



Update 1

Covid-19 Guidance for HCSA Members

Published 16th March 2020

Resources and advice for members as at 16.03.20

- NHS England: published collected guidance for [healthcare professionals in secondary care](#)
- GMC: [Coronavirus information and advice](#)
- Public Health England [guidance for health professionals](#)
- NHS Staff Council: [joint statement](#) on Coronavirus
- NHS England: [General PPE advice including putting on and removal](#)
- NHS England: guidance for practitioners in the [independent sector](#)
- Health Education England: [Guidance for trainees on impact of Coronavirus](#)

FAQ on Covid-19

For the latest version of this FAQ, which is updated frequently based on the latest intelligence and policies, please visit our Covid-19 section on www.hcsa.com

1. What to do if you develop symptoms

Find out the local policies and protocols where you work.

Where staff are required to self-isolate, pay arrangements should be clearly communicated during this period of absence.

Where staff are being paid under contractual sick pay, any absence should be treated as an absence related to compliance with national infection control guidance and should not count towards any sickness absence policy triggers.

2. What to do if you believe you are vulnerable to Covid-19

If you believe that you may be more vulnerable to Covid-19 eg you have a suppressed immune system or you are older, ensure that you seek advice from occupational health regarding your deployment.

3. Redeployment to another clinical area

If you are moved from other clinical areas to support work on Covid-19, your employer should make an assessment on the ability to continue to deliver safe and effective care in the services/areas affected.

Your employer has a duty to ensure that steps are being taken to mitigate any safety risks that may occur if you are moved to other areas and that these are recorded.

The GMC has also issued guidance designed to ease the fears of doctors who may be redeployed to unfamiliar roles.

It states: *“Patients must not be exposed to unnecessary risk. Difficult decisions may need to be made quickly about what is the safest and best course of action at any given time.*

“When deciding the safest and best course of action in the circumstances, doctors should consider factors including:

- *what is within their knowledge and skills*
- *what support other members of the healthcare team could offer*
- *what will be best for the individual patient given available options*
- *the protection and needs of all patients they have a responsibility towards*
- *minimising the risk of transmission and protecting their own health.”*

It is important to note that while there may be mitigating circumstances many of the usual criteria by which doctors' fitness to practice is judged will still apply during this period. Therefore, HCSA would advise a cautious approach to risk which is mindful of the GMC guidance.

4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

It is the responsibility of your employer to ensure that adequate supplies of PPE are available for use by staff providing care to suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19.

Anyone who may be involved in the care of patients with suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19 should be trained in appropriate infection prevention measures - including the correct use of PPE eg how to put it on and take it off safely.

Fit testing should be in place for the use of FFP3 face masks. We would advise that you immediately make management aware if fit testing has not been made available or if the FFP3 does not fit.

Employers have a duty to ensure that procedures are in place to allow staff and representatives to raise any concerns at the earliest opportunity in relation to equipment.

In the first instance, you should raise any concerns with your line manager/supervisor. However, if you continue to have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact HCSA for further support. We are also monitoring the availability of PPE centrally.

5. Additional hours and fatigue

If you are not working to your existing shift patterns during this period, your amended working arrangement should still be agreed with you. Employers are responsible for ensuring that arrangements for accruing overtime payments/TOIL for any additional work have been agreed and confirmed with locally recognised trade unions, including HCSA.

Whether or not you are caring for patients with suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19, this will be a period of unprecedented demand for health services. However, it remains vitally important to ensure that you are able to take adequate rest breaks during a shift and in between shifts to ensure you do not become fatigued.

We are expecting new guidance from the Department of Health and NHS Employers on changes to HR policies to deal with Covid-19 and will update members accordingly when it becomes available.

6. Raising concerns

Employers have a duty to ensure that procedures are in place to allow staff and representatives to raise any concerns at the earliest opportunity in relation to equipment, policies and processes for managing Covid-19. As part of this, you should feel able to raise concerns without detriment, and you should be provided with feedback on the outcome.

In the first instance, you should raise any concerns with your line manager/supervisor. However, if you continue to have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact HCSA for further support.

7. Contacting HCSA

Currently we are maintaining a full service, although as part of our duty of care towards staff we are restricting face-to-face meetings to a minimum and replacing these with videoconferencing wherever possible.

You can contact us using the online Q&A (password required), by telephone on 01256 771777, or by emailing conspec@hcsa.com.