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**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**RISING COVID-19 CASES IN FIFE LEADS TO SUSPENSION OF ROUTINE HOSPITAL VISITING**

NHS Fife is to suspend routine visiting across its hospital sites after a sharp increase in COVID-19 infections in the Kingdom.

To protect vulnerable patients and ensure the safety of healthcare staff, all routine visiting will be suspended from Friday 06 November 2020 at 7pm.

The suspension will apply to all hospitals in Fife and will be reviewed regularly.

NHS Fife Director of Public Health, Dona Milne, said of the changes:

“We know that the suspension of routine visiting will be concerning for patients and their loved ones, however, we have seen a growing number of COVID-19 infections over recent weeks and it is clear that we have considerable spread of the virus within our communities in Fife. Some of the people becoming infected are becoming very unwell and are being admitted to our hospitals.

“The nature of this virus is that it is highly infectious and can be easily spread by those with no symptoms at all or with mild symptoms. For those most vulnerable amongst us, such as those cared for in our hospitals, contracting COVID-19 can be particularly dangerous and it is vital that we do all that we can to protect those most at risk of the effects of the virus and to protect our health and social care services.”

There are a small number of areas which are exempt from the new visiting arrangements, where visiting is considered to be essential and will continue to be permitted:-

* **Maternity -** Pregnant women may identify a designated visitor to accompany them to their scans, antenatal appointments, during in labour on the postnatal/ maternity ward.
* **End of Life Care** – To visit a person receiving end-of-life care.
* **Mental Health/ Learning Disabilities** - To support someone with a mental health issue, or those with a learning disability or autism where not being present would cause the patient to be distressed.
* **Children’s Services** - To accompany a child in hospital.

NHS Fife Medical Director, Dr Christopher McKenna, added:

“COVID-19 poses a significant threat to those who are vulnerable and it is crucial that we take all reasonable steps to limit the opportunities for the virus to be brought into our hospitals.

“The likely challenges facing healthcare services in Fife in the coming weeks and months are considerable, as we seek to care for a rising number of patients with COVID-19 while also providing a good standard of care to other patients with other equally serious health conditions. We need to do all we can to prevent clusters of COVID-19 within our hospitals and it is not overstating the situation to say that by taking this step will ultimately help us to save lives.

“Importantly, while we don’t yet know how long these arrangements will remain in place for, patients and their loved ones can be assured that we will be doing all that we can to ensure those in our care can keep in touch with their loved ones while visiting remains suspended.”

It is extremely important that those attending hospital facilities, either as an essential visitor or for outpatient appointments, refrain from doing so if they feel unwell or have any of the known symptoms of COVID-19, such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to the sense of smell or taste, however mild they may be.

Anyone experiencing the well-established symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, should immediately self-isolate and arrange a test using the NHS inform website at: [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot) or by calling 0800 028 2816.

A local online support hub has been created to provide information on testing for COVID-19 and updates on the pandemic. Visit: [www.nhsfife.org/coronavirus](http://www.nhsfife.org/coronavirus).

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