DIRECTORATE FOR CHIEF NURSING OFFICER
DCNO : HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATED INFECTION, ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE AND PROFESSIONAL HEALTHCARE REGULATION POLICY

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Our Reference: *[removed]*

19 November 2026

Dear Lara Wong,

Thank you for your letter of 22 October 2026, submitted on behalf of the co-signatories, regarding Respiratory Protective Equipment guidance within Scotland's National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (NIPCM) and Care Home Infection Prevention and Control Manual (CHIPCM). As a Senior Policy Manager with responsibility for infection, prevention and control (IPC) in healthcare settings, I have been asked to respond.

As you will be aware, Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection (ARHAI) Scotland is a national clinical service within Public Services Delivery Scotland, who provides national expertise and leadership on IPC, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and healthcare associated infections (HCAIs).

ARHAI Scotland is responsible for the development, maintenance and ongoing review of both the NIPCM and CHIPCM, including ensuring that the guidance reflects the latest evidence, national policy and best practice.

I recognise the concerns you have raised regarding respiratory protection, particularly for clinically vulnerable patients and visitors, and the importance of ensuring that national IPC guidance is informed by the available scientific evidence. I note that you welcome the amendment made to section 2.4.5 of the NIPCM on 14 October 2026, which clarified the distinction between valved and unvalved respiratory protective equipment.

I undertstand that your letter has also been directed to ARHAI Scotland. As the specific points and questions you raise relate to the content and development of the NIPCM and CHIPCM guidance, ARHAI Scotland is best placed to provide a detailed response to these matters, and I would encourage you to continue to engage directly with them.

The Scottish Government acknowledges and agrees that the lessons arising from the COVID-19 public

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inquiries must continue to inform and strengthen Scotland's approach to IPC. It may be helpful for you to know that this commitment is explicitly reflected within the first priority of Scotland's new IPC Strategy, which recognises the importance of learning from relevant public inquiries and incorporating this learning into national policy and practice. This approach is also consistent with the Scottish Government's response to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 3 recommendations, including the recommendation that IPC guidance should take a broader approach to assessing transmission risk, taking account of factors including transmissibility, environmental considerations, the setting in which care is delivered and the procedures being undertaken.

The Scottish Government remains committed to considering the findings and recommendations of public inquiries and reflecting relevant learning in national IPC policy. We will continue to work with ARHAI Scotland and other partners to support the development and implementation of evidence-based IPC guidance that protects patients, staff and the wider public.

Thank you again for taking the time to raise these important matters.

Yours sincerely

[name removed]

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