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To
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Registered care at home providers
Chief Executives NHS Boards and Local Authorities

CC
Nurse Directors
Chief Social Workers
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23 June 2021

COVID-19 Use of Face Masks in Social Care Settings including Adult Care Homes Guidance Update

I am writing to you with an update on the extended use of face mask guidance in social care settings.

I understand the language within the update to the guidance, previously named Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on the extended use of face masks and face coverings in hospitals, primary care, wider community care and adult care homes, has caused confusion and concern for care homes, social care staff, residents and users of social care services and their friends and family, for which the Scottish Government and I sincerely apologise. This was not our intention.

We all want to keep care home residents, and users of social care services and staff as safe as possible. That is why the guidance on the extended use of face masks and face coverings in hospitals, primary care, wider community care and adult care home, continues to include recommendations on face masks in adult social care sector, in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) 'Advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID-19'. The guidance was originally updated in October 2020 to reflect WHO guidance and a further update was provided on 7 June.

We have listened to feedback from the sector on the recent update (June 7) and have worked in partnership with representatives from the sector to review and complete a further update of this guidance. As a result of this review, social care guidance has now been separated from hospital and primary care settings and the new guidance document has been published and can be viewed accessed here [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): use of face coverings in social care settings including adult care homes](#)

The guidance on the extend use of face masks within adult care homes, has been updated to ensure it accurately communicates that residents are **not** required to wear a Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask (FRSM) or face covering within the care home, which is first and foremost their own home. It is a resident choice whether to wear one. However, as adult care homes are homes to multiple vulnerable people and have a higher level of visitors both

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social and professional; as well as a variety of staff carrying out duties in the home, adult care home residents may benefit from wearing an FRSM as a final layer of protection in certain circumstances. The circumstances and factors adult care home should consider before recommending masks as an extra layer of protection to residents are detailed in the document, with the needs and choices of adult care home residents as the primary consideration.

The updated guidance also provides information to support the [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Scottish COVID-19 Care Home Infection Prevention and Control Addendum](#) and [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Scottish COVID-19 Community Health and Care Settings Infection Prevention and Control Addendum](#) including further information on when staff in social care settings should wear masks and the type of masks that should be worn depending on the role of the workers.

I hope that this provides some some clarity on guidance and alleviates any concerns in adult social care with regards to mask wearing and use within these setting. I would like to apologise once again for any upset and confusion my previous communication caused.

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