

Dear Public Representative,

Please note our latest updates on planning and information on Covid-19. This is for your information and also attached is information under 'Advice to the Public' if required for informing your constituents.

Our latest video message from our Chief Executive, Dr. Anne Kilgallen, can be viewed by – [Click Here](#) or on image below.



Please be aware this is a continually evolving situation. As such please check for any daily updates which will be provided on the Public Health Agency website at: [Click Here](#)

We are very aware of the importance of continuing to communicate with all our staff. This is not always easy given the changing position and that we have staff who are very busy providing care to our patients and service users. We also regularly update advice and information on our Social Media channels and Western Trust Website: [Click Here](#)

The Western Health and Social Care Trust is working collaboratively with our partners in the Department of Health, Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board in respect of preparations and planning for Covid-19.

The Trust have intensified preparations and planning to respond to assessment and treatment needs for people infected with Covid-19 in addition to taking all necessary precautions to protect our patients and staff from Coronavirus.

We have now implemented new inpatient pathways for people suspected to have Covid-19. Patients who need admission to hospital during this 'delay phase' will be admitted to specialist facilities and cared for within isolation rooms. We have designated areas on both our main hospital sites for this purpose.

Trust Bronze and Silver control meetings occur daily, reporting into the regional Health Silver while Health Gold has now been stood up at the Department.

There are some local changes to the movement of people on our hospital sites. We no longer allow access to the main hospital via the Altnagelvin ED during daytime hours. We have implemented strict visiting rules in the North West Cancer Centre and we are using social media to remind people to think before they visit.

We are developing guidance on meetings and have stood down non-essential face to face training events.

In planning to respond to the pressures in the system in the months ahead, the Western Trust will have to postpone non-urgent and routine elective appointments and surgeries to focus on the immediate demands associated with coronavirus.

At this stage, the focus remains on containment, with all efforts being made to avoid the spread of infection between people.

The Western Trust have in place robust arrangements to test for coronavirus with systems in place for Altnagelvin Acute Hospital and South West Acute Hospital to deal with this.

We are asking anyone who shows certain symptoms to self-isolate for 7 days, regardless of whether they have travelled to affected areas. This means we want people to stay at home and avoid all but essential contact with others for 7 days from the point of displaying mild symptoms, to slow the spread of infection.

In relation to Covid19 information and updates, these will be issued to all Public Representatives on a weekly basis. Any statements will also be issued to all Public Representatives by email.

In light of the considerable preparation, planning and anticipated workload and pressure on all our services in respect of Covid19, we would also ask all our Public Representatives to be mindful of requests, enquiries and any pressurised timelines imposed.

Regards
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Advice to the public:

As per the current advice, the most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves remains washing their hands more often, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water. Make sure you cough or sneeze into a tissue, put it in a bin and wash your hands.

You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation.

If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days contact your GP. For a medical emergency dial 999.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus?

We are still learning about COVID-19. At the moment, we believe that the majority of people who get the disease will experience a mild illness and will not need hospital treatment.

However, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

For the most up to date information and guidance click [here](#).

Public Health Advice

Stay at home for 7 days if you have either:

- a high temperature
- a new continuous cough

This will help to protect others in your community while you are infectious.

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.

You do not need to contact NHS 111 to tell them you're staying at home.

We will not be testing people who are self-isolating with mild symptoms.

Advice on hospital and other care setting visits

Health and social care services are coming under growing pressure due to the increase in cases of coronavirus. We expect normal business will not be possible as we move into the next phase of this pandemic.

Unfortunately, that may include some restrictions on visits to hospitals, care homes and other care settings.

Given the particular risks from coronavirus, hospitals and other providers have to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of patients and staff. People with underlying health problems are at particular risk, which is why hospital environments and care homes need to take particular care.

Everyone is therefore asked to follow some basic common sense guidelines:

- Do not visit if you are unwell yourself.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after visiting and use the hand sanitiser gel provided.
- Ask yourself if your visit is essential.
- One adult visitor per day only, unless in exceptional circumstances and following discussion with the ward sister or equivalent.
- Attend outpatients either alone or only accompanied by one adult.
- Check in advance and follow any localised arrangements which hospitals and other care settings have put in place.

Further information and advice is available:

- By calling the NHS 111 helpline for advice.
Callers should **press 1** when they are advised.
- Public Health Agency website www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus or
- Public Health England <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>
- For travel advice, see www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus