



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Jo Churchill MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Prevention,
Public Health and Primary Care*

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By email

Dear Dr. Ponsonby,

The health and wellbeing of NHS staff is crucial; not only to the individual, but also for the care of their patients. We recognise the importance that occupational health can play in supporting NHS staff. As part of the NHS People Plan, we will set out a comprehensive package of support that all NHS Staff can expect to receive from their employer.

This support will include rapid access to occupational health services for all NHS staff. However, due to the ongoing Covid-19 response publication of the final NHS People Plan has been deferred to this Autumn.

Although publication of the final NHS People Plan has been delayed, the health and wellbeing of our NHS staff cannot wait. That is why we have commissioned the NHS to urgently put in place a package of support for NHS staff during this time. This package will involve accelerating development of some elements of the People Plan, such as occupational health provision.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently working to appoint several SEQOHS accredited organisations, who have capacity to provide services for a national contract from which NHS trusts can buy-in additional support on an ad hoc basis to supplement their existing services. A framework of suppliers will be put in place shortly, which can be accessed by NHS trusts online at www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk. NHS trusts who wish to buy-in additional services to supplement existing teams should refer to the framework and contact the suppliers directly to agree services.

The available services will include:

- A supply of temporary OH staff
- Fast-track health clearance for returning NHS workers and volunteers

- OH Physician / OH adviser management referrals
- A Covid-19 helpline
- Wellbeing services including counselling and coaching and MSK/Physio

We are working around the clock to give the NHS and social care sector the equipment and support they need. The full weight of the Government is behind this effort, we are working closely with industry, the NHS, social care providers and the Army to ensure the right equipment continues to be delivered to the right setting.

On 10 April, we published our PPE Plan, [see here](#), which is a UK-wide plan to ensure that critical personal protective equipment (PPE) is delivered to those on the frontline responding to Covid-19. The 3-strand plan provides clear guidance on who needs PPE, when they need it, ensuring that for those who need it, the PPE arrives at the right time. Critically, it sets out our plans to secure enough PPE to last through the crisis and ensure continuity beyond.

We have published guidance on the use of PPE in clinical settings, [available here](#). Guidance has also been published on the use of protective equipment in a range of settings outside of health and care.

FIT testing is an important aspect of personal protection. Public Health England (PHE) has engaged with RPA (an independent Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) fit testing company) who are running fit-test training sessions via webinars to help staff who will be training to individuals to use FFP3 respirators for the first time or those seeking refresher training. Booking on to these courses is via RPA's helpline on 07947 968972 and 07947 968922. This training is free.

A YouTube video intended as a guide for staff about how to put on PPE, is also available here: https://youtu.be/kKz_vNGsNhc.

Kind regards,



JO CHURCHILL