

From the Deputy Secretary, Social Services Policy Group/
Chief Social Work Officer
Seán Holland



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte
Mánnystrie O Poustie

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Via email

All independent providers of:

- Domiciliary care including supported living
- Adult Residential Care Homes
- Nursing Care Homes

Chief Executives of HSC Trusts

Dear Colleagues

CONTINUING USE OF PPE AND IPC DURING THIS PHASE OF THE PANDEMIC

Many of you and your teams will by now have received the first of two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and some of you may by now have had your second vaccination. The continued deployment of the vaccination programme is both hugely important and welcome. The progress we have made in delivering vaccinations in such a short space of time – through the huge efforts of staff across the system – is a significant achievement.

However, I wanted to write to remind you that it is essential that we all continue to follow best practice to help minimise ongoing risks of infection. This applies to everyone in all settings regardless of whether they have received the vaccination. In particular, it is important that we all still act to prevent the spread of coronavirus through: optimal hand hygiene and personal hygiene measures, good ventilation, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when required and strict adherence to infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in all settings. The application of these measures has undoubtedly saved lives and will continue to do so. Until you are notified that regional guidance has changed, it is important that these measures are maintained.

PPE continues to be available, without charge, from HSC Trusts for independent sector providers who are unable to access their own supplies of PPE. In addition, we have made available videos and training, through both the Clinical Education Centre (CEC) and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) for instance, which focus on IPC and PPE. Furthermore there are programmes from the CEC aimed at those staff who do not regularly look after respiratory patients and/or have limited ward/community based experience – alongside a number of clinical skills type programmes to support staff dealing with respiratory patients. CEC programmes related specifically to COVID-19 are open free of charge to all sectors across Northern Ireland.

You will all be very aware that, alongside the positive news about progress in rolling out of vaccines, there is currently a high level of community transmission and huge pressure on the health and social care system, particularly our hospitals. Continuing to safely manage discharges from hospitals to care homes and people's own homes through ongoing IPC measures and the use of PPE, is an essential part of ensuring our hospitals can support the most unwell patients. This is another reason to continue to ensure we maintain the highest standards.

I want to thank you for your continued support to maintaining the very high standards that have been set so far and thank you once again for your hard work and commitment in these very challenging times.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Holland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

SEAN HOLLAND

Chief Social Work Officer/Deputy Secretary

cc: Prof Charlotte McArdle, DoH
Dr Michael McBride, DoH
Sharon Gallagher, HSCB
Marie Roulston, HSCB
Olive MacLeod, PHA
Rodney Morton, PHA
Tony Stevens, RQIA
Patricia Higgins, NISCC
Vivian McConvey, PCC
HSC Trust Directors of Older People's Services
Pauline Shepherd, IHCP
Lesley Megarity, UKHCA
Leslie-Anne Newton, ARC
Pat Cullen, RCN