking.</p>
Working in Care and Support and absence	<p>If colleagues need to self-isolate or are infected by Covid 19, please liaise with your manager and the Executive Director.</p>
Ventilation in offices	<p>Windows should be opened to allow a circulation of fresh air. Fans or air conditioning units must not be used in the office. We appreciate that when temperatures drop offices may be chilly and so, colleagues may want to consider wearing layers and dressing appropriately for a cooler office.</p>
Meetings (including with residents)	<p>Colleagues: No indoor meetings in person unless business critical such as essential training or with prior approval of Executive Director and must be managed based on Covid secure measures (face covering, distances etc). Meetings held outdoors are acceptable.</p> <p>Residents: Recognised residents' groups (SIGs, Forums, etc) should not meet indoors in person unless business critical or</p>

	with prior approval of an Executive Director and must be Covid secure. Meetings held outdoors are acceptable
Training and Conferences	Where conducted in person, this should be done under existing 'Covid Secure' guidelines (see above). Mandatory training takes priority over all other training. External conferences should not be attended.
Use of communal facilities (including lounges, restaurants, kitchen space, guest rooms, showers, and toilet facilities) for service users	Communal areas can be used, although we should adhere to government guidance & encourage non-colleagues to wear a mask and follow Covid Secure guidelines. Colleagues entering communal areas must wear a mask and follow existing RAMS. Sanitiser and wipes will be made available. Cleaning regimes will need to be reintroduced.
Self-isolation and Covid infection absence	Colleagues must advise of infection or self-isolation, and if possible, make alternative working arrangements.
Outdoor events for residents and service users	These can resume under government guidelines, whereby individuals must take responsibility for keeping themselves safe.

Best wishes

Emh Coronavirus Response Team