



## COVID-19 NHS 24 Operating Processes for Social Distancing Adherence

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**This document is based on what is currently known about COVID-19.  
As Scottish Government and Health Protection Scotland update their guidance as  
needed and as additional information becomes available NHS 24 will respond to and  
enact this as appropriate.**

## 1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To note NHS 24's operational plan in relation to adherence to the nationally provided guidance by Health Protection Scotland in relation to social distancing in the workplace during the period of COVID 19 outbreak.
- 1.2 The full document published by Health Protection Scotland for non-healthcare environments which NHS 24 is considered to be can be found at:  
  
[https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2973/documents/1\\_covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings.pdf](https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2973/documents/1_covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings.pdf).
- 1.3 Any reference to this guidance within this paper is taken from version 4.3 published on 20 May 2020.

## 2. TIMING

- 2.1 The operational plans described below are currently in situ within all of the NHS 24 estate and apply to all staff.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 With the international spread of COVID-19 now within communities across Scotland it means that everyone in Scotland should take extra precautions to ensure they practice good hand hygiene and social distancing. There is a responsibility upon employers in protecting their workforce to ensure they are adhering to social distancing and good hygiene practices and the national guidance. Ensuring Staff safety and supporting employee wellbeing are key NHS 24 priorities. NHS 24 have implemented processes to ensure this is where practicable the case. The processes as detailed below outline the steps and arrangements NHS 24 have in place to ensure staff safety and adherence to these guidelines.

This has formed an additional significant work stream of the incident management team, where partnership colleagues have the opportunity to escalate any issues or concerns on a daily basis.

### 3.2 **NHS 24 operational response to ensure adherence to Social Distancing measures**

For the purposes of Scottish Government and Health Protection Scotland guidance, NHS 24 is considered to be a non-healthcare environment as it is viewed as an environment where entry to the premises can be controlled and

one that is not managing patients directly within a face to face environment. Of note, both the task carried out by our key workers and the role are essential.

- 3.3 In these circumstances the guidance to maintaining a social distance is recommended to be 2 metres. NHS 24 are where it is possible invoking this guidance
- 3.4 In considering the ways that NHS 24 work, whether within a pod based contact centre environment, where large numbers of call handlers are supported by clinical supervisors within close proximity or within a smaller spaced local centre it will not always be possible to physically maintain the 2 metre social distance rule
- 3.5 Therefore where work cannot be continued or completed at a 2m social distance, in line with the guidance from Scottish Government and Health Protection Scotland, NHS 24 have considered where tasks can be done in a different way in order to observe and maintain the 2m rule
- 3.6 NHS 24 have changed the working environment to allow 2m to be maintained where possible – this is simpler to do when the staffing levels are low enough to accommodate this
- 3.7 When the contact centres are busier and the 2m rule cannot always be adhered to then NHS 24 will ensure that:
  - the time staff spend at less than 2m is minimised
  - the 2m distance is always maintained during screen and meal breaks
  - where the 2m distance cannot be kept, NHS 24 ensure the greatest distance between people is maintained and working practices are being continually evolved, changed and monitored to ensure this is being adhered to.
    - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874316/Infection\\_prevention\\_and\\_control\\_guidance\\_for\\_pandemic\\_coronavirus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874316/Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_for_pandemic_coronavirus.pdf)
  - appropriate environmental changes where possible have been implemented to minimise contact. Examples include reviewing and reducing contact centre seating availability to facilitate recommended social distancing within the centre, meaning staff are utilising different areas of the contact centres to increase social distances

- changes to normal working practices have been implemented. This included changing how staff take clinical supervision to allow the supervisor and the call handler to maintain social distancing
- good hygiene practices and all infection prevention and control measures are implemented fully. This includes:
  - fortnightly deep cleaning of all work stations including keyboards
  - ensuring all staff have access to supplies of alcohol wipes and antiseptic gel, where available. Detergent based wipes are an acceptable substitute.
  - reminding staff of self-responsibility in maintaining good hygiene by undertaking the contact precautions required to reduce potential transmission, including cleaning their work station and chair at the beginning and end of shifts. Headsets, as is normal practice should not be shared and all Clinical supervisors will carry and use their own Headsets.
  - staff are encouraged to undertake regular hand washing and each centre has communication and posters to encourage and demonstrate this
  - staff are further asked to ensure all personal property, bags, coats food etc. are placed in lockers, and to further minimise the risk of contamination staff are requested not to bring bags or coats onto the operational floor
  - staff are asked not travel in uniform if they travel on public transport. If staff are travelling by car, it is safe to travel in uniform as long as staff go directly to and from work and do not enter a public building/place en route
  - as new or updated guidance is received from Health Protection Scotland this is shared with and communicated to staff.
  - Any member of staff with symptoms must not attend work and must follow household isolation guidance. This also applies if any member of the household of a staff member develops symptoms. Staff who become unwell during a shift must have clear advice on what immediate steps to take.

## **4. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 As this is a fluid, dynamic and ever changing situation NHS 24 is continually risk assessing this situation and responding accordingly. This is discussed daily at COVID-19 Incident Management Team meetings and is discussed at the Executive Management Team to ensure that NHS 24 are evaluating and responding to the risks. This is also discussed at Area Partnership Forum.
- 4.2 This risk is currently on the COVID-19 Risk register and is being continually monitored to ensure mitigation is in place and effective
- 4.3 In line with national guidance all staff with specific requirements relating to health in relation to COVID-19 have had risk assessments. For confidentiality and due to the sensitive nature of these assessments these are managed by Human Resources, supported by senior clinicians in Service Delivery
- 4.4 NHS 24 have consulted with the organisational Health & Safety Adviser who has assessed our processes and guidance within the context of our operating environment and HPS guidance. Our advisor is satisfied with the arrangements and mitigation that NHS 24 have put in place to support staff and meet the requirements of the current guidance.

## **5. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

- 5.1 All equality and diversity issues have been considered, and there are no identified issues currently, this will be remain subject to constant review.

## **6. ENGAGEMENT**

- 6.1 Continued engagement is key to ensuring that NHS 24 are responding adequately to national guidance to maintain staff safety and wellbeing. Engagement in this issue has been at national level with Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland, at organisational level across multiple directorates, and with staff
- 6.2 On a weekly basis, the Director of Workforce and the Director of Service Delivery meet virtually with Area Partnership Forum colleagues. On a monthly basis a COVID-19 specific Area Partnership Forum takes place with

involvement from representative union Full Time Officers from Trade Unions and Professional Bodies and NHS 24 Executive Team Members

- 6.2 Any changes and updates will continue to be communicated to all staff within NHS 24 to ensure they remain informed and updated. Regular communication to staff has been occurring throughout this includes poster communication, written communication and daily face to face communication at the staff huddles.