

**An update on COVID-19 from Amanda Pritchard**

*Version 1 – March 2020*

**Updates**

**Shielding high-risk patient groups**

On Monday 16 March the UK government announced measures, advising those who are or may be at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

From today, we'll be writing to all patients at high risk of severe morbidity and mortality from COVIDー We are asking for your help with management and shielding of those most at risk. Further details can be found in a letter published for GPs and shared with NHS leaders. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/guidance-and-updates-for-gps-at-risk-patients/>

**Support with daily living**

We have encouraged patients to discuss their daily needs with their carers, friends, families and local voluntary groups. This includes support for physical needs such as food and shopping deliveries, as well as their mental health needs.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are also setting up a new volunteering portal that they can use to access support for daily tasks. This will be available from Tuesday 24 March. Given capacity, only the highest risk patients should be directed to this service.

**Independent health provider partnership**

We are writing to all NHS Leaders about the deal struck with the independent health sector to provide 8,000 hospital beds across England, nearly 1200 more ventilators, more than 10,000 nurses, over 700 doctors and over 8,000 other clinical staff. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/03/nhs-strikes-major-deal-to-expand-hospital-capacity-to-battle-coronavirus/>

The contract has been nationally commissioned and funded, It will supersede local agreements and operate from **Monday 23 March for a minimum of 14 weeks**.

The national approach to commissioning this independent sector capacity ensures there is assurance and transparency for both NHS and independent providers, and it reduces the burden of negotiation and contracting on local NHS organisations.

There is no need to engage in parallel local discussions about commissioning and funding, or to gather basic capacity information for contracted providers. The focus should now immediately turn to local management of mobilisation.

**FOI and the coronavirus: a measured approach from the ICO**

The Information Commisioner (ICO) has updated their website with guidance for public bodies on the freedom of information act. Whilst, they cannot extend statutory timescales, they will not be penalising public authorities for prioritising other areas or adapting their usual approach during this extraordinary period. <https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/icos-blog-on-its-information-rights-work/>

**Hot Topics**

**PPE availability and delivery**

You will have seen the letter and guidance that has been sent out on PPE availability. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/guidance-supply-use-of-ppe/>

* Over the last three days alone more than 200 organisations, including all NHS hospitals, received fresh supplies of facemasks and other PPE as did ambulance trusts and other NHS organisations.
* From this week the army will offer personnel to help manage and offload supplies in busy NHS settings, helping to distribute and deliver urgent PPE supplies to the frontline during the epidemic.
* NHS Supply Chain has created a pagewhich tells people what is being delivered each day, its daily manifests will tell you when vitally important PPE stock and non-PPE products you have ordered will be arriving.
* The delivery schedule will be uploaded by 11 pm for the following three days and will be added today.
* To ensure the security of this vital stock NHS Supply Chain has put the manifests behind a website log in.
* The supply distribution helpline can answer PPE calls and emails 24/7 on 0800 915 9964 / 0191 283 6543 or email: supplydisruptionservice@nhsbsa.nhs.uk.

**Looking after our people**

* Your directors of human resources will have received a detailed note updating them on the definition of vulnerable staff groups and the specific actions every employer is being asked to take to support them. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/letter-to-hr-colleagues/>
* Please take time to read this section of NHS Employers website which continues to be updated. <https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19>
* Looking after staff right across the NHS remains a top priority.

Thank you for everything you do to support your teams and each other.

**Weekly webinar invitation from Professor Keith Willett**

Professor Keith Willett has been hosting weekly webinars on the NHS response to the coronavirus with NHS leads. These webinars will be repeated twice each week on Thursday, once in the morning at 11am and again in the afternoon at 4pm. The content of both AM and PM webinars will be the same, so you do not need to join both. The sessions will last no more than an hour; we will keep them shorter if possible.

If you have not been receiving invitations to these please contact nhs.stakeholderengagement@nhs.net to be added to the distribution list.

You do not need to confirm your attendance in advance but please do make every effort to ensure that someone from your organisation attends one of the sessions.