

Policy for Patients and Staff During the Covid-19 Pandemic



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1. Background

1.1 Clinical Partners is moving some of its assessments and consultations back to face to face appointments at the request of patients and clinicians. This will be a gradual process and kept under review depending on Government Guidelines and local restrictions or risks.

1.2 This policy reflects the guidelines in place for the safe delivery of services and promotes social distancing, effective hygiene and cleaning processes and the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment for patients and clinicians.

2.2 Due to the everchanging pandemic situation and guidance in place this policy will be reviewed frequently in response to the service being provided and the current restrictions in place.

2. Purpose

2.1 To protect staff, parents and patients by implementing safe working practices including:

- social distancing
- restricting numbers of people within the clinic
- enhanced cleaning procedures
- wearing of PPE

2.2 To implement procedures to ensure that any person (patient, parent, visitor or staff) with signs or symptoms that might be due to COVID-19 will not be admitted to clinic facilities.

2.3 To inform patients of Clinical Partners' Covid-19 operating principles are that:

- they will be in any clinic or consulting room for as little time as possible
- they will be asked to practice social distancing wherever possible

and

- they will be asked to attend wearing a facial cover.

2.4 To ensure that Clinical Partners operates within current guidelines issued by the Government of the NHS. <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

2.5 To promote and enforce the wearing of PPE (Personal protection equipment) in accordance with guidance in place for staff and face coverings for patients or visitors to our clinics.

Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Clinical Partners will also take into account any exemptions to the wearing of face coverings in accordance with the guidance in place at the time such as:

- children under the age of 11 (Public Health England do not recommended face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)
- people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability

- where putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- if you are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate

[Government advice on face coverings](#)

2.6 To enhance infection control procedures for the environment and assessment process.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all employees, patients, visitors and contractors working for or supplying services to or for Clinical Partners.

3.2 All Clinical Partners staff and Clinicians will be emailed and additionally given a physical copy of this policy if requested.

3.3 All patients will be sent a copy of this policy to read before attending the clinic. If they have any questions they should contact Clinical Partners Triage Team.

4. Patient Policy

4.1 Patients and accompanying others are reminded that if on the day of their appointment they are feeling unwell, have developed a temperature or cough, or a member of their family/household or someone they have had close contact with have developed any symptoms or tested positive, they are to cancel their appointment and to rebook when well and guidelines allow.

4.2 Patients and accompanying others are requested to not arrive before their appointment time. One parent only should accompany a child. Accompanying relatives etc. may be asked to wait outside until the appointment is over if COVID safe waiting areas are not available. All adult patients, parents and other visitors are required to wear masks upon entry to the clinic. These may be removed only as directed by your clinician.

4.3 Patients and accompanying others will be asked a series of health screening questions upon arrival and temperature checks may be undertaken. Additionally, anyone who presents with a cough or visually appears to be unwell to Clinical Partners' staff, will be asked to leave immediately and to rebook their appointment when they are feeling better.

4.4 Patients and Clinical Partners staff will not be permitted to wander around any communal areas to use their mobile phones.

4.5 Waiting areas will not be used by Clinical Partners Patients, unless social distancing can be maintained and COVID safe policies are in place.

4.6 Hand sanitiser is available to our patients, Clinical Partners staff and visitors.

4.7 We are unable to offer beverages in clinics. Please bring your own drinks if required.

4.8 Patients are to be asked to leave the building as soon as their assessment has concluded.

4.9 Patients are asked to follow Local Policy and NHS guidelines and inform Clinical Partners if they or their child should show any signs of COVID 19 infection up to 14 days after their assessment. [NHS Test and Trace](#)

5. Staff Policy

5.1 All members of the Clinical Partners team are reminded that if they are feeling unwell, have developed a temperature or cough, or a member of their family/household or someone they have had close contact with have developed any symptoms or tested positive, they are to follow current guidance and inform Clinical Partners Triage Team.

5.2 Clinical Partners staff must ensure that they are aware of when and how to self-isolate if required, see link: [NHS Self-isolation and treating coronavirus symptoms](#)

5.3 Clinical Partners staff should stay away from work until they are free of any symptoms of infection in accordance with the guidance. [How long to self-isolate - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#) . No pressure will be put on any member of staff to return to work until they feel well enough to do so.

5.4 All Clinical Partners team members should wet wash hands for 20 seconds with liquid soap and dry thoroughly on entering the consulting rooms, before eating/preparing food and drink, every two hours and between patients, following cleaning and when leaving the building. How to hand wash posters are generally displayed in numerous locations around the consulting rooms.

5.5 Appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) is to be worn by staff when:

- local policy dictates
- 2m social distancing cannot be maintained due to the nature of the role. In this event surgical masks are provided
- social distancing is not possible due to the nature of the assessment, visors or masks to be worn as necessitated
- cleaning the consulting room or equipment, gloves and aprons and are provided for cleaning ADOS equipment

5.6 Clinicians occupying the consulting rooms are responsible for cleaning/wiping down the chairs, high touch areas and any surfaces that their patients have been in contact with during their appointment after each patient leaves. This is to include the door handles on both sides of the doors.

5.7 Hand sanitiser is available for staff to use regularly in each consulting room and in every case between each patient.

5.8 We are asking for packed/cold lunches and beverages to be brought into the consulting rooms to reduce risks. Communal kitchens/break areas if available will be used in accordance with local procedures that will be shared with Clinical Partners team members.

5.9 Mobile phones – if bringing into the building please clean your mobile phone with a bacterial wipe on entering the building and again on leaving. Please refrain as much as possible from walking around making non-essential calls and placing your mobile phone on surfaces as you move around. Research has shown the virus can remain active on plastic for a very long time.

5.10 If you experience any difficulty with patients' compliance with any aspect of this policy, please contact Clinical Partners Triage Team who will assist with the situation if required.

5.11 As part of our responsibilities to our staff, Clinical Partners will keep everyone updated on any further actions that we may take to reduce risks of exposure to Covid-19.

6. Cleaning protocols in premises belonging to Clinical Partners

6.1 Communal areas

- Between each assessment door handles, switches etc. will be cleaned with Isopropyl 70% alcohol wipes - signature sheet will be completed by the reception/triage staff
- If in the event the waiting areas are used reception staff will clean the chairs; door handles (both sides), tables using Isopropyl 70% alcohol wipes after use. Chairs are wiped down. The initials of the person doing the cleaning will be recorded on the appropriate cleaning record sheet.

6.2 Consulting rooms

- between each assessment the door handles, switches, tables etc. will be cleaned with Isopropyl 70% alcohol wipes
- a signature sheet will be completed by the clinical staff

6.3 Equipment or assessment play equipment must be decontaminated in accordance with the procedures in Appendix 1 Decontamination. Staff must familiarise themselves with the Toy Management Policy.

7. Cleaning protocols in premises hosting facilities to Clinical Partners

7.1 Clinical Partners has assurance from the owners of consulting rooms used by our clinicians that additional cleaning in addition to the regular cleaning is being carried out. There may be restrictions to the use of toilets and communal areas to ensure social distancing. We do advise clinicians to:

- familiarise themselves with any local procedures or requirements
- wash their hands for 20 seconds with liquid soap and dry thoroughly on entering the consulting rooms, before eating/preparing food and drink, every two hours and between patients
- clean door handles, switches, tables etc. with Isopropyl 70% alcohol wipes before and between each patient assessment

8. Monitoring the Policy

8.1 This Policy and the Toy Management Policy and Daily Procedures document must be read, by each member of the Clinical Partners Team.

8.2 Records of cleaning record will be maintained in premises managed by Clinical Partners.

9. Risk Assessment

9.1 A risk assessment has been carried out with suggestions recorded and implemented.

This is a working document and will be updated as further risks are identified or indeed removed. The arrangements within the risk assessment have been influenced by the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) and [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) as the Covid-19 (SARS-Cov-2) virus is hazardous to health for which a risk assessment is required.

10. Impact Assessment

10.1 When developing this policy for reintroducing face to face assessment and consultations Clinical Partners has considered any impact on any of the protected characteristics under the Equality and Human Rights legislation in place and if this impact is likely to be positive or negative. The following characteristics have been identified as possibly impacted by COVID and how Clinical Partners provides services.

10.2 Currently face to face consultations are available for limited NHS commissioned and private assessments. This is due to the closure of venues, the difficulty in being able to follow local and national guidance around social distancing and the wearing of PPE for some of the assessments we provide.

10.3 Age

Older people

- Older people are more likely to develop serious ill health and are more likely to have complex co-morbidities which place them at greater risk of complications.
- As restrictions lift or the vaccination programme ensures some immunity, Clinical Partners will consider the impact of “social distancing” approaches to COVID-19 on the human rights of older people by maintaining effective infection control procedures in clinics in order to protect lives.

Clinical Partners acknowledges that the current lack of face to face services for older people may have a negative effect on our older patients. However face to face assessments may put them at greater risk. We will be keeping government guidance under review, assessing risks, reviewing requests for face to face consultations and reviewing any complaints.

10.4 Child and Adolescent Services

- Initially Clinical Partners received decreased referrals to our Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services that may cause a surge in referrals after lockdown and also create difficulties in transition planning for young people.
- Children, especially those in primary school are thought to have minor COVID symptoms but long-term effects on mental health for those who are shielding, in lockdown and missing out on education is significant. [COVID-19 - research studies on children and young people's views | RCPCH](#)

Clinical Partners will be monitoring feedback from parents and patients as we slowly reintroduce services following guidance available.

10.5 Race/Ethnicity

Disproportionate numbers of BME people are dying of COVID-19 and also there are also disproportionate numbers of BME people in intensive care with severe effects of COVID-19. Reasons for this are currently unknown. BME people may be more likely to have health conditions associated with a worse outcome from COVID-19 (such as diabetes) or be in occupations where social distancing is harder to maintain. There may also be factors connected with access to healthcare.

Clinical Partners will be monitoring feedback from parents and patients as we slowly reintroduce services following guidance available.

10.6 There have also been a disproportionate number of deaths of BME staff who have been delivering health and social care. Some BME staff have said that, because of discrimination, they are fearful of asking for adequate PPE.

None of our Consultants or Psychologists are expected to work if they are not comfortable to do so. Home working and Zoom conferencing has been initiated. PPE is provided as required as clinics reopen. We are in regular contact with our clinicians.

10.7 Gender

Clinical Partners is aware that men are more likely to experience severe COVID-19 symptoms and are disproportionately represented in deaths from COVID-19.

Clinical Partners has assessed that the access of men to the gradual reopening of our face to face services should not be affected or the risk increased with good social distancing and infection control procedures.

10.8 Gender Reassignment

Clinical Partners acknowledges that our social distancing policy might have a higher impact for Trans older people who have experienced discrimination and this may reinforce a sense of stigma.

Clinical Partners will be monitoring feedback from patients as we slowly reintroduce face to face services following guidance available.

10.9 Pregnancy and maternity

There's no evidence that pregnant women are more likely to get seriously ill from coronavirus. But pregnant women have been included in the list of people at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) as a precaution. This is because pregnant women can sometimes be more at risk from viruses like flu.

It's not clear if this happens with coronavirus. But because it's a new virus, it's safer to include pregnant women in the moderate-risk group. It may be possible for them to pass coronavirus to their baby before they are born. But when this has happened, the babies have got better. There's no evidence coronavirus causes miscarriage or affects how a baby develops in pregnancy.

Clinical Partners will be monitoring guidance for pregnant women in the delivery of face -to face services.

10.10 Disabilities

New data shows a significant increase in deaths of people with a learning disability as a result of Covid-19. On 2 June 2020, the [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) published data](#). The new figures included deaths reported by those who provide care for people with a learning disability and/or autism. This includes adult social care, independent hospitals and community care. Between 10 April and 15 May 2020, 386 people who were receiving care from learning disability and/or autism services died. In the same period last year 165 people died. This represents a 134% increase. Of the 386 people who died this year, 206 were as a result of suspected or confirmed Covid-19.

Other disabilities can also increase the risk to people.

Clinical Partners will be monitoring guidance and patients who declare a disability in the provision of any face to face services during the pandemic.

11. References

Managing risks and risk assessment at work: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm>

RIDDOR reporting of COVID-19: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/riddor-reporting-coronavirus.htm>

Guidance to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the coronavirus pandemic: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

Further references used to inform and assist in the creation of the policy:

Returning to the workplace: Safety considerations for practising psychologists: <https://www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/professional/returning-workplace>

Reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the hospital setting: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/reducing-the-risk-of-transmission-of-covid-19-in-the-hospital-setting>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus#infection-prevention-and-control>

COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

PPE in outpatient setting: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886370/COVID-19_Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_Appendix_2.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-use-for-non-aerosol-generating-procedures>

NHS contact and trace: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

Appendix 1 Decontamination for assessment toys when applicable

Method 1

Between each patient

Soak in a Milton or chlorine solution of 1000ppm. This will sterilise in 15 minutes. Adequate time will be allowed between assessments to allow for the 15 minute soak and drying of toys that can be cleaned in this way. All kits must be cleaned when returned to head office.

Equipment

1. Sterilising solution
2. Sterilising container with lid and locking handle to protect the solution and lip for easy pouring out of fluid following use
3. Gloves and disposable plastic apron

Method

1. Prepare the solution of Milton or a chlorine solution of 1000ppm according to manufacturers instructions in the 5L sterilising unit. This solution can be used for a day's clinic
2. Ensure that all toys are submerged

3. Toys to remain in the solution for a minimum of 15 minutes
4. The toys should then be placed on paper towels and either left to dry or dried with a paper towel

Alternatively

Use of 70% Isopropyl wipes or spray. This can be used on toys that it is not possible to soak.

Equipment

1. 70% Isopropyl wipes or spray
2. Gloves

Method

1. Each toy should be sprayed or wiped with an antibacterial spray or cloth making sure that all surfaces are wiped
2. The toy should be left on paper towels to dry out

Please note that the box containing the toys must also be cleaned, either by the use of 70% Isopropyl wipes or spray or washing with soap and water and drying before replacing toys.