

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Issue Date: 20 November 2017

STATUS: ACTION

CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH

Title: INTEGRATED GUIDANCE ON HEALTH CLEARANCE OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS INFECTED WITH BLOODBORNE VIRUSES (HEPATITIS B, HEPATITIS C AND HIV)

Date of Expiry / Review: N/A

For Action by:
Chief Executives - Health Boards and NHS Trusts

For Information:
Independent Healthcare providers

Distribution list at annex 4.

Action required by: As soon as practicable. Assurance to be provided to the Welsh Government that the required actions have been taken by 28 February 2018.

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Enclosure(s): Annex 1 – list of guidance being combined and replaced
Annex 2 – Letter template to healthcare workers undertaking exposure prone procedures
Annex 3 – Letter template to clinical dental teams undertaking exposure prone procedures in primary care
Annex 4 – Circular distribution list
The integrated guidance on health clearance of healthcare workers and management of healthcare workers infected with blood borne viruses (hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV) can be found on:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bbvs-in-healthcare-workers-health-clearance-and-management>

Dear colleague,

Integrated guidance on health clearance of healthcare workers and the management of healthcare workers infected with bloodborne viruses (hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV).

Summary

The purpose of this circular is to inform you of the: *Integrated guidance on health clearance of healthcare workers and the management of healthcare workers infected with bloodborne viruses (hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV)*. A link to the guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bbvs-in-healthcare-workers-health-clearance-and-management>

This integrated guidance brings together the current guidance on the management of blood-borne viruses (BBV) in healthcare workers (HCWs); it includes guidance on clearance and monitoring of HCWs who undertake exposure-prone procedures (EPPs) and advice on the investigation and management of any HCWs found to have a BBV. This integrated guide replaces all previous guidance set out at **Annex 1**.

What's changed?

Whilst this integrated guidance does not represent a policy change, there are some new elements including:

- the concept of the 'exposure-prone environment';
- changes in the arrangements for testing and reporting of results for HBV (testing is now permitted in accredited laboratories rather than being restricted to 'designated laboratories'); and
- arrangements for patient notification exercises.

Who is affected?

It remains policy that all new HCWs are required to have the standard health clearance checks. A new HCW is an individual having direct clinical contact with NHS patients, whether as an employee of a health board or trust or with their agreement (e.g. student placements, visiting fellows and contractors) for the first time. Additional health clearance is required for all new HCWs performing EPPs in all health care settings including primary care (medical practice and dental practice), secondary care and other community settings.

All HCWs, including those who are self employed or employed in the independent sector, are under ethical and legal duties to protect the health and safety of themselves and of others, such as colleagues and patients, and must have understanding of, and co-operate in health and safety matters.

Patient safety and public confidence are paramount and dependent on the BBV positive or potentially infected HCWs observing their duty of self-declaration to an occupational physician. This means HCWs are under an ongoing obligation to seek professional advice about the need to be tested if they have any reason to believe that they may have been exposed to infection

with a serious communicable disease either through a specific occupational incident or outside their work environment. Failure to do so may breach the duty of care to patients.

For those HCWs who are aware that they are infected with one or a combination of HIV, HBV or HCV, it is incumbent on the HCW to ensure that they are assessed regularly by their treating physician and promptly seek and follow appropriate expert occupational health advice. HCWs who are self employed or doing locums may have to arrange to take advice from an occupational physician themselves if it is not provided by the locum agency or employer.

Actions for Health Boards and NHS Trusts

Health boards and NHS trusts should contact all HCWs who perform EPPs, including dentists in primary care, to remind them of their ongoing obligation to promptly seek professional advice about the need to be tested if they may have been exposed to a BBV. Letter templates are at Annex 2 and Annex 3.

Health boards and NHS trusts should report their action to their Quality and Safety Committee and also provide assurance that the above requirements have been undertaken to the Welsh Government. Please send your response to: HealthProtection@gov.wales by no later than 28 February 2018.

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) expects healthcare organisations to comply with all relevant standards and/or statutory requirements. It considers this and other guidance in developing its approach to inspections.

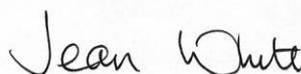
Independent healthcare providers

Independent healthcare providers will wish to ensure they comply with the above requirements and therefore assure themselves that all HCWs they employ have had the appropriate health clearance requirements.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Frank Atherton
Chief Medical Officer/Medical
Director NHS Wales**



**Professor Jean White CBE
Chief Nursing Officer/Nurse
Director NHS Wales**



**Dr Colette Bridgman
Chief Dental Officer**

This integrated guidance combines and replaces the following:

General

[Health clearance for tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV: New healthcare workers. Department of Health. March 2007](#) **(The blood borne virus sections of this guidance only; the document should still be used for guidance on clearance for tuberculosis)**

HIV

[The Management of HIV infected Healthcare Workers who perform exposure prone procedures: updated guidance, January 2014. Public Health England](#)

Hepatitis B

[Hepatitis B infected healthcare workers and antiviral therapy. Department of Health. March 2007](#)

[Hepatitis B infected healthcare workers. Health Service Circular, HSC 2000/020. Department of Health. 23 June 2000](#)

[Hepatitis B infected healthcare workers: guidance on implementation of Health Service Circular, HSC 2000/020. Department of Health. 2000](#)

[Protecting healthcare workers and patients from Hepatitis B: Recommendations of the Advisory Group on Hepatitis. Department of Health. August 1993](#)

[Protecting healthcare workers and patients from Hepatitis B. Health Service guidelines, on Hepatitis. HSG\(93\)40. Department of Health. 18 August 1993](#)

[Addendum to HSG\(93\)40: Protecting healthcare workers and patients from hepatitis B - EL \(96\) 77. Department of Health. 26 September 1996](#)

[Addendum to HSG\(93\)40: Protecting health care workers and patients from hepatitis B. Department of Health. April 2004](#)

Hepatitis C

[Hepatitis C infected healthcare workers. Health Service Circular, HSC 2002/010. Department of Health. 14 August 2002](#)

[Hepatitis C Infected Healthcare Workers. Department of Health. August 2002](#)

Duty of self-declaration for healthcare workers performing exposure prone procedures

Dear employee,

All healthcare workers (HCWs), including those who are self employed or employed in the independent sector, are under ethical and legal duties to protect the health and safety of themselves and of others, such as colleagues and patients, and must have understanding of, and co-operate in health and safety matters.

Patient safety and public confidence are paramount. This is particularly dependent on HCWs who perform exposure prone procedures (EPPs) and who are bloodborne virus positive or potentially infected, observing their duty of self-declaration to an occupational physician.

This means you are under an ongoing obligation to seek professional advice about the need to be tested if you have any reason to believe that you may have been exposed to infection with a serious communicable disease either through a specific occupational incident or outside your work environment. Failure to do so may breach the duty of care to patients.

For those HCWs who are aware that they are infected with one or a combination of hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV, it is incumbent on the HCW to ensure that they are assessed regularly by their treating physician and promptly seek and follow appropriate expert occupational health advice.

A new guidance document 'Integrated guidance on the management of healthcare workers infected with bloodborne viruses (hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV) (2017)' which brings a number of documents into a single place is now available on: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bloodborne-viruses-bbvs-in-healthcare-workers>

If you have any queries or concerns please contact the occupational health service via the following methods: XXXXX

Duty of self-declaration for dental team members performing exposure prone procedures

To all members of the clinical dental team,

Welsh Government has published a Welsh Health Circular '*Integrated guidance on the management of healthcare workers infected with bloodborne viruses (hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV) (2017)*'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bloodborne-viruses-bbvs-in-healthcare-workers>

In addition the GDC Standards for the dental team state:

1.5.2 You must make sure that you have all necessary vaccinations and follow guidance relating to blood-borne viruses.

This letter is to remind you to seek professional advice on the need to be tested if you have any reason to believe you may have been exposed to infection with a serious communicable disease either through an occupational incident or outside your work environment. Failure to do so may breach the duty of care to patients.

All dental team members are under ethical and legal duties to protect the health and safety of themselves and others, such as colleagues and patients. Dental team members who are aware they are infected with hepatitis B, hepatitis C or HIV must ensure they are assessed regularly by their treating physician and promptly seek and follow appropriate expert occupational health advice.

The UK Advisory Panel provides information for dental teams on Exposure Prone Procedures (EPP). That is 'clinical procedures where the worker's gloved hands may come into contact with sharp instruments, needle tips or sharp tissues within the patient and where the hands or fingertips may not be visible at all times'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-dentistry-exposure-prone-procedure-categorisation>

If you have any queries or concerns please contact the occupational health service via the following methods: XXXXX

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