



Risk Advisory Notice: COVID-19 (Coronavirus)*

*This document should be read in conjunction with State Claims Agency document:
Indemnity Advices: COVID-19 (Coronavirus)*

Health and social care services in Ireland are currently, and are likely to remain, under immense pressure as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The State Claims Agency (SCA) recognises that this is an exceptional and evolving situation. The safety, health and wellbeing of service users, patients, health and social care professionals and other personnel engaged to deal with the pandemic is the utmost priority at this time.

This pandemic is likely to last for an extended period of time and delegated health and social care enterprises should ensure that every reasonable effort is made to implement basic risk management controls. This includes carrying out dynamic risk assessments on duties / tasks that health and social care professionals and other personnel carry out, as well as mitigating hazards that may arise when using premises, including third-party premises, during the COVID-19 outbreak in Ireland.

As a result of the fluid nature of the current situation, health and social care personnel may also find themselves in rapidly changing and critical situations, while trying to maintain safe clinical care and a safe environment for all service users and personnel. The SCA acknowledges the significant additional

challenges likely to be faced by these professionals during the pandemic. In light of these challenges, it is as important as ever to be guided by the principles of patient safety. It is also important for all personnel to remember to be aware of and care for their own wellbeing, and that of their colleagues, so that they can continue to effectively care for others.

This guidance document sets out the risk management considerations that delegated health and social care enterprises should consider when engaging health and social care professionals and other individuals to provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the risk management considerations for health and social care professionals.

**This Risk Advisory Notice has been produced solely for use by health and social care Delegated State Authorities. This notice has been provided with reasonable care and skill, based on an analysis of information on incident and claims available to the State Claims Agency.*



1: COVID-19 – ORGANISATIONAL-LEVEL RISK MANAGEMENT

Activities	Risk management considerations
Engaging health and social care professionals and other personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal agreement: A short written arrangement between health and social care professionals or other individuals engaged should be put in place. This should set out items such as primary duties, reporting structure, confidentiality agreements. Garda vetting should be considered for certain roles, as per local policy and procedures.• Competence / training: All health and social care professionals or other individuals engaged should be competent to perform their assigned role. Individuals should receive an induction training / briefing. Additional briefing / training should be provided, where deemed necessary. For further information please refer to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- SIG-01 State Indemnity Operated by the SCA.- SIG-03 Use of Contractors- SIG-12 - Work Placement and Experience Programmes
Infection control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infection control procedures, which take account of standard precautions and transmission-based precautions, where necessary, should be put in place and communicated to all as appropriate.
Using third party premises (including temporary structures used for the delivery of COVID-19 services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site suitability: The fundamental risk which arises when using a third-party premises is that the premises may not be ideally suited and may need to be adapted to allow for the delivery of COVID-19 services. A survey should be conducted on the premises and the following key factors should be considered:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Physical hazards (access, egress etc)- Supply, storage and provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)- Traffic management planning- Emergency response planning, including fire safety- Storage, handling and use of chemicals / medical supplies / waste- Availability of welfare facilities• Licence/lease agreement: A standard licence / lease agreement has been developed and is available from HSE Estates. For further information please refer to SIG -01 State Indemnity Operated by the SCA
Driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All personnel engaged by a health and social care enterprise must have the appropriate, current and valid licence for the vehicle they drive. A Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) may be required for certain vehicle types. For further information please refer to SCA Motor Guidance Document.
Employee Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee support services should be provided by delegated health and social care enterprises to all health and social care professionals or other individuals engaged during the COVID-19 pandemic i.e. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).
All documentation and records should be retained on file.	



2: COVID-19 – HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS RISK MANAGEMENT

Activities	Risk management considerations
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance inter-professional communication to the greatest extent possible; consider methodologies such as ISBAR / ISBAR³ and huddles, particularly for clinical handover, transfer of care, or when escalating care.• Consider coordinating phone calls / bleeps to the on-call team by allocating one person to oversee these activities during busy periods.• Avoid removing healthcare records from the clinical area as their absence may compromise the service user's care.• Communicate clearly, compassionately and openly with service users / authorised persons, and choose the most appropriate environment for communication in order to ensure confidentiality.
Delivery of care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• During the pandemic, health and social care professionals may be asked to carry out interventions and procedures beyond their scope of practice. If a health and social care professional is requested to carry out a task that they believe they are not competent to undertake, they should discuss this with the requestor or escalate to a senior colleague.• Health and social care professionals who are volunteering, inexperienced or returning to work after a significant period of absence should have appropriate levels of supervision and, where possible, work alongside those who are more experienced.• At-risk service users, in particular those with complex conditions and comorbidities, and including those who do not have COVID-19, should be identified and managed appropriately.
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As always, maintain contemporaneous notes, documenting all relevant details in healthcare records, both as a record of the care and treatment provided to the service user and as a method of communication between health and social care professionals.
Informed consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide service users / authorised persons with clear, easy to understand information on the benefits, risks and alternatives of any treatment / intervention.• Confirm that service users / authorised persons understand the information provided to them and ensure that they are given the opportunity to ask questions and that they provide consent voluntarily to any treatment / intervention.
Maintaining a safe environment for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The COVID-19 pandemic will generate significantly higher service demands so ensure coordinated utilisation of resources, paying attention to personnel and skill mix.• The shift leader should maintain oversight with safety / situational awareness.• Have clear escalation protocols in place / visible for personnel which clearly identify individuals' roles for each shift.
Patient who is deteriorating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accurate use of early warning scores (EWS), (National EWS, Emergency Medicine EWS, Irish Maternity EWS, Irish Paediatric EWS), including monitoring of clinical observations / vital signs and escalation as required, will facilitate early recognition of a service user whose condition is deteriorating.
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use PPE carefully, judiciously and in line with national recommendations.
Service user identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm the identification of a service user by using at least two service user identifiers before any care is provided, and label samples with the correct details to avoid delays in processing or receiving results.



3: REPORTING COVID-19 INCIDENTS

It is a statutory requirement to report all incidents, including near misses, and this will enable rapid local and national learning.

Incidents should be reported in accordance with HSE guidelines and the requirements of

the HSE Incident Management Framework, and using the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

NIMS has been updated to allow for reporting of COVID-19-related incidents and guidance has been issued to all NIMS Users.

Further information

- Contact the Enterprise Risk or Clinical Risk Units of the SCA via stateclaims@ntma.ie
- Information on reporting COVID-19 incidents on NIMS is available on the **My NIMS Homepage** or from the **HSE NIMS Helpdesk** at nims@hse.ie
- Contact your health and social care enterprise's **local risk manager / health and safety professional / quality and safety manager** for further information on local risk and staff and service user safety management practices that should be implemented
- The **HSE National Health and Safety Function** can be consulted, where necessary, at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/safetywellbeing>