



COVID-19

Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines for Maintenance Staff and Contractors providing services in HSE Health and Social Care Facilities including clinical settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Note: This document is a brief general guide on key points related to risk of infection. It does not replace the obligations of employers of external contractors to ensure adherence to requirements for health and safety in the workplace as specified by legislation or relevant authorities.

These guidelines may be updated in line with HPSC guidelines.

The most important part of protecting patients from the risk of infection caused by maintenance or development work in a clinical area or adjacent to a clinical area is careful attention to basic hygiene at all times. Prevent or limit entry of dust or dirt into areas occupied by patients. Do not enter a clinical area while wearing work clothing that is soiled or dusty and wash your hands or use alcohol hand rub before you enter the clinical area.

Purpose

This guideline has been developed to support both HSE Maintenance staff and Contractors, working on behalf of the HSE, in ensuring the correct Infection Prevention & Control Precautions are adhered to when working in any clinical setting.

Scope

This guideline applies to all HSE Maintenance staff and Contractors working on behalf of the HSE for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Risk Assessment/ Work Planning

It is important that all tasks are risk assessed individually in terms of controls required. All tasks must be planned and managed, to avoid risk, as far as reasonably practicable. Key stakeholders involved must be aware of these plans.

Please refer to COVID-19 - Social Distancing Working Environment-‘HR Circular 014/2020: Social Distancing in the Health Sector’ and ‘HR Circular 017/2020: update re social Distancing in the Health Sector’ and ‘HR Circular 019/2020 Essential Service under new Public Health Guidelines COVID-19’

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/safetywellbeing/healthsafetyand%20wellbeing/covid-19-social-distancing-working-environment-risk-assessment.pdf>

Working in close (within 2 metres) proximity to patients/ clients with suspected/confirmed infection should be avoided if possible.

In seeking to avoid working within 2 m of patients/clients, plan the work in advance and vacate a room or an area to facilitate works where possible. Consider if the work can be done at off peak times or at a time when the facility is unoccupied.

In the case of external contractors, the individual’s employer should undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment and ensure controls are in place to protect their employee during travel and when undertaking work on an HSE (or other) site. The purpose of this risk assessment is for the employer to determine what precautions/risk controls are necessary.

The HSE should ensure that sufficient information is provided to the contractor/employee to enable him/her to undertake this risk assessment. This would include communication between the contractor and the relevant Clinical Manager or HSE contact person and the sharing of the HSE’s local risk assessment on COVID-19. HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre) guidelines should also be brought to the attention of the contractor.

Roles and Responsibilities

Supervisors of HSE Staff or Contractors are responsible for ensuring that staff are appropriately trained to work in or adjacent to a clinical setting and are effectively supervised.

All healthcare facilities should have pathways in place to ensure that services provided by external contractors including deliveries of supplies can be performed in a safe manner with minimal risk to the contractors and staff/patients.

The healthcare facility and the Contractors should have processes in place to manage the risk of persons who have symptoms of COVID-19 entering the facility.

The Senior Clinical Manager/Manager on site is the appropriate point of contact, all guidance and direction given by the Senior Clinical Manager/Manager should be adhered to with regard to basic infection prevention and control guidance.

All HSE Maintenance staff and Contractors must work in a safe manner and follow all advice and guidance given by the HSE Clinical Manager.

Standard Precautions for all Maintenance/ Minor works in Clinical settings

Staff or Contractors should not attend any HSE premises to carry out work if they themselves have fever, cough or shortness of breath or any kind of respiratory symptoms or if they have been identified as a COVID-19 Contact.

They should be aware of the policy for reporting illness to their manager.

Please refer to COVID-19 Information Leaflet for contractors on Healthcare sites

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/employeremployeesguidance/Covid%2019%20Information%20for%20contractors%20and%20maintenance%20staff%20on%20healthcare%20sites.pdf>

Physical distancing of 2 metres must be adhered to the greatest possible extent.

Hands must be cleaned before entering and upon leaving the healthcare facility and regularly throughout the day as appropriate.

If there is a requirement to enter a unit or ward accommodating patients or residents within a healthcare facility – hands must be cleaned before entering and upon leaving individual wards or units within the healthcare facility.

Wash your hands with soap and water if there is visible dirt. Alcohol-based hand rub can be used throughout the day on visibly clean hands.

Hand hygiene is demonstrated on the HSEland Training course as outlined below.

Please remember that alcohol-based hand rub is flammable and this should be taken into consideration when working with possible sources of ignition.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth as you work, as respiratory viruses need access to these body sites in order to cause infection.

Observe respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette for example when coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. Discard the tissue immediately into a waste bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. If you do not have a tissue cough or sneeze into your upper arm or the crook of your elbow - do not cough or sneeze into your hand.

Staff or contractors should not eat, drink or smoke/vape smoke while carrying out work and should minimise social interaction with each other.

Avoid physical contact with persons within the facility – gestures such as hand shaking must be avoided.

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

Where it is necessary for the safety of the Maintenance Staff /Contractor or for patients/clients, appropriate PPE and instruction on use should be provided. This should be based on advice from the Clinical Manager of Infection Prevention and Control team.

Where relevant to their work Maintenance staff and Contractors must ensure that they complete the HSEland online training course on PPE.

When working within an environment where healthcare is being delivered Maintenance Staff and Contractors should follow guidance on mask use for healthcare workers (link below).

Surgical masks should be worn by all workers for all encounters, of 15 minutes or more, with other workers in the workplace where a distance of 2 m cannot be maintained.

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/ppe/useofsurgicalmasksinhealthcaresetting/>

Maintenance staff and Contractors must be supplied with the necessary PPE by their employers. However, it would be prudent to ensure that the HSE site has a supply of PPE available for any visitors. The contractor should be inducted onto the site on arrival (i.e. briefed on local precautions). Any PPE should be appropriately disposed of before leaving the HSE site in accordance with HPSC guidelines.

Training

The HSELand Courses detailed below are available for all Maintenance and Contract staff before working in a clinical setting

- Hand hygiene for HSE non-Clinical staff:
- Putting on and Taking off PPE in a healthcare /community setting:
- Introduction to Infection Prevention & Control

Note: staff should create a staff login to HSELand if they do not have one already. External Contractors can login in as a Temporary worker/ Volunteer:

<https://www.hseland.ie/dash/Account/Login>

References

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/>

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

ENDS