

**From the Chief Dental Officer
Caroline Lappin**



BY EMAIL

Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 90 522952
Email: caroline.lappin@health-ni.gov.uk

9 June 2022

Dear Colleagues

Current position in Northern Ireland in relation to Infection Prevention and Control Guidance

As you may be aware, the UK-wide Guidance on *Infection Prevention and Control for Seasonal Respiratory Infections including SARS-CoV-2* has been removed from the GOV.UK website, and the associated Dental Appendix was withdrawn on 27 May 2022. Each of the four countries are now transitioning to the use of their IPC manuals and the application of Standard Infection Prevention and Control Precautions (SICPs) and Transmission Based Precautions (TBPs).

The Northern Ireland Regional IPC Manual has been updated and COVID-19 has been added to the table of communicable diseases. The purpose of this guidance is to provide disease specific infection prevention and control measures to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in Health and Social Care settings in Northern Ireland and is available on the PHA website at <https://www.niinfectioncontrolmanual.net/>. This Manual is an evidenced base resource for healthcare workers in all professional groups, and should be used in all Healthcare settings, including Hospital, Community, Primary Care, Private or Voluntary Sectors.

The following IPC measures should be in place across the health and social care system, including dental settings:

- Adherence to the IPC Hierarchy of controls as implemented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ensure effective Dynamic risk assessment which is commensurate with the level of COVID risk and the need to provide services.
- Physical distancing is recommended by WHO to remain at one metre and at two metres where infectious respiratory patients are cared for.
- Continue the effective use of appropriate levels of PPE.

Level 2 PPE

Patients who are known or suspected to be positive with a respiratory pathogen including COVID-19, and whose treatment cannot be deferred, should receive care using level 2 PPE for aerosol generating procedures to minimise the risk of spread of the virus. In addition, level 2 PPE should be used where an unacceptable risk of transmission remains following the application of the Hierarchy of Controls risk assessment. All other patients, including those undergoing AGPs, can be treated safely using standard IPC precautions and the overarching Hierarchy of Controls as outlined in the most up to date guidance.

From 7 July 2022, claims for level 2 PPE use under code 3001, will only be payable on this basis and justification in the clinical notes will be necessary to assure the claim. An MDS to this effect will follow.

To assist you, please find attached a short guide *Dental IPC guidance for Primary and Community Dental Settings (including Emergency Dental Centres) June 2022*. Please note, this is not stand-alone Dental IPC guidance, but a summary of the main guidance contained in the Infection Prevention and Control Manual for Northern Ireland.

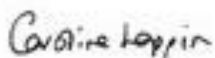
Implementation Period

All dental services should ensure effective dynamic risk assessment, which is commensurate with the level of COVID risk, including community transmission rates.

The Northern Ireland GDS Operational Guidance, updated 22 December 2021 is now superseded by the attached guidance and the Infection Prevention and Control Manual for Northern Ireland. **This is with effective for all dental settings from 7 July 2022**, providing a transition period for review of policies and updating of risk assessments. However, the guidance is valid with immediate effect for those settings who are in a position to implement sooner.

I want to thank each of you, and your teams, for the work provided over a very challenging two and a half years. We are certainly in a better place.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Lappin
Chief Dental Officer

Enc. Dental IPC guidance for Primary and Community Dental Settings (including Emergency Dental Centres) June 2022.pdf

Cc M Donaldson SPPG
D O'Carolan SPPG
RQIA
Clinical Directors, Community Dental Services, HSC Trusts