Title: Review of duration of restriction of movements for individuals exposed, or potentially exposed, to Covid-19 (via close contact with a confirmed case only)

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Organisation: Department of Health
Date: 16 December 2020

Action required:
x For noting
☐ For discussion
☐ For decision

Approved for future publication: YES
Current Position/Previous NPHET consideration

- This paper relates to the duration of restriction of movements for individuals exposed, or potentially exposed to COVID-19 arising from close contact with a confirmed case. It does not consider advice for those travelling internationally.
- The NPHET considered advice from HIQA at its meetings of the 1 and 22 October in relation to whether the period of restricted movement for close contacts should be reduced from 14 days and any consequent implications for the current testing protocol of day zero and day seven tests\(^1\).
- **It was decided at the time to maintain the current advice on 14 days of restricted movement and current testing protocols.**
- HIQA advice was based on:
  - A modelling exercise to estimate the residual risk of transmission associated with different testing scenarios that aim to shorten the duration of restriction of movements for close contacts of a COVID-19 case. A range of scenarios were modelled.
  - Research evidence in relation to the incubation period
  - Review on international guidance and practice
  - Input from the COVID-19 Expert Advisory Group
- HIQA advice concluded that if a change was going to be implemented, the estimates presented from the model suggest that the use of RT-PCR tests on ‘Day Zero’ and ‘Day 10’ with end of restricted movements on receipt of a ‘not detected’ result from the second test would present the largest incremental benefit and lowest incremental risk relative to current standard practice in Ireland.
- HIQA advice also outlined a range of additional factors for consideration, including particular consideration of residual risk of infection for certain groups, including residents in LTRC, other vulnerable groups, healthcare workers; levels of adherence to restricted movement advice and test regimen, potential impact on current Test and Trace capacity, type of test utilised and clear communications of any changes.

Current International Advice and Practice (non-exhaustive)

**ECDC:**

A report published by the ECDC on 24 September 2020 proposed that an individual may discontinue restriction of movements if a PCR test taken on day 10 following exposure returns a virus ‘not detected’ result.

**Proposed Common EU Approach:**

The Commission have developed draft *Recommendations for a common EU approach regarding isolation for COVID-19 patients and quarantine for contacts and travellers* with the view to achieving an EU level agreement for a more coordinated approach to quarantine and isolation measures in line with the guidance issued by the ECDC and the WHO. The main points of the draft paper in relation to close contacts include:

\(^1\) [https://www.hiqa.ie/reports-and-publications/health-technology-assessment/restriction-movements-individuals-exposed-or](https://www.hiqa.ie/reports-and-publications/health-technology-assessment/restriction-movements-individuals-exposed-or)
• Duration of restricted movements for close contacts across Europe varies from 7 to 14 days, with a 10-day period being the most common timeframe currently (see table in Appendix).

• Proposed recommendation that **countries should ensure at least 10-day quarantine period for high-risk contacts with a confirmed case**; this could be shortened to 7 days after exposure if a RT-PCR test is negative.

• Early release from quarantine should be assessed on a case-by-case basis for contacts working with vulnerable populations, or contacts in LTRC settings or prisons.

**UK:**

• On the 11th of December, the UK Chief Medical Officers’ announced a change to the self-isolation period for close contacts from 14 days to 10 days to apply from the 14 December: people who test positive should continue to self-isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms or 10 days from point of taking a positive test if asymptomatic.2

**US:**

The CDC updated its guidance for close contacts earlier this month to the following:3

• Recommends a quarantine period of 14 days. However, based on local circumstances and resources, the following options to shorten quarantine are acceptable alternatives.

• Isolation period can end after 10 days without a test if the person has reported no symptoms

• Isolation period can end after 7 days with a negative test result and if the person has reported no symptoms

**Audit of Compliance – key points**

An audit was undertaken by the HSE to assess compliance with self-isolation for cases and restriction of movement for contacts by assessing the behaviour, knowledge and attitude of cases and contacts identified by the national contact management programme. Key results:

• Of the 1027 cases who tested positive for COVID-19, 96.6% reported that they complied with self-isolation after being informed of their test; of the <4% who left the house, their mains reasons were for exercise (55.9%), medical appointment (17.6%) and work (5.9%).

• Of the 1078 who were close contacts, 86.6% reported that they complied with restriction of movements after being informed that they were a close contact; of the <14% who did not restrict their movements, their reasons were exercise (42.9%), going to the shops for groceries or medicines (28.6%) and work (22.9%).

**Next Steps**

• It is proposed that NPHET give further consideration at its meeting on the 23rd December to (1) whether it is appropriate to reduce the period of restricted movement for close contacts from 14 days and (2) any consequent changes to current testing arrangements for close contacts.

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2 [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

• This consideration should be informed by further modelling by HIQA of a further range of scenarios, and input from the HSE in relation to the current testing programme for close contacts from both a public health and operational perspective.
Appendix: Extract from draft *Recommendations for a common EU approach regarding isolation for COVID-19 patients and quarantine for contacts and travellers*

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<th>Duration of quarantine – contacts</th>
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| * This is inaccurate – will be corrected