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Health Board, Chief Executives

Copy To: Medical Directors
Nurse Directors
Nominated Leads
Regional Child Protection Managed Clinical Network Leads

20 April 2020

Dear Colleague

FORENSIC MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS FOR VICTIMS OF RAPE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Further to Dr Catherine Calderwood's letter to you of 30 March 2020, I am writing to set out my expectations with regard to the provision of healthcare and Forensic Medical Examination (FME) services for victims of rape or sexual assault in light of the current pandemic.

The National Police Care Network has now issued guidance (attached in my email) to ensure timely access to person centred, trauma informed FME, which specifically sets out the standards of care expected and the adjustments required to patient pathways in the context of COVID-19.

This takes cognisance of the Faculty for Forensic and Legal Medicine guidance on face to face FME for COVID positive or symptomatic patients (insofar as this should be applied in a Scottish context). It also includes advice on pre-screening patients and wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment in line with Health Protection Scotland (HPS) infection, prevention and control protocols.

The Taskforce DNA Decontamination Protocol¹ should continue to be complied with for all forensic suites and equipment such as colposcopes. You may also wish to refer to the Ethical Advice and Support Framework.²

Whilst not covered by the PCN guidance, arrangements for Joint Paediatric Forensic Examinations of a child or young person who has experienced sexual abuse, should also continue in line with current processes, taking account of HPS guidance.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/forensic-medical-examinations-dna-decontamination-guidelines/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/04/coronavirus-covid-19-ethical-advice-and-support-framework/documents/covid-19-cmo-ethical-advice-and-standards-3-april-2020/covid-19-cmo-ethical-advice-and-standards-3-april-2020/govscot%3Adocument/COVID-19%2BCMO%2Bethical%2Badvice%2Bsupport%2Bguidance%2B-%2Bv2.2%2B-%2B3%2BApril%2B2020.pdf>

Together, the above guidance should ensure that all victims of rape and sexual assault continue to receive a high quality of care throughout COVID-19.

You may also wish to note that on 1 April 2020, the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans confirmed to the Scottish Parliament that the Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Bill is an important Government priority and will continue to a revised timetable. Updates will be provided by the Bill Team in due course.

Yours sincerely

DR GREGOR SMITH
Interim Chief Medical Officer