



24 February 2022

By email: [firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)

Cc: [paul.leinster@parliament.scot](mailto:paul.leinster@parliament.scot)

Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
First Minister of Scotland

Dear First Minister,

**Clarifying routes of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and providing appropriate protection to the healthcare workforce in Scotland**

We are writing as the leaders of professional bodies, trade unions of health and care professions and experts to ask you to ensure Scotland provides appropriate access to infection control and respiratory protective

equipment to its healthcare workforce. Specifically, we ask you to ensure consistency of information in publications from Scottish Government on the transmission routes of SARS-CoV-2.

### Clarifying the Transmission Route for SARS-CoV-2

There is now significant scientific consensus around the route of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, with most official bodies now stating **that SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted by the airborne route as well as by droplets and fomites**. These bodies include the [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO), Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC-USA) [Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 Transmission | CDC](#), European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) [Transmission of COVID-19 \(europa.eu\)](#) and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) [SAGE 98 minutes](#).

The Cabinet Office guidance for England (18 January 2022) is explicit about the routes of transmission of COVID-19:

*Airborne transmission is a very significant way that the virus circulates. It is possible to be infected by someone you don't have close contact with, especially if you're in a crowded and/or poorly ventilated space.*

*Close contact with an infected person is also a significant way COVID-19 is spread. When someone with COVID-19 breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes, they release particles containing the virus that causes COVID-19.*

We are delighted that you are aware of the different transmission routes, particularly on the risk of airborne transmission.

*"...First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. For example, better ventilation won't just reduce the spread of Covid – it will also help reduce the spread of other airborne viruses, now and in the future."*

[https://modbs.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/19769/Whitty\\_urges\\_businesses\\_to\\_invest\\_in\\_ventilation\\_.html](https://modbs.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/19769/Whitty_urges_businesses_to_invest_in_ventilation_.html)

However the [Scottish Winter \(21/22\), Respiratory Infections in Health and Care Settings Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) Addendum](#) which was launched on the 29th November 2021 and which all NHS Scotland Health Boards have implemented and are adhering to states:

*The evidence continues to support the most **likely route of COVID-19 transmission being via the droplet and contact route**.*

In addition, the latest iteration of UK IPC (Infection Prevention & Control) guidance 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 no longer gives an any indication of the routes of transmission of SARS-CoV-2. These omissions make Infection Prevention and Control decisions and risk assessments less easy to carry out in an appropriate fashion.

In Scotland these omissions are causing confusion with health and social care employers focussing on droplet transmission as the main form of transmission and providing inadequate protection to their workforce. As SARS-CoV-2 is an occupational hazard, employers are not meeting their legal responsibilities as laid out in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 for ensuring the safety of the healthcare workforce through the provision of appropriate respiratory protective equipment (RPE).

We therefore ask you to use your position and authority to rectify this lack of clarity in Scottish government guidance which should make explicit that SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted by the airborne route as well as by droplets and fomites. This will enable appropriate risk assessment and access to infection prevention and respiratory protective equipment (RPE), including FFP3 respirators for the healthcare workforce.

We are aware that some of the colleagues who are signatories to this letter are meeting with you on 25 February have already shared a file with you on 25 June 2021 on the scientific evidence as well as information about different types of RPE. We are happy to provide more if required.

Yours sincerely,



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Chair of the Covid  
Airborne Protection  
Alliance (\*CAPA)



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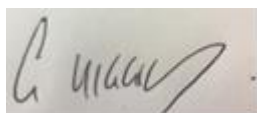
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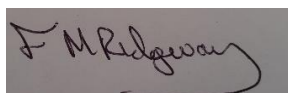
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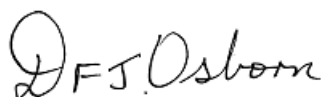
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\*CAPA

- ARTP - Association for Respiratory Technology & Physiology
- BAPEN – British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
- BIASP – British and Irish Association of Stroke Physicians
- BDA – British Dietetic Association
- BOHS - British Occupational Health Society
- BSG - British Society of Gastroenterology
- College of Paramedics
- CSP – Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
- FreshAir NHS
- HCSA - Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association
- MSDUK Med Supply Drive UK
- NNNG - National Nurses Nutrition Group
- QNI - Queen's Nursing Institute
- RCSLT – Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
- Unite the Union
- Doctors Association UK
- Trident HS&E