

Media Release

16 July 2021

NHS Patients, Staff and Visitors Must Continue To Wear Face Coverings in Healthcare Settings

NHS England have reminded the public that everyone accessing or visiting healthcare settings must continue to wear a face covering and follow social distancing rules.

Covid restrictions will end in many settings in England from Monday. However, Public Health England's infection prevention control guidelines and hospital visiting guidance are set to remain in place for all staff and visitors.

That means NHS visitor guidance will stay in place across all health services including hospitals, GP practices, dental practices, optometrists and pharmacies to ensure patients and staff are protected.

Staff, patients and visitors will also be expected to continue to follow social distancing rules when visiting any care setting as well as using face coverings, mask and other personal protection equipment.

Dr Paula Cowan, local GP and Chair of NHS Wirral CCG, said:

“We welcome and support this recent announcement from NHS England as the increase in the number of COVID-19 infections in Wirral show that we still have some way to go in the battle against the disease.

“It is therefore absolutely vital that this guidance remains in place and is followed, to help protect both our patients and staff, in GP practices and other healthcare settings.

“NHS sites across Wirral will be adhering to this guidance in an effort to reduce the risk of infection from COVID-19. We must all continue to do as much as possible to keep ourselves, and those around us, safe.”

Dr Nikki Stevenson, Medical Director and Deputy Chief Executive at Wirral University Teaching Hospital, said:

“Due to the increase in prevalence of COVID-19 in the community, visiting restrictions at our hospitals will remain in place. Anyone entering our hospitals will be required to wear a mask

and social distancing measures will still be in place. It is important that we protect our patients and staff from the spread of COVID-19. We would like to thank the community for their continued support with this.”

Dr Nick Cross Executive Medical Director at Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust, said:

“It is vital that everyone continues to play their part to help protect patients and service users in our communities - particularly those who may be more clinically vulnerable. The robust measures we have in place, both in our Trust and across the NHS, are vital to prevent the spread of any infection including COVID-19. This ensures that people can have confidence to access NHS services safely. We thank the public for their ongoing support and cooperation.”

Julie Webster, Director of Public Health, Wirral Council, said:

“Continuing to adhere to the core infection control measures that have been in place through the last 18 months – plus getting regularly tested and receiving vaccinations when they are offered – is considered the best way forward.

“The early evidence suggests that the hugely successful mass vaccination programme has weakened the link between infection of risk of hospitalisation and loss of life, which is incredibly encouraging, but that unfortunately is not the end of this story.

“Throughout this pandemic, we have witnessed from our population extraordinary levels of personal resilience, as well as kindness and thoughtful consideration towards others, and it is with this in mind that we ask you to continue your efforts in being strong, being kind and being safe.”

All primary care services in Wirral (GP practices, dental practices, pharmacies and optometry providers) are open. People can continue to access them as they have throughout the pandemic and are encouraged to come forward and seek help when they need any kind of medical care.

Wirral GP practices continue to offer convenient and flexible ways to receive healthcare, including appointments over the phone, using video calls and messaging to peoples mobiles or computers. Where patients need to be seen by a health professional face-to-face, this will be arranged.

Anyone wishing to seek healthcare advice from a GP can do so in one of the following ways:

1. Visit your GP surgery website and complete a confidential online form to request advice or treatment. You will receive a response as soon as possible, usually within two working days. Online forms should not be used for very urgent medical problems.

2. Call your surgery to arrange an appointment. You will usually be assessed by a clinician on the telephone first, with face-to-face care arranged if clinically needed. If you have a preference about how to access care you can discuss it with your practice.
3. For urgent issues or out of hours, you can also call the NHS on 111 or go online to seek NHS advice 111.nhs.uk
4. Download the [NHS App](#) to order repeat prescriptions and get health advice.

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Notes to editors:

The full press release from NHS England can be viewed on the NHS England website: [NHS England » NHS Patients, staff and visitors must continue to wear face coverings in healthcare settings](#)