



29 January 2021

To: Sara Gorton
Head of Health UNISON Trade Union SPF Chair

Rebecca Smith
Managing Director NHS Employers Employer SPF Chair

Dear Sara and Rebecca,

Guidance on use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the NHS to protect staff from the new variant of the Coronavirus

Thank you for your letter dated 19 January 2021. Firstly, we would like to offer our thanks for the ongoing support and engagement on issues related to PPE and staff protection during the pandemic. We completely agree that protecting our staff and ensuring their wellbeing is vital and continues to be a priority for us.

Colleagues from across the system have been working on an updated version of the UK IPC Guidance. The UK [Infection Prevention and Control guidance](#), agreed by the UK's four chief medical and nursing officers and published by Public Health England, has been updated to reflect the most up-to-date scientific understanding of how to prevent and control COVID-19 infection. Amendments have been made to strengthen existing messaging and provide further clarity where needed, including updates to the care pathways to recognise testing and exposure. Appendices to support the remobilisation and maintenance of dental, mental health and learning disability services have also been added. Changes to the previous version can be found listed on pages 7 and 8 of the guidance.

Following extensive clinical and scientific review, no changes to the recommendations, including PPE, have been made in response to the new variant strains at this stage. However, this position will remain under constant review. As stated in the guidance, where practices differ from those recommended/stated in the national guidance, individual organisations are responsible for ensuring safe systems of work for their staff, including the completion of risk assessments approved through local governance procedures.

We want to reassure you that the revised guidance continues to recommend the sessional use of FFP3 respirators (with eye/ face protection) in the medium and high risk pathway for healthcare workers where AGPs are undertaken for COVID-19 cohorted patients/individuals. The guidance continues to emphasise that organisations should ensure that all staff wearing an FFP3 and/or respirators should receive a face fit check as part of their IPC training.

We understand that this is an anxious time for staff and that appropriate PPE along with continued adherence to rigorous hand hygiene and social distancing is critical to keeping our staff safe. We want to assure you that the revised guidance is based on the most up to date

evidence we have and that it is under constant multidisciplinary review as and when new evidence emerges.

Yours sincerely,



Ruth May
Chief Nursing Officer for England
NHS England and NHS improvement



Susan Hopkins
Strategic Response Director COVID-19, PHE
Chief Medical Advisor NHS Test and Trace