

To:
Care Providers

March 2020

Dear colleagues,

Covid-19: Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to Social Care Settings

In light of the Covid-19 situation the country has now moved to the delay phase posing a significant challenge to the social care sector. Our valued social care workers are essential to maintain the delivering of care and support in Wales. Your commitment to our most vulnerable people is essential and very much valued and I thank you for your ongoing support.

In line with current guidance a supply of PPE is being distributed for use in social care in Wales.

There has been understandable concern about the level of PPE required. The PPE is for social care staff who are providing direct care to people suspected or confirmed as having novel coronavirus (COVID-19) according to the current definition for community cases, either living in their own homes, or in care homes.

Guidelines on PPE use

It is important that all staff use the correct PPE, when providing direct care to anyone with respiratory symptoms that could be due to COVID-19, including high fever and a persistent cough.

If neither the care worker nor the individual receiving care and support is symptomatic, then no personal protective equipment is required above and beyond normal good hygiene practices.

Any PPE equipment provided to your staff must only be used in conjunction with national guidance as per attached annex A and the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual that Wales has adopted

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/95007>

Certain areas of healthcare, particularly the acute sector, require a higher level of PPE because they are undertaking Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP's). However, the standard PPE as detailed in annex A is appropriate for social care settings.

Interim arrangements

Any business as usual arrangements care providers have in place to procure PPE stock should be followed in all instances. If PPE stock cannot be accessed, and while we are preparing to distribute PPE stock to local authorities, there are arrangements in place that care providers can approach local health boards for

urgent assistance. These arrangements should be utilised if a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed.

Distribution of stock

Limited quantities of PPE stock will be available for care providers from a central contingency supply maintained for health and social care. These include:

- Gloves
- Aprons
- Face Masks
- Reusable Eye Protection

It is important to follow the guidelines on appropriate PPE usage so that only the right equipment is used, that it is used correctly and only as necessary, when the situation requires.

The distribution of PPE stock will be co-ordinated by NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) who will distribute the supply to Joint Equipment Stores/Community Equipment Stores (JES) that service local authorities. The stock will be held in these locations and any requests for stock will be managed by the relevant local authority in conjunction with the JES.

We are working with NHS Shared Services and local authorities to issue this stock at the earliest opportunity. Alongside this we will work with local authorities to issue guidance for care providers on how to request access to PPE stock when the need arises.

All services are advised to keep up to date with the latest advice on COVID-19 via Public Health Wales (PHW) website at <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

Further general guidance for residential care, supported living and home care settings can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance>

Bespoke additional Welsh guidance for these settings is also currently being considered.

Yours Sincerely

ALBERT HEANEY
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND INTEGRATION

Annex A

Information about appropriate levels of PPE for Social Care Settings

The provided PPE stock must be controlled to preserve supply and only **used** for key interactions. The supply is intended for your social care staff who are within 1m of a patient to provide **direct care** to a symptomatic person in a care home or in their own home. It is **not intended for other uses and not for:**

- a. non contact care,
- b. Circulating staff like receptionists or admin staff within facilities.

Social distancing of 2m should be used for non-contact activities such as giving advice to relatives or service users or conducting verbal consultations. Also consider a demarked zone at reception points in social care facilities.

- **PPE MUST ONLY BE USED for the care of those with acute respiratory infection or influenza like illness (unless AGP's¹ performed)**
- **The PPE recommended for this is :**
 - Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask (FRSM),
 - Disposable gloves
 - Disposable plastic apron
 - ¹Appropriate eye protection after risk assessment of need if splashing or spraying of body fluids likely
- **Effective Hand Hygiene is Essential Combined with use of PPE**

Case definition

As of 13th March 2020 the possible [case definition](#) for COVID-19 is based purely on clinical criteria. While most people with COVID-19 will have a mild, self-limiting infection your service users may be in a vulnerable group because of age and underlying health problems.

Any service users meeting the possible case definition for COVID-19 should be isolated in their home or own room. Direct those in their own home to [“stay at home”](#) advice which can be found via the [NHS Direct](#). The service user or carer should be directed to phone their GP to discuss any worsening symptoms (or [NHS Direct](#) if out of hours). If symptomatic they should not attend the GP surgery in person or be taken to any other social care facilities and not go to A&E. If it is an emergency they or their carer should phone 999 and inform the call handler of their symptoms.

¹Reusable eye protection must be decontaminated after every use.