Screening restart: Guidance for safe service provision during Covid-19 pandemic and post pandemic phase

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The Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR), in collaboration with the Royal College of Radiologists (RCR), has produced this joint guidance to support the restarting of screening services involving imaging during the COVID-19 pandemic. This document offers guidance to members and providers. It supports 'paused' or 'stopped' services to recommence safely, protecting staff and clients.

The guidance within this document is to inform local policy decisions with regard to the delivering of screening services, to ensure that providers meet government recommendations, while still providing client-centred care within the challenging environments of the COVID-19 pandemic and post pandemic (endemic) stage. All staff should work to the same local policy, to provide a consistent service to clients.

Reducing the risk of infection

1. Ensure as a first priority that screening services continue to be available for the recognised highest risk groups, as identified in individual screening programmes[1].
2. Consider rescheduling all routine, asymptomatic screening appointments and other non-urgent asymptomatic imaging, until community risk is minimal or further guidance received[2].
3. Apply social distance practices upon registration and in the waiting area. Where social distancing is not possible staff must wear PPE[2,3].
4. Staff to use PPE when performing examinations until sustained community COVID-19 transmission is no longer prevalent, or further guidance issued:
    a. sessional fluid resistant surgical mask, ± eye shield
    b. apron and gloves, changed between each client[3,4]
5. Apply social distance practices during staff travel and at break times[5].
6. Ensure minimal staff rotation to different machines or locations during this period to prevent cross-infection by staff[2].
7. Minimise the number of staff in each imaging room to maintain social distancing.
8. There must be hand hygiene facilities in the examination room[6,7,3]. Access to soap and water is the preferred and advised method for hand hygiene with COVID-19[7].
9. Wash hands/sanitise before and after each imaging episode[2].
10. Disinfect client contact areas between each use. (Use facility and manufacturer-approved wipes or disinfectants, in keeping with institutional recommendations)[2,3].

Before restarting (screening programme management considerations)

11. Risk assess each separate screening location.
12. As a minimum, risk assess:
    a. Travel arrangements for staff[5]
    b. Health risks, including stress and psychological impact of COVID-19, for staff and clients
    c. The impact of working in small or confined spaces wearing PPE
    d. Access to PPE, training, disposal[2]
    e. Access to clinical waste for disposal of used PPE and cleaning materials[2]
    f. Access to hand hygiene facilties within the work area[6,7,5,2]
    g. Space required for social distancing measures[2]
    h. Ventilation of the work area - in general wards and single rooms there should be a minimum of 6 air changes per hour[3,5]
    i. Efficacy of using masks for clients
    j. Staff numbers and skill mix needed to provide an amended service
13. Adjust scheduling intervals between clients to allow for:
    a. Cleaning time
    b. Adequate distancing to prevent overcrowding2
14. For mobile vans/small facilities consider asking clients to wait outside/ in a car and only enter the facility when there is space[2] or they are instructed to do so e.g. via text message or other visual signal.
15. Inform clients that they must not attend if experiencing current symptoms, test positive to COVID-19 or have a positive case in their household; the appointment should be rescheduled.
    E.g.:
    a. Include in Screening invitation letter
    b. Telephone the day before appointments to review health and symptom questions[2]
16. Advise those who are self-shielding not to attend until the shielding restriction is lifted.
17. Test systems of work and access to facilities with staff involved, amending and updating processes as required to maintain safety.

When screening

18. Advise clients before they attend, and display information, that no clients with COVID-19 like symptoms or cough will be screened.
    a. Question clients on arrival about COVID-19 symptoms or COVID-19 contacts
    b. Consider temperature check where organisational policies support this
    c. Reschedule and advise on self-isolation as appropriate and in line with national guidance[8]
    d. Provide advice about accessing screening/health care after the self-isolated period
19. Inform clients what actions the staff are taking to protect the clients and themselves.
20. Clean all client contact surfaces between clients.
21. Regularly clean and disinfect all surfaces using appropriate products and PPE, (as per local policies and standards), including doorknobs, imaging and work surfaces, computer & printer, telephones and dictation equipment. Do this at least daily and preferably, between users.

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