Infection prevention and control board assurance framework

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NHS England and NHS Improvement

Foreword

NHS staff should be proud of the care being provided to patients and the way in which services have been rapidly adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective infection prevention and control is fundamental to our efforts. We have developed this board assurance framework to support all healthcare providers to effectively self-assess their compliance with PHE COVID-19 related infection prevention and control guidance and to identify risks. The general principles can be applied across all settings; acute and specialist hospitals, community hospitals, mental health and learning disability, and locally adapted.

The framework can be used to assure directors of infection prevention and control, medical directors and directors of nursing by assessing the measures taken in line with current guidance. It can be used to provide evidence and also as an improvement tool to optimise actions and interventions. The framework can also be used to assure trust boards.

Using this framework is not compulsory, however its use as a source of internal assurance will help support organisations to maintain quality standards.

Ruth May
Chief Nursing Officer for England

1. Introduction

As our understanding of COVID-19 has developed, PHE guidance on required infection prevention and control measures has been published, updated and refined to reflect the learning. This continuous process will ensure organisations can respond in an evidence-based way to maintain the safety of patients, services users and staff.

We have developed this framework to help providers assess themselves against the guidance as a source of internal assurance that quality standards are being maintained. It will also help them identify any areas of risk and show the corrective actions taken in response. The tool therefore can also provide assurance to trust boards that organisational compliance has been systematically reviewed.

The framework is intended to be useful for directors of infection prevention and control, medical directors and directors of nursing rather than imposing an additional burden. This is a decision that will be taken locally although organisations must ensure they have alternative appropriate internal assurance mechanisms in place.

2. Legislative framework

The legislative framework is in place to protect service users and staff from avoidable harm in a healthcare setting. We have structured the framework around the existing 10 criteria set out in the Code of Practice on the prevention and control of infection which links directly to Regulation 12 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places wide-ranging duties on employers, who are required to protect the 'health, safety and welfare' at work of all their employees, as well as others on their premises, including temporary staff, casual workers, the self-employed, clients, visitors and the general public. The legislation also imposes a duty on staff to take reasonable care of health and safety at work for themselves and for others, and to co-operate with employers to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements.

Robust risk assessment processes are central to protecting the health, safety and welfare of patients, service users and staff under both pieces of legislation. Where it is not possible to eliminate risk, organisations must assess and mitigate risk and provide safe systems of work. In the context of COVID-19, there is an inherent level of risk for NHS staff who are

treating and caring for patients and service users and for the patients and service users themselves in a healthcare setting. All organisations must therefore ensure that risks are identified, managed and mitigated appropriately.

Infection Prevention and Control board assurance framework

1. Systems are in place to manage and monitor the prevention and control of infection. These systems use risk assessments and consider the susceptibility of service users and any risks posed by their environment and other service users			
Key lines of enquiry	**Evidence**	**Gaps in Assurance**	**Mitigating Actions**
Systems and processes are in place to ensure: • infection risk is assessed at the front door and this is documented in patient notes • patients with possible or confirmed COVID-19 are not moved unless this is appropriate for their care or reduces the risk of transmission • compliance with the PHE national guidance around discharge or transfer of COVID-19 positive patients • patients and staff are protected with PPE, as per the PHE national guidance • national IPC PHE guidance is regularly checked for updates and any changes are			

Key lines of enquiry	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions
effectively communicated to staff in a timely way • changes to PHE guidance are brought to the attention of boards and any risks and mitigating actions are highlighted • risks are reflected in risk registers and the Board Assurance Framework where appropriate • robust IPC risk assessment processes and practices are in place for non COVID-19 infections and pathogens			

2. Provide and maintain a clean and appropriate environment in managed premises that facilitates the prevention and control of infections			
Key lines of enquiry	**Evidence**	**Gaps in Assurance**	**Mitigating Actions**
Systems and processes are in place to ensure: • teams with appropriate training care for and treat patients in COVID-19 isolation or cohort areas • designated cleaning teams with appropriate training in required techniques and use			

of PPE, are assigned to COVID-19 isolation or cohort areas. • decontamination and terminal decontamination of isolation rooms or cohort areas is carried out in line with PHE national guidance • increased frequency of cleaning in areas that have higher environmental contamination rates as set out in the PHE national guidance • linen from possible and confirmed COVID-19 patients is managed in line with PHE national guidance and the appropriate precautions are taken • single use items are used where possible and according to Single Use Policy • reusable equipment is appropriately decontaminated in line with local and PHE national policy			

3. Ensure appropriate antimicrobial use to optimise patient outcomes and to reduce the risk of adverse events and antimicrobial resistance			
Key lines of enquiry	**Evidence**	**Gaps in Assurance**	**Mitigating Actions**
Systems and process are in place to ensure: • arrangements around antimicrobial stewardship are maintained • mandatory reporting requirements are adhered to and boards continue to maintain oversight			
4. Provide suitable accurate information on infections to service users, their visitors and any person concerned with providing further support or nursing/ medical care in a timely fashion			
Key lines of enquiry	**Evidence**	**Gaps in Assurance**	**Mitigating Actions**
Systems and processes are in place to ensure: • implementation of national guidance on visiting patients in a care setting • areas in which suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients are where possible being treated in areas marked with appropriate signage and			

Key lines of enquiry	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions
where appropriate with restricted access • information and guidance on COVID-19 is available on all Trust websites with easy read versions • infection status is communicated to the receiving organisation or department when a possible or confirmed COVID-19 patient needs to be moved			

5. Ensure prompt identification of people who have or are at risk of developing an infection so that they receive timely and appropriate treatment to reduce the risk of transmitting infection to other people

Key lines of enquiry	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions
Systems and processes are in place to ensure: • front door areas have appropriate triaging arrangements in place to cohort patients with possible or confirmed COVID-19 symptoms to minimise the risk of cross-infection • patients with suspected COVID-19 are tested promptly			

Key lines of enquiry	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions
• patients that test negative but display or go on to develop symptoms of COVID-19 are segregated and promptly re-tested • patients that attend for routine appointments who display symptoms of COVID-19 are managed appropriately			

6. Systems to ensure that all care workers (including contractors and volunteers) are aware of and discharge their responsibilities in the process of preventing and controlling infection			
Key lines of enquiry	**Evidence**	**Gaps in Assurance**	**Mitigating Actions**
Systems and processes are in place to ensure: • all staff (clinical and non-clinical) have appropriate training, in line with latest PHE guidance, to ensure their personal safety and working environment is safe • all staff providing patient care are trained in the selection and use of PPE appropriate for the clinical situation and on how to safely don and doff it			

- a record of staff training is maintained - appropriate arrangements are in place that any reuse of PPE in line with the CAS alert is properly monitored and managed - any incidents relating to the re-use of PPE are monitored and appropriate action taken - adherence to PHE national guidance on the use of PPE is regularly audited - staff regularly undertake hand hygiene and observe standard infection control precautions - staff understand the requirements for uniform laundering where this is not provided for on site - all staff understand the symptoms of COVID-19 and take appropriate action in line with PHE national guidance if they or a member of their			

	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions
household display any of the symptoms.			

7. Provide or secure adequate isolation facilities

Key lines of enquiry	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions
Systems and processes are in place to ensure: • patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are where possible isolated in appropriate facilities or designated areas where appropriate • areas used to cohort patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are compliant with the environmental requirements set out in the current PHE national guidance • patients with resistant/alert organisms are managed according to local IPC guidance, including ensuring appropriate patient placement			

8. Secure adequate access to laboratory support as appropriate

Key lines of enquiry	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions

There are systems and processes in place to ensure:			
• testing is undertaken by competent and trained individuals • patient and staff COVID-19 testing is undertaken promptly and in line with PHE national guidance • screening for other potential infections takes place			

9. Have and adhere to policies designed for the individual's care and provider organisations that will help to prevent and control infections			
Key lines of enquiry	**Evidence**	**Gaps in Assurance**	**Mitigating Actions**
Systems and processes are in place to ensure that: • staff are supported in adhering to all IPC policies, including those for other alert organisms • any changes to the PHE national guidance on PPE are quickly identified and effectively communicated to staff • all clinical waste related to confirmed or suspected			

Key lines of enquiry	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions
COVID-19 cases is handled, stored and managed in accordance with current PHE national guidance • PPE stock is appropriately stored and accessible to staff who require it			

10. Have a system in place to manage the occupational health needs and obligations of staff in relation to infection

Key lines of enquiry	Evidence	Gaps in Assurance	Mitigating Actions
Appropriate systems and processes are in place to ensure: • staff in 'at-risk' groups are identified and managed appropriately including ensuring their physical and psychological wellbeing is supported • staff required to wear FFP reusable respirators undergo training that is compliant with PHE national guidance and a record of this training is maintained • staff absence and well-being are monitored and staff who are self-isolating are supported and able to access testing			

• staff that test positive have adequate information and support to aid their recovery and return to work.			