

Dear colleagues,

Please read

The impact of the Covid-19 alpha variant (the Kent variant) at Holy Cross in January 2021 was significant: One third of our workforce and over a quarter of our inpatients tested positive, and we lost people in our care and people we cared about. Ward-staffing fell to critical levels very quickly.

Omicron is thought to be 50%-100% more transmissible than the Kent variant. It is believed to evade some protection afforded by vaccinations although much is still unknown. We are asking you to remain very alert during this current surge.

Keep Covid Out

Our first line of defence is to keep Covid out of Holy Cross.

As such, we ask you to:

- 1) limit your social interactions outside of work
- 2) have all vaccine and booster jabs as soon as you are eligible
- 3) fully comply with our requirements for testing, and stay away from work (or remove yourself *from* work immediately) if you have tested positive for coronavirus, and notify HR without delay
- 4) NOT come into work if you are feeling unwell. Instead (and without delay) notify HR and explain your symptoms. HR may ask you to take a PCR test without delay. If positive, will be asked to stay away from work for the full period of isolation.
- 5) notify HR without delay if a member of your household tests positive from Covid and don't come into work until you have had that conversation (depending on several factors you may be asked to isolate or may be asked to come to work).
- 6) consider staying on site temporarily if you are Covid negative but believe you have a reasonable chance of coming into contact with someone who is Covid positive (eg through using public transport, household dynamics etc). We can provide short-term accommodation free of charge.
- 7) work zonally on the wards, barrier nurse where required (as per out protocols), and not go into clinical areas unless you have good reason to do so
- 8) comply with the UK Gov't rules on taking a PCR test within 48 hours of travelling from abroad (you will need to include these two days when requesting your annual leave. A negative PCR test is a prerequisite before returning to work).

From Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December

All staff must take a Lateral Flow Test before starting their shift (on **any day you are working at Holy Cross – if you work Monday to Friday – you will have to take a LFT every day between Monday and Friday**). This can either be at home before starting work (evidenced on the NHS app), on arrival at work, or at handover meetings at the start of your shift.

Over the next few weeks PCR tests will be conducted on the following dates

- Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December
- Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> December

- Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January
- Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January

*If ward staffing numbers drop to critical levels*

- 1) prioritize nursing tasks
- 2) we will ask staff to consider working overtime (this includes staff who have booked leave – if working during their leave day, they will be paid for leave and for their overtime)
- 3) we will block-book agency as a precaution (where able to)
- 4) we will redeploy therapists and therapy assistants onto the ward
- 5) we will redeploy admin staff into support roles
- 6) remember you are not alone – the management team can be contacted at any time

*Useful contact numbers:*

HR 01428 633311 (ext. 1222 or 1223)

Gina Guo (Director of Nursing Services) - 07898 885231

Rasheed Meeran (Director of Clinical Services and Covid-lead) – 07809 562508

Jo Speed (General Manager) – 07766 734809

Sue O'Rourke (HR Manager) – 07927 774848

Ross White (CEO and Registered Manager) – 07751 303047

Finally, thank you. It has been a year with challenges and great achievements too - and you have been amazing!

*Please stay focused.*

Kind regards

Ross