

29 July 2021

Dear Member

From 19 July **in England** there is no limit on how many people can meet. The guidance relating to the one metre ruling is removed (except in some places like hospitals and passport control). Face coverings no longer required by law although the Government (and the Prime Minister emphasised this in his announcement) still "expects and recommends" that masks are worn in crowded and enclosed spaces".

However, you will have noticed that since 19 July most shops and transport operators still require masks and a number of supermarkets have placed full page adverts in national newspapers emphasising that although Government restrictions have been eased in England, they want to remain on the safe side (for both customers and staff) so will continue to provide hand sanitisers and trolley cleaning stations, together with protective screens at checkout. They will monitor the flow of customers to prevent overcrowding and ask that customers wear a face covering in store if they can.

I know that our members will be sensible and not take any undue risks. A number of branches are planning to hold meetings soon and we will issue guidance on how to ensure meeting premises are safe soon.

In Scotland, the situation is different and only up to 10 people can meet in a public indoor space. Masks remain compulsory on public transport and in shops and this will continue for some time. In indoor public places social distancing is changed from 2 metres to 1 metre and people are advised to continue working from home. The Scottish Government hopes to lift most of the remaining restrictions on 9 August.

In Wales, there is no limit on how many people can meet outdoors but up to 6 people only can meet indoors in private homes. It is hoped that the legal limits on the number of people who can meet indoors will be lifted on 7 August, but face coverings will continue to be required in most indoor places and on public transport.

Whilst the situation in three countries is different, and the pace of opening up variable, the direction is clear. Let us all hope that these relaxations are "irreversible". The Government promises to keep the position under review and the latest information suggests that the number of the cases in the UK has fallen considerably over the last 6 days. Don't hesitate to contact the Central Office if you have any questions.

Most NHS organisations are taking a precautionary approach and coming out of lockdown more slowly. They have not changed their infection prevention control guidelines and continue to ask all staff and visitors to wear face coverings to minimise the risk of infection. Social distancing guidelines remain in place. As far as staff is concerned those that can work from home are encouraged to do so.

As far as the Central Office is concerned we will continue with our current practice, will monitor telephones regularly and if you ring you can be sure that you will receive a response quickly. No decision has yet been made as to when or indeed whether, we go back to pre-pandemic working arrangements.

I was honoured to be invited to A Service of Commemoration and Thanksgiving on the Anniversary of the NHS on Monday, 5th July at St Paul's Cathedral. The service was attended by the Duke of Cambridge, the Prime Minister and other ministers. The service was led by the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally who until 2000 was the Chief Nursing Officer in the Department of Health. Contributions in the service came from the consultant who treated the first Covid patients, the matron who administered the first vaccine and other members of staff from the NHS. Sir Simon Stevens and the Bishop both gave addresses referring to the diversity of staff in the NHS and expressing gratitude to all those in the NHS that had worked so tirelessly during the pandemic.

I was proud to be there; it was a humbling experience.

Patients Association

We have worked relatively closely with the Patients Association over a number of years and I encourage you to become a member which is free.

Their 2020 Annual Review is now available on their website and will give you highlights of the work undertaken in 2020.

For those of you that are members of the Patients Association, you will be receiving a link to an on-line survey that will ask you about your membership of the Patients Association. As they try to determine how they can work with their members more closely.

From time to time the Patients Association seek volunteers to participate in surveys or engagement events. Currently they are seeking people to join their Lived Experience Advisory Panel - the panel will work to help them better understand the needs of patients and is a significant part of the work they are beginning in the patient partnership. The panel will be made up of 10 people and they are looking for people who:-

- consider themselves disabled
- have a sensory impairment or a learning disability
- are neuro atypical
- are a carer for a family member

Or people from the BAME communities

The group will meet for the first time in September and meet monthly until January 2022, using zoom.

If you are interested in joining the panel, please contact Sarah.tilsed@patients-association.org.uk

Sarah is the Head of Patient Partnership and she will explain how you apply. The closing date for applications is 13 August 2021.

If you do apply please let us know, particularly if you are successful on becoming one of only 10 people on the panel. If you are not successful there are plenty of other opportunities for you to share your opinions with the Patients Association.

Vaccination Steward Volunteers

There are vacancies for Vaccination Steward Volunteers as part of the [@NHSVolunteerResponders](https://www.nhs.uk/volunteering/) programme in certain parts of England.

Find out if help is needed in your area and sign up here: nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/

If your area isn't on the list, you can register your interest here: nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/nextinline

Mirthy Talks

The Mirthy talks remain popular with our members. The forthcoming talks are:-

10 August – 10.45am It's Not What You Say – Alan Jones
24 August – 10.45am Arsenic – the Victorian Housewife's Friend – Graham Harrison
7 September – 10.45am A Toastmaster's Tale – Geoff Harris

Conference/AGM October 2021

We are continuing to plan for the conference to go ahead and over 100 members have already booked but we do need more than that to make it a successful event and we encourage members to book with loW Tours by the 27th August. We want to ensure that the conference is as vibrant as previous years.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely



John Rostill OBE
Chief Executive