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Dear Colleagues

## **COVID-19 Healthcare Associated Infection: Learning Letter for Care Homes and Day Care Settings**

There is recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted across all Health and Social Care systems including public and private sector and has placed immense pressures on all staff involved in managing COVID-19 incidents/outbreaks. It is also acknowledged that significant work has gone into mitigating and reducing the risk of infection across the wider system.

This letter outlines **critical early learning** emerging from a regional learning event and following a number of Hospital Acquired and Health Care Facility Acquired COVID-19 infection incidents/outbreaks which is relevant to the Care Home and Day Care sectors.

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- **Infection Prevention & Control:** In order to prevent and mitigate outbreaks of COVID-19 across and within the Care Home sector, robust and continuous implementation of Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance and practices are essential. This requires effective use of appropriate PPE, supporting adherence to hand hygiene guidance, maintaining the enhanced cleaning of all environments that is already in place and footfall management.

It is important that COVID secure practices are encouraged in all communal areas and administrative offices; this is equally important in **staff only spaces** as it is in areas where care and support is delivered to residents. Staff should ensure that they adhere to the required public health measures in these areas, this includes maintaining strict social distancing, ensuring that good hand and respiratory hygiene is practiced by all and that there is good ventilation.

Particular attention must be paid to rest and break rooms used by all staff: this includes areas used by clinical and non-clinical staff. All staff must observe the behaviours required to maintain 2m social distancing. Social distancing in staff rooms can be achieved by ensuring that breaks are staggered and that several people are not using rooms at the same time. It is particularly important that such areas have a robust and recorded risk assessment and when it is deemed that the rest or break area is NOT COVID secure, a face covering or clinical grade face mask should be donned by all staff.



These areas should be subject to enhanced environmental cleaning as per the organisation's cleaning policy with the frequency and quality of environmental cleaning being assured.

- **Social Distancing:** Risk assessment and the use of mitigation measures are encouraged to prevent overcrowding, and streamline (minimise) footfall in order to prevent the spread and transmission of COVID-19. These include :-
  - a. 2-metre spacing
  - b. Utilisation of screens where possible
  - c. Effective ventilation
  - d. Hand hygiene stations
  - e. Wearing of face masks for staff
  - f. Wearing of face covering for all visitors to the facility
  
- **Supporting staff, visitors and residents:** It is recognised that there is COVID-19 'fatigue' and there is a need to continue joint working on human and behavioural factors. Staff, visitors and residents should be supported to adhere to infection prevention and control measures. This requires recurrent messaging which makes consistent adherence to a COVID-19 secure environment easier.

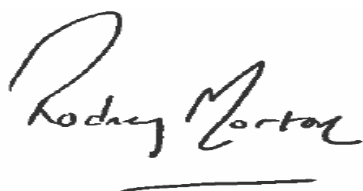
Provision of effective signage and development of monitoring systems which enables adherence to infection prevention and control measures should be put in place. Where possible, one way systems/protective screening may be put place, in order to reduce the risk of staff, residents and visitors compromising social distancing guidelines. It is also



important that staff working in COVID-19 secure environments, and who are required to consistently wear PPE, have frequent socially distanced breaks. Organisations should continue to ensure the provision of emotional and psychological support services for all their staff.

**To note;** it is vital that everyone takes responsibility to adhere to public health advice outside of the Care Home environments so that COVID-19 transmission can be reduced.

I would ask that Care Home and Day Care providers take account of the learning outlined in this letter and ensure that all the measures and standards noted are in place across their organisation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all providers for your hard work and diligence in supporting the fight against COVID-19.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney Morton". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Mr Rodney Morton

Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals

