



Guideline Document



Ref: GD:13:02	Interim Guidance for Healthcare Worker (HCW) Close Contact Management				
Issue date:	29 th Dec 2021	Revised Date:	14 th Jan 2022	Review date:	TBD
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Responsibility for Implementation:	Healthcare Services Management				

1. Introduction

This document outlines the process, clinical governance and other practical considerations like arranging PCR or antigen tests for healthcare workers (HCWs) after a workplace exposure to an identified 'Covid-19 Detected' case in a healthcare facility. In particular, it sets out the mechanism through which the national Contact Management Programme (CMP) can assist healthcare facilities by sending a text message to HCWs who are identified as close contacts in a healthcare setting. That text message will include a link to a webpage that will provide advice regarding appropriate restricted movement and testing requirements. It will also facilitate the booking of a test for that HCW.

For the purposes of this process, the definitions of Contact Tracing and Contact Management can be described as follows:

- **Contact Tracing:** The process of identifying the close contacts of a confirmed coronavirus case as set out in the "Risk Assessment of Healthcare Worker exposure to Covid-19" document.
- **Contact Management:** The provision of public health information, the arrangement of testing as necessary in line with public health guidance.

Existing contact tracing processes remain unchanged. The identification of HCW close contacts remains, and continues to be, the responsibility of line management under the Clinical Governance of the healthcare facility.

The 'National Guidelines for Public Health management of contacts of cases of COVID-19' outlines the requirements for Close contact management based on a person's vaccination, previous infection and booster status – See <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/contacttracingguidance/National%20Interim%20Guidance%20for%20contact%20tracing.pdf>

The 'Quick Guide for Healthcare Worker (HCW) Management' can also be referred to for details of the requirements for restricted movement and testing for HCWs - See <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-unit/covid-19-guidance/quick-guide-for-healthcare-worker-management.pdf>

For Close Contact information, HCWs should click this link - <https://hse.ie/cvdcc>

2. Process

2.1. Exposure risk assessment

- 2.1.1. Following identification of a positive case within a healthcare facility (patient or staff), close contacts must be identified by the existing Contact Tracing Team using the 'Risk Assessment of Healthcare Workers with Potential Workplace Exposure to Covid-19 Case' - See <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-unit/covid-19-guidance/assessment-testing-and-return-to-work-of-symptomatic-healthcare-worker1.pdf>
- 2.1.2. Contact needs to have occurred during the infectious period. The infectious period is defined as 48 hours before symptom onset in the case or, where the test was from an asymptomatic case, the infectious period is from 24 hours before the date of test.

2.2. Referral of Confirmed Close Contacts to the National Contact Management Programme (CMP)

- 2.2.1. The 'HCW Close Contact Upload form' must be completed in full online by the Contact tracing team or line manager, depending on local healthcare facility arrangements. This is available at <https://www2.hse.ie/services/record-close-contacts/record-close-contacts.html> – see Appendix 1 for information on the data entry process.
- 2.2.2. The 'Circumstances of Close Contact' tab should be entered as 'Healthcare Setting Staff' for workplace Close Contacts identified.
- 2.2.3. The Contact Tracers must ensure all fields are populated in order to proceed.
- 2.2.4. Queries from individual employees or managers should be referred to the local healthcare facility.

2.3. CMP Data Processing Team close contact management

- 2.3.1. The HCW will receive a text with a link to direct them to a webpage which contains appropriate information about restricting movements and testing appropriate to their circumstances. (<https://hse.ie/cvdcc>).
- 2.3.2. The HCW should request appropriate tests as directed on this webpage.
- 2.3.3. The test arranged may be an antigen test or a PCR test as indicated.
- 2.3.4. Antigen tests will be delivered to the HCWs home address.

2.4. Healthcare Worker Attendance at Work

- 2.4.1. Symptomatic HCWs or HCWs with a positive antigen test should self-isolate and arrange a PCR test via the online portal - <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/coronavirus/testing/testing-for-healthcare-workers.html> (Click 'Book a PCR test online' on this page).
- 2.4.2. If no availability online, the HCW should contact their GP to arrange testing.
- 2.4.3. Where a healthcare facility wishes to follow a different process locally for HCW PCR testing, the facility should designate clinical responsibility to an appropriate senior clinician outside of Occupational Health. Occupational Health are no longer involved in HCW PCR testing and are now aligned with the national Public Health process.
- 2.4.4. Occupational Health Services enable the HSE to deliver safe, effective, and quality care to all of its service users by optimising the available workforce and the health and wellbeing of that workforce. They will continue to support HCW attendance at work through timely access to:
 - Preplacement Health Assessment for recruitment purposes, including
 - Overseas recruitment
 - NCHD clearance including Exposure Prone procedure clearance

- Occupational vaccination programme
 - Recruitment for all vacant and additional posts.
 - 'Covid Age' assessments as per '[Guidance on Fitness for Work of Healthcare Workers in the Higher Risk Categories, including Pregnant Healthcare Workers](#)' including
 - Assessment of 'High' and 'Higher' risk HCWs
 - 'Covid Age' Assessment for pregnant HCWs
 - Fitness for work assessment and case management of HCWs out of work due to illness or injury as per the Management Attendance and Rehabilitation Policies including
 - Referrals for mental health issues
 - Referrals for HCWs absent due to Post Acute Covid/Long Covid
 - Long term absence referrals
 - Critical Illness protocol assessments/Serious Physical Assault assessments/Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration/ Injury Grant Assessments.
 - Urgent blood and bodily fluid exposure management
- 2.4.5. The HSE Employee Assistance Programme is also available to HCWs requiring psychological support -0818 327 327.
- 2.4.6. The HCW must advise their manager of any positive test results immediately to allow for workforce planning and further contact tracing as required.
- 2.4.7. HCWs should log any positive antigen test online at <https://antigentesting.hse.ie/>.
- 2.4.8. The HCW close contacts can only return to work if they remain asymptomatic following the advised restricted movement - see [Quick Guide for HCW Management](#).
- 2.4.9. Symptomatic HCW should follow the Assessment, '[Testing Pathway and Return to Work of Symptomatic Healthcare Workers](#)' algorithm regarding their return to work.
- 2.4.10. HCWs who become acutely unwell should contact their GP/GP out-of-hours or if necessary the appropriate emergency services by calling '112'/'999'.
- 2.4.11. Further information for HCWs with Covid-19 infection or those identified as close contacts are available on the HSE website - <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>.
- 2.4.12. Derogation remains a management process and may be considered in certain circumstances – See <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-unit/covid-19-guidance/derogation-for-the-return-to-work-of-healthcare-workers.pdf>.

Appendix 1: Close Contacts Upload

<https://www2.hse.ie/services/record-close-contacts/record-close-contacts.html>

Background

The “Record Close Contacts” form can be used by healthcare facilities to upload the details of people who have been identified as close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19.

The form and steps to take

The “Record Close Contacts” form has 11 fields to be filled out. Each is explained below.

1. First name – enter the close contact’s first name
2. Last name – enter the close contact’s last name
3. Mobile number - enter the close contact’s mobile number in format “+353899999999” or “0899999999”
4. Is this the contact’s own mobile – select either “Caller’s own mobile” or “Parent/Guardian mobile” or “Other”
5. County – select the county the contact resides in from the dropdown list
6. Contact type – select “Close”
7. The date the last contact occurred – Using the calendar picker, enter the date of last contact with the index case
8. Gender – select “Male”, “Female” or “Other” from the dropdown
9. Date of birth – record the date of birth in format “DD/MM/YYYY”
10. Is the date of birth an estimate? – select “Yes” if the date of birth provided is an estimated one, otherwise select “No”
11. Circumstance of contact – select the [Healthcare Setting Staff’ for workplace Close Contacts](#) from the dropdown list
12. I’m not a robot check – select the option and mark the correct pictures (if asked)
13. Click on “Submit”

Repeat the process if there are multiple close contacts to record.