

## Media Release

**Date:** 19 March 2021

### **Face masks remain mandatory at the PEH but most HSC services return to normal in Stage 3**

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With the start of Stage 3 on Monday 22 March the hospital will be back open to visitors as normal and all services will have resumed, but anyone attending the PEH will still be required to wear a face mask for the duration of their visit.

HSC services that provide health and care in the community will also fully resume, although some safety measures will similarly remain in place, including social distancing and staff wearing face coverings. Care home activity, including visitations, will return to normal, although social distancing and use of face coverings will still be adopted where appropriate. Secondary mental health services will also resume face-to-face appointments with the appropriate measures in place. Face masks will also be worn for these appointments if it is not possible to socially distance and it is clinically appropriate to do so.

These continuing safety measures for HSC are independent to what is outlined in Stage 3 in the Exit from lockdown framework, and are remaining in place for the time being to protect our health services from any unnecessary risk. These measures are continually under review in accordance with perceived risk.

All entrances to the PEH hospital building will be open and there will no longer be COVID-19 streaming (temperature checks and other observations) outside the Emergency Department entrance. But all visitors will be expected to sanitise their hands before entering and leaving the hospital using the hand gel dispensers which will be signposted.

Anyone feeling unwell in any way is asked not to attend the hospital or any HSC facilities, as well as care homes. Those with clinical appointments that feel unwell should call ahead to discuss their situation.

Director of Hospital and Adult Community Care Services, Dermot Mullin, said:

‘We are very pleased to be offering all health and care services again and to be able welcome back visitors, but will must still remain vigilant for signs and symptoms of COVID 19. The message remains the same that we only have one hospital and we must protect out PEH.

‘We are very sorry to anyone that has been impacted by the restrictions in place during lockdown but would like to thank the whole community for their continued support as this has helped protect bed capacity in the hospital.’

Expectant mothers and birth partners will continue to be screened for COVID from 39 weeks gestation and will be advised to minimise social contact from that time. It remains that only one birth partner can attend labours and births for the time being and both expectant mother and birth partner will undergo COVID swabs on admission and daily throughout their stay. Postnatal visits will return to normal with a maximum of 4 visitors per bed, with all adults required to wear surgical masks.

Antenatal clinics are returning to the PEH on Monday, having been temporarily relocated to Lukis House during lockdown. Partners and children are able to attend these appointments. Antenatal scans can only be attended by one other person.

All elective surgery and outpatient appointments will resume. People undergoing procedures should follow any guidance given to them in the lead up, including pre-surgery testing and possible isolation recommendations.