



FOI REF: 22/649

7th December 2022

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

I am responding to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. The answers to your specific questions are as follows:

Please supply the Hospitals risk assessment demonstrating that the use of face masks should remain compulsory at the hospital for staff (since Scotland allow staff to make an informed choice and other English hospital have removed the mask policy). If the risk assessment relies on peer reviewed papers, please also reveal the name of the reviews and the source.

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) has taken the approach of following national guidance and consideration of the risk of local prevalence of pathogens such as COVID, seasonal influenza and respiratory syncytial virus. National guidance advises the following: "In health and care settings, non-pharmaceutical interventions (such as mask wearing and enhanced ventilation) may be used, depending on local prevalence and risk assessment, to help to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2". [COVID-19: information and advice for health and care professionals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/covid-19-information-and-advice-for-health-and-care-professionals)

The wearing of surgical face masks in clinical settings has been discussed at multi-professional meetings within ESHT and at the Integrated Care System Infection Prevention and Control cell. We are required to take into account the hierarchy of controls as set out by the Health and Safety executive. It has been agreed to recommend that staff and visitors continue to wear surgical face masks in clinical settings while there is COVID and flu circulating and to regularly review this position when the problem reduces.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Should you be dissatisfied with the Trust's response to your request, you have the right to request an internal review. Please write to the Freedom of Information Department (esh-tr.foi@nhs.net), quoting the above reference, within 40 working days. The Trust is not obliged to accept an internal review after this date.

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Should you still be dissatisfied with your FOI request, you have the right of complaint to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Yours sincerely

Linda Thornhill (Mrs)
Corporate Governance Manager
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