

17th June 2020

THE USE OF PPE IN CLINICAL SETTINGS COVID-19

The issue of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the NHS has been one of the biggest problems faced by GMB members working clinical settings during the Coronavirus Pandemic. Guidance published by Public Health England (PHE) has been criticised by many, including GMB, for being insufficient at times and driven by supply and stock issues rather than what provides the best protection from Covid-19 for healthcare workers. GMB also has concerns that not all healthcare workers are being given access to PPE. To confirm, **all staff have the right to PPE, irrelevant of job role**. GMB has campaigned for better protection and access to PPE for all of our members and will continue to do so throughout this Pandemic. **PHE guidance is the minimal protection that needs to be provided – GMB expects more for our members.**

This most up to date PHE guidance, which is relevant to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

And an easy to read checklist can be accessed at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/886707/T1_poster_Recommended_PPE_for_healthcare_workers_by_secondary_care_clinical_context.pdf

The Secretary of States announced that as of 15th June 2020, all healthcare workers in England are to wear face masks, and details of this can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/new-government-recommendations-for-england-nhs-hospital-trusts-and-private-hospital-providers>

Further guidance was published for situations where there are extreme shortages of PPE and this can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/managing-shortages-in-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

GMB wants to bring to your attention the following key points:

- Sessional use means 1 worker, 1 shift.
- The guidance states that gowns or coveralls can be used for an entire session of work in higher risk areas. However, more than one may be needed should a worker have to remove it or change it during the session or if they move between areas.
- Fluid repellent surgical masks (FRSM) and eye protection can be used for an entire session of work.
- The guidance for PPE that is suitable for reuse in cases of extreme shortages, is to be reused by that individual only and not shared amongst workers, with appropriate cleaning performed after each use. A detergent product either combined / sequentially with a decontamination product should be used to clean the item, rinsed thoroughly and left to dry. However, GMB believes that PPE should be disposed of and not reused in all circumstances and NHS Trusts should be working to ensure there are no shortages in supplies.
- Reusable face masks should be carefully folded so the outer surface is held inwards and should be stored in a clean sealable bag / box marked with the persons name. Fit checks should be performed each time a respirator is donned if it is reused.
- Hand hygiene should be practiced and extended to exposed forearms, after the removal of PPE.
- All staff should adhere to social distancing (2 meters) wherever possible.
- Staff should take regular breaks and rest periods. Breaks should be staggered to limit the numbers of staff in communal rest areas.

If you have any concerns regarding access to PPE, please contact your local GMB representative or email NHS@gmb.org.uk

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