

To: Via email: info@smilefree.org

NHS England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
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25 August 2023

Dear colleagues,

The Smile Free Campaign – mask use in the NHS

Thank you for your letter to Amanda Pritchard dated 3 July. I am replying on behalf of Amanda as national lead for infection prevention and control (IPC) for the NHS in England.

As previously communicated (letter to Dr Gary Sidley, 5 October 2022), since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK IPC Guidance was published initially by Public Health England and subsequently by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

The current UKHSA guidance: [COVID -specific information and advice for health and care professionals \(published 27 May 2022\)](#) sets out that in health and care settings, non-pharmaceutical interventions (such as mask wearing and enhanced ventilation) may be used, depending on local prevalence and risk assessment, with the aim to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

The [letter to the NHS](#) sets out advice to support organisations to interpret the UKHSA's guidance on IPC measures, including mask wearing, specifically that any IPC measures beyond those contained in the UKHSA guidance and the [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual \(NIPCM\)](#) is a matter for local discretion. Consequently, there may be observed variation in practice as individual organisations continue to respond to local prevalence of respiratory viral infections.

Thank you again for your letters and for raising your concerns around this important issue.

Yours sincerely



Dame Ruth May, DBE

Chief Nursing Officer, England
NHS England