

Ref: FOIA Reference 2024/25-267

**Royal Stoke University Hospital**  
**Data, Security and Protection**  
Newcastle Road  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST4 6QG

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Email [foi@uhn.nhs.uk](mailto:foi@uhn.nhs.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your email dated 23rd July 2024 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) regarding Face masks

As of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014 University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust (UHNM) manages two hospital sites – Royal Stoke University Hospital, and County Hospital (Stafford). Therefore the response below is for the two sites combined from that date where appropriate.

**Q1 As of the beginning of July you reintroduced the wearing of face masks in 'clinical areas' of hospitals within your Trust. I have two requests.**

**Please detail the specific risk assessment and management processes you undertook as part of making this decision. Please detail who is responsible for making these decisions. Please include minutes from meetings where this decision was made.**

A1 The Trust has a legal duty under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of its employees, we also have a duty under section 3 to ensure that we conduct our undertaking in a way that does not pose a risk to the health and safety of others who may be affected, such as patients.

The risk is assessed dynamically due to the continual changing rates. The number of covid inpatient cases are reviewed on a daily basis and we review the community covid rates as well as any latest advice from NHS England (NHSE) and UKHSA, (The UK Health Security Agency). This is augmented by intelligence from the community, most notably the surveillance that the Lead Doctor for Infection Prevention keeps, staff sickness reports as well as activity in the COVID Medicines Delivery Unit (CMDU). This data is then discussed at the UHNM Clinical Advisory Group and the Executive team for a decision if we are proposing a change to practice. As changes are agreed and implemented we also inform NHSE and the Integrated Care Board.

These decisions are not taken lightly but are carefully and robustly discussed at the weekly meetings. In addition, the Deputy Director of Infection Prevention receives a daily report outlining the current level of inpatients with covid and a number of other respiratory infections.

The Clinical Advisory Group is held on a weekly basis, where the situation report is presented and discussed with a view to advising the Executive Team on strategy to consider in managing

the situations presenting. The Clinical Advisory Group membership includes the most senior medical professionals within the Organisation along with the Lead Doctor for Infection Control, Deputy Director of Infection Control and Consultant for Public Health.

The weekly meeting considers and advises on many aspects of Hospital management, meeting minutes are not produced.

*The wearing of a fluid repellent surgical facemask is mandatory for staff in clinical areas; we also encourage patients and visitors to wear them in the clinical areas. This is one prevention measure; others include good respiratory and hand hygiene, other PPE, and environmental cleanliness.*

**Q2 Please detail the COVID-19 infection numbers that (a) cause a risk assessment to occur; (b) cause masks to be reintroduced**

A2 We discuss every week the number of inpatients with Covid at the Clinical Advisory Group, and our threshold to review the introduction of facemasks is >100 cases. This is augmented by intelligence from the community staff sickness reports as well as activity in the CMDU.,

\*Please note that any individuals identified do not give consent for their personal data to be processed for the purposes of direct marketing.

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An anonymised copy of this request can be found on the Trust's disclosure log, please note that all requests can be found at the following link: <http://www.uhnm.nhs.uk/aboutus/Statutory-Policies-and-Procedures/Pages/Freedom-of-Information-Disclosure-Log.aspx>

This letter confirms the completion of this request. A log of this request and a copy of this letter will be held by the Trust.

If you have any queries related to the response provided please in the first instance contact my office.

Should you have a complaint about the response or the handling of your request, please also contact my office to request a review of this. If having exhausted the Trust's FOIA complaints process you are still not satisfied, you are entitled to approach the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and request an assessment of the manner in which the Trust has managed your request.

The Information Commissioner may be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF or via [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

Yours,



**Rachel Montinaro**  
Data Security and Protection Manager - Records