



Faith and Belief Leaders and Representatives

24 April 2021

Dear Faith and Belief Leaders and Representatives

### **Expansion of NHS Visiting Guidance and universal COVID testing**

Thank you for all you are continuing to do to provide Spiritual Care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have published refreshed Visiting Guidance which reflects the expansion of visiting which takes effect from today. Please note the Spiritual Care Appendix Three on page 22 - [Coronavirus+COVID-19+-+visiting+guidance+for+hospitals+-+applies+from+26+April+2021.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/0403_202104/Coronavirus_COVID-19_visiting_guidance_for_hospitals_applies_from_26_April_2021.pdf)

We know you share our desire that spiritual care visits are as safe as possible, with all proportionate mitigations in place and that we balance this with the need to ensure every patient, who wants one, has visits. We wrote to NHS Boards in November to outline that visits by faith representatives from outwith a hospital's spiritual care team, where required, should not be classed as a designated visitor. Faith representatives should be permitted to visit more than one patient in hospital where necessary, as long as it is safe to do so and all necessary hygiene measures are observed.

I wanted to draw your attention to the First Minister's announcement last week that universal lateral flow testing is available for anyone in Scotland from today (26 April). We have written to NHS Boards to draw attention to this offer as part of preparations to support the safe re-expansion of hospital visiting beginning today.

Alongside face coverings, distancing and hand hygiene, voluntary lateral flow testing can be an important part of a multi-layer approach to protecting patients, staff and visitors. Information on how to order tests is on the Scottish Government's website or tests can be collected from COVID testing centres in the afternoon or early evening.

However, there are two important factors to bear in mind. Testing is not mandatory and boards are not able to insist that visitors undergo a test before visiting. Not wishing or not being able to test will not be an obstacle to a visit. It is also important to note that if visitors choose to test then this must be considered an additional mitigation as part of a suite of protections including face coverings, distancing and hand hygiene – and that it will be important to protect visitors as well as patients and staff to the best of our ability. Even if a test is done, these other measures will still have to remain in place.



Once again, thank you for all you continue to do.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Leitch", with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

**Jason Leitch**  
**National Clinical Director**