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For the attention of Chief Executives

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Your ref: «Yourref»  
Our ref: «Ourref»  
24 March 2020

Dear Colleagues

Thank you for your continued efforts in dealing with the current COVID-19 outbreak. As we mentioned in our letter of 18 March 2020, the situation is fast moving and subject to change at this difficult time. In the light of the updated advice we have therefore restructured the principles for restricting visitors to assist you at this time.

### **Updated principles for restricting visitors to patients in NHS Scotland during Covid-19 outbreak**

- In the light of the updated advice around reducing the risk of spreading Covid-19 and shielding vulnerable groups, NHS Boards are now being asked to restrict hospital visiting to **essential visits only** with immediate effect.

#### **The following visits are deemed essential:**

- A birth partner during childbirth
- For a person receiving end-of-life care
- to support someone with a mental health issue such as dementia, a learning disability or autism where not being present would cause the patient to be distressed
- to accompany a child in hospital.

Visitors should also consider whether a visit is essential even in these circumstances.

- In normal circumstances, the Scottish Government supports a person-centred, flexible approach to visiting in NHS Scotland so that people have access to families and loved ones while they are in hospital. These measures are being taken with great reluctance to

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protect patients, visitors and staff in line with public health and scientific advice regarding the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Anyone who is unwell and/or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 - a new, persistent cough and fever or high temperature - should **NOT** visit any patients in a hospital.
- Non-essential visitors should be encouraged to consider alternative ways of maintaining contact with relatives and loved ones in hospital, such as by phone.
- Boards must ensure that those who visit are informed of and adhere to appropriate infection prevention and control procedures as are required in this outbreak
- These measures will be reviewed regularly and relaxed when it is safe to do so. Once we return to normal operating conditions NHS Scotland will reinstate a person-centred approach to visiting.

Yours faithfully



**Professor Fiona McQueen**  
**Chief Nursing Officer**



**Professor Jason Leitch**  
**National Clinical Director**

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