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

Approved for future publication: YES
Previous NPHET considerations

- 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 2020 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.
- The NPHET further considered updated modelling and advice from HIQA at its meetings of 17 and 23 December 2020 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\(^2\).
- At its meeting of 23 December, the NPHET recommended that, given current infection levels and growing constraints on testing system, the testing protocol for close contacts should change, with the Day 0 and 7 tests to be replace by a single test five days after last contact with a confirmed case. No change to the duration of restriction of movements (i.e. 14 days) was recommended at the time.

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\(^1\) [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)

\(^2\) [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)
Current Position
At a meeting between the Department and the HSE on 31 December 2020, it was agreed that, given the unsustainable pressure on the testing system, that close contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19 would not be routinely referred for testing, although anyone who developed symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (whether a contact of a case or not) should be referred for testing. No change to the duration of restriction of movements (i.e. 14 days) was recommended at the time.

Given the ongoing concern regarding the novel variants, close contacts of any positive case which has travelled from Great Britain or South Africa are requested to self-isolate and get a test at day 5 post their exposure to the case.

Separately, current occupational guidance on the management of healthcare workers (HCW) states that: 3

- Where a HCW has been identified as a close contact due to a workplace exposure, testing will be carried out on Day 5 from their last exposure to the case.
- Regardless of the result of the Day 5 test, close contacts still need to restrict their movements for 14 days from their last exposure to the case (unless derogated to return to work by management following a ‘not detected’ test)

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 European 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:

- Proposed recommendation that countries should ensure at least 10- to 14-day quarantine period (starting with the day after the last potentially infectious exposure) for high-risk contacts with a confirmed SARS-CoV-2 positive case, in accordance with national recommendations. Persons developing symptoms during the quarantine period should be immediately isolated and tested for SARS CoV-19. This quarantine period could be shortened to 5 to 10 days after exposure in the absence of symptoms if a RT-PCR test or RAT, according to national recommendations, at a nationally defined day e.g. 5, 7 or 10 of quarantine is negative.
- Early release from quarantine should be assessed on a case-by-case basis for contacts working in critical infrastructures, including with vulnerable populations or contacts in high risk settings

such as long-term care facilities or prisons or, if nationally defined, after a negative molecular test at the end of quarantine.

UK:
Contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 need to self-isolate at home for 10 days from the date of last contact with the confirmed case.4

US:
The CDC updated its guidance for close contacts in December 2020 to the following5:

- Recommends a quarantine period of 14 days. However, based on local circumstances and resources, the following options to shorten quarantine are acceptable alternatives;
- Quarantine period can end after 10 days without a test if the person has reported no symptoms;
- Quarantine period can end after 7 days with a negative test result and if the person has reported no symptoms.

Next Steps
It is proposed that, for the general population,
- testing of all close contacts at Day 5 post their last exposure to the case should recommence as soon as swabbing, testing and contact tracing capacity can facilitate this development;
- close contacts should continue to be advised to restrict their movements as per current recommendations (i.e. 14 days);
- NPHET will again review the frequency and timing of testing and the duration of restriction of movements, in line with the advice provide by HIQA today, once capacity increases.

It is further proposed that
- close contacts of any positive case who has travelled from Great Britain or South Africa should continue to be requested to self-isolate and get a test at day 5 post their last exposure to the case.

It is further proposed, specifically for HCW designated as close contacts,
- To continue with testing at Day 5 post their last exposure to the case;
- To offer a second test at Day 10 post their last exposure to the case, with exit from restricted movements if this Day 10 test is reported as ‘not detected’;
- That this approach will be implemented urgently (as soon as it can be operationalised) for HCWs in community and acute settings.

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