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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Health Board Chief Executives

cc. Health Board Medical Directors & Nurse Directors
Health Board Directors of Public Health
Public Health Wales
Welsh Ambulance Service

13 February 2020

Dear Colleague,

Increasing capacity across the NHS estate for management of possible cases of COVID-19 who require hospital admission

I write further to my letter of 10 February which requested that your health board establish a COVID-19 community assessment and testing service and a Coronavirus Testing Unit separate from Emergency Departments for assessment and testing of possible cases of COVID-19 who do not require urgent hospital admission. I now seek assurance that you can deliver care to those who do require hospital admission.

Delivering care to these individuals will require isolation facilities in line with Welsh Health Circular WHC (2018) 033 – Airborne Isolation Room Requirements (attached for information) and an appropriately trained workforce.

Isolation facilities

One of the main recommendations, as stated in the Welsh Health Circular WHC (2018) 033 (attached for information), was that all new isolation rooms used for the isolation of patients who have infections that can be spread via the airborne route must be Negative Pressure Suites (NPS). That circular also recommends that health boards should consider converting existing Positively Pressurised Ventilated Lobby (PPVL) isolation suites to NPS suites.

In addition to the requirements stated above, Welsh Health Circular (2018) 033 also requires each health board to provide isolation rooms in the following locations:

- Every hospital in Wales with a 24 hour Emergency Unit **must** have at least one Negative Pressure Suite located within that Emergency Unit.
- Every health board in Wales **must** have at least one Negative Pressure Suite able to accommodate a case requiring respiratory isolation in **either** an acute respiratory unit, **or** an infectious diseases unit **or** a medical unit with access to respiratory expertise.
- Every health board in Wales **must** also have **either**:
 - A Negative Pressure Suite in every Level 3 general Critical Care Unit Or
 - At least one Negative Pressure Suite in a Level 3 general Critical Care Unit and robust plans (agreed with all partner agencies involved) for transfer and transport of critical ill cases requiring respiratory isolation between the Critical Care Units within the health board.



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- In addition, there must be a Negative Pressure Suite in every tertiary specialist paediatric facility in Wales.

An audit carried out by NHS Wales Shared Service Partnership – Specialist Estates Services in 2019 on behalf of Welsh Government reported that only 6 of the 22 isolation facilities in Wales were fully compliant with the guidance. For those of you who were non-compliant I ask that you report on any actions you have taken to date to achieve compliance.

Appropriately trained workforce

Delivering care to individuals with possible COVID-19 will require a suitably trained team;

- Dedicated clinical lead - medical consultant/registrar
- General nursing with agreed ratio per bed
- Healthcare Support Workers with agreed ratio per bed

Staff **must** be trained in the use of PPE required for coronavirus contact, including donning and doffing and fit-tested for FFP3 masks. Staff **must** be trained in sampling requirements, sample packaging requirements and waste management.

I ask that you respond by no later than 19 February on the ability of your health board to deliver this package of care. Should you be unable to provide in-patient care for assessment and testing of possible cases of COVID-19 requiring hospital admission please clarify steps being taken to address this, barriers to achieving it and timeline to delivering it. **Replies to be sent to ECCW.Health@gov.wales**

Thank you for your support in taking this forward.

Personal Data

DR FRANK ATHERTON