

**From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride**



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnstríe O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

HSS(MD)20/2020

FOR ACTION

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Health and Social
Care Board/HSC Trusts/ NIAS

Chief Executive, BSO

GP Medical Advisers, Health & Social Care Board

All General Practitioners and GP Locums (for onward
distribution to practice staff)

RQIA (*for onward transmission to all independent providers
including independent hospitals*)

OOHs Medical Managers (for onward distribution to staff)

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Our Ref: HSS(MD)20/2020

Date: 3 April 2020

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST

Dear Colleagues

COVID-19: PPE GUIDANCE UPDATE

Action Required

Chief Executives must ensure this information is drawn to the attention of all relevant clinical staff to enable them to respond accordingly.

The HSCB must ensure this correspondence is cascaded to all General Practitioners, Out-of-Hour Facilities, relevant Dental Services and Community Pharmacists.

The PHA must ensure this correspondence is shared with all relevant staff to enable them to respond accordingly.

RQIA must share this correspondence with all independent providers.

Leaders from a range of medical and nursing professional groups have published new guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE) for health and social care staff who are likely to come into contact with patients with COVID-19.

The guidance has been agreed by the four UK Chief Medical Officers, Chief Nursing Officers and Chief Dental Officers in the UK and endorsed by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and is applicable in all parts of the UK.

The updated guidance reflects the fact that COVID-19 is now widespread in the community, meaning clinicians are more likely to see patients with the virus. The guidance is based on the best scientific evidence and is consistent with what WHO recommends <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/modes-of-transmission-of-virus-causing-covid-19-implications-for-ipc-precaution-recommendations> in circumstances and settings with the highest risk of transmission.

We know that those of you on the frontline may be anxious about access to PPE. We want to reassure you that this guidance will both provide more consistent guidance stratified by risk and protect stock levels through preventing unnecessary use.

The tables outlining the guidance are attached, but please see a summary below. The guidance can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

- Any clinician working in a hospital, primary care or community care setting within two metres of a suspected or confirmed coronavirus COVID-19 patient should wear an apron, gloves, surgical mask and eye protection, based on the risk.
- Recognises that clinicians may wish to wear an apron, gloves, surgical mask and eye protection when assessing patients in any setting, where the risk of COVID-19 is unknown.
- In some circumstances PPE, particularly masks and eye protection which is there to protect the health and care worker can be worn for an entire session and doesn't need to be changed between patients, as long as it is safe to do so.
- More detail on what PPE to use in different clinical scenarios as well as community settings, such as care homes and caring for individuals in their own homes.
- When carrying out aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) clinicians should wear a higher level of protective equipment, these are listed out in the guidance.
- Use of aprons rather than gowns for non-aerosol generating procedures, including advice on thoroughly washing forearms if there is a risk of exposure to droplets, consistent with the UK policy of bare below the elbows and evidence reviews on the risks of healthcare acquired infections.
- WHO recommends the use of FFP2 masks but the UK has gone further and recommends the use of FFP3 masks. However, we are clear that FFP2 have been approved by the WHO and can be used safely if needed. There is good stock of FFP3 masks in the UK.

We appreciate the incredible work you are doing in this epidemic, as does everyone in the country. PPE is part of ensuring this can be done in the safest way possible and hope this guidance helps to ensure everyone can have access to the appropriate level of protection.

Yours sincerely



Dr Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer



Professor Charlotte McArdle
Chief Nursing Officer

