



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Protocol for the review of current public health guidance for community settings and infection prevention and control measures in healthcare settings for COVID-19

11 January 2021

Version	1.0
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Version history		
Version	Date	Description of change
v1.0		

Purpose and aim

The purpose of this protocol is to outline the process by which the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) will synthesise evidence to inform advice from HIQA to the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). This rapid review was requested by NPHE to address the following policy issue:

“In light of increased transmission of COVID-19 and the identification of new variants of concern, is the current Irish guidance in relation to public health measures in community settings and infection prevention and control measures in healthcare settings appropriate?”

The following research question was formulated to inform this policy question:

“Have international agencies introduced any additional or more stringent public health measures in community settings or infection prevention and control measures in healthcare settings, in response to increased transmission of COVID-19 or the identification of new variants of concern?”

1. Process outline

It is important that a standardised approach to the process is developed and documented, to allow for transparency and to mitigate risks which may arise due to changes in staff delivering and or receiving the information.

Three distinct steps in the process have been identified. These are listed below and described in more detail in sections 2.1-2.3.

- 1.** Search relevant international resources.
- 2.** Review and summarise identified public health guidance on infection prevention and control of COVID-19.
- 3.** Summarise findings.

2. Review process

2.1 Search relevant international resources

The international resources included for review come from a range of ministries of health and public health agencies. These were chosen based on new COVID-19 variants of concern having been identified within that country, the country being in a similar phase of pandemic response, guidance being available in English, widespread use of the organisation’s advice, and or the working constraints of HIQA’s Evidence Synthesis Team. The websites listed below will be reviewed to identify additional or more stringent infection prevention and control measures, compared to those

recommended in Ireland, that have been introduced in response to increased transmission or the identification of new variants of concern.

- Australian Government Department of Health
<https://www.health.gov.au/resources>
- Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Austria
<https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Ministerium/Informationspflicht/corona.html>
- Ministry of Education and Training, Belgium
<https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/update-corona-akkoord-over-draaiboeken-2020-2021>
- Government of Canada
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents.html>
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/awareness-resources.html>
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>
- National Board of Health, Ministry of Children and Education, Denmark
<https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2020/jul/200701-regler-og-retningslinjer-fra-den-1--august-er-nu-udstedt-i-ny-bekendtgoerelse>
<https://www.sst.dk/da/Udgivelser/2020/Genaabning-af-skoler>
- Public Health England
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>
- National Health Service England
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/page/2/?filter-keyword&filter-category&filter-publication&filter-date-from&filter-date-to&filter-order-by=modified-desc>
- Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare
<https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases-and-vaccinations/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates>
- Ministry for National Education, France
<https://www.education.gouv.fr/>
- Federal Ministry of Health, Robert Koch Institut, Germany
<https://www.zusammengengencorona.de/en/>
https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/Infekt/EpidBull/Archiv/2020/19/Art_03.html?n=13490888
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland
<https://www.government.is/ministries/ministry-of-education-science-and-culture/>
- Government of the Netherlands, National Institute for Public Health and Environment, Netherlands

<https://ci.rivm.nl/langdurig-neusverkouden-kinderen>

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/coronavirus-covid-19/ouders-scholieren-en-studenten-kinderopvang-en-onderwijs>

- Ministry of Health New Zealand
<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>
- Public Health Agency of Northern Ireland
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-professionals-and-organisations>
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/guidance-healthcare>
- Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)
<https://www.fhi.no/en/id/infectious-diseases/coronavirus/>
- Health Protection Scotland
<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>
- Ministry of Health Singapore
<https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19/advisories-for-various-sectors>
- Ministry for Health, and Ministry for Education and Vocational Education, Spain
<https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/portada.html>
- Public Health Agency of Sweden
<https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/>
- Federal Office of Public Health, Switzerland
<https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/krankheiten/ausbrueche-epidemien-pandemien/aktuelle-ausbrueche-epidemien/novel-cov.html>
- Welsh Government
<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>
- World Health Organization (WHO)
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance-publications?healthtopics=b6bd35a3-cf4f-4851-8e80-85cb0068335b&publishingoffices=aeebab07-3d0c-4a24-b6ef-7c11b7139e43&healthtopics-hidden=true&publishingoffices-hidden=true>
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/search?s=&sort_by=field_ct_publication_date&sort_order=DESC&f%5B0%5D=diseases%3A2942
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/whats-new-all.html>

2.2 Review and summarise identified public health guidance on infection prevention and control of COVID-19

All identified current public health guidance on infection prevention and control of COVID-19 will be reviewed, and any additional or more stringent infection prevention and control measures that have been introduced in response to increased transmission or the identification of new variants of concern will be extracted.

2.3 Summarise findings

A summary of the findings will be drafted with all extracted data presented in the report. This review will consider guidance relating to social distancing and personal protective equipment in the following distinct areas:

- General community settings
- General healthcare settings
- Residential care facilities
- Community pharmacy
- Public transport
- Education
- Vulnerable groups
- Workplaces where it is difficult to socially distance.

3. Quality assurance process

The review question will be led by an experienced analyst. A minimum of five team members will be assigned to assist with the review. The second reviewers will be required to check that the report accurately reflects the guidance included, and will help expedite the process given the short turnaround time. The summary will be reviewed by a senior member of the team, to ensure processes are followed and quality maintained.

4. Timelines

This rapid review of public health guidance will be conducted in line with the processes and timelines outlined for Phase 2 of HIQA's COVID-19 response. Work will commence on 11 January 2021 and a final draft will be completed and circulated to NPHET on 13 January 2021 for consideration at their meeting on the 14 January 2021.

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