



Department of Health & Social Care

COMMUNICATION TO ADULT SOCIAL CARE SECTOR OF PPE GUIDANCE AND SUPPLY ROUTES

Guidance on PPE for the Social Care Sector

1. Current Advice

The Government has published a range of guidance to help care providers reduce the spread of infection. The most up to date guidance is:

- [The action plan for adult social care](#)
- [Table 4 of the infection control guidance](#)
- [The PPE plan](#)

The guidance sets out advice for those affected on how to minimise risks of transmission, through good infection control practices, and set out some of the steps that local authorities and the NHS should take to support care providers through the pandemic.

2. Advice that has been superseded

Previously published guidance on the use of PPE for [care homes and home care provision](#) has been superseded, as well as Tables 1, 2 and 3 in the [infection control guidance](#).

3. Upcoming support tools

Public Health England (PHE) is working to provide clarity on Table 4 of the infection control guidance and further FAQs to explain how PPE guidance works in practice in the care sector by 16th April 2020. For example, this will explain how the term “sessional use” should be interpreted in a care home. This will be closely followed by similar information for home care.

The care sector has asked for there to be consistent messaging across the NHS and care sectors about PPE so that everyone is clear about when to use PPE, and when it is not necessary. The care sector has also called for more support with training (especially face masks) as whilst many parts of the sector work regularly with



Department of Health & Social Care

infection control, these are new requirements. Some parts of the sector, particularly smaller scale settings are not used to managing infectious disease and may not be familiar with infection control procedures.

To support this, PHE will work with the care sector representative bodies to produce some specialised training videos for donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off) of standard PPE by 17th April 2020 and will offer tailored insights into how the PPE guidance applies in care settings. We will keep under review what other forms of training and support may be required locally to ensure safety and respond to the needs of staff working in the sector.

Access to PPE and Supply Routes

PPE such as gloves and aprons, has only historically been needed in some settings in adult social care. For others, it has generally not been required. Care providers that need it have normally made their own arrangements to buy PPE through the market. And very few, if any, care providers have historically needed facemasks. However, as a result of COVID-19 the latest PPE guidance recommends an increased use of PPE, including facemasks.

Global demand for this equipment is at unprecedented levels and several countries have placed export bans on the sale of PPE, making it extremely hard for many care providers to access PPE through their normal routes. The reports we have heard from the sector reflect this picture and we are working around the clock to fix this.

We also recognise that care providers feel there is a lack of clarity around which routes are available for them to access supply. These are therefore being set out below and are accurate as of 16th April 2020.

4. An emergency push in March

As an initial step to address the spike in demand for PPE, in mid-March, social care providers across England received an emergency drop of over **7 million** PPE items, so that every Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered care home, home care and hospice provider received at least 300 face masks to meet immediate needs. We know that this was only a temporary solution but one that allowed us to put in place a more sustainable interim solution for the sector.

5. Current supply routes for the Adult Social Care Sector

a) BAU supply chains and social care wholesalers



Department of Health & Social Care

We encourage all care providers to continue to use their BAU supply chains where they can. We know that there are issues where their BAU suppliers do not regularly stock the items they now need, or do not have enough stock to fulfil orders.

To address this, we are supporting the existing supplier network by providing stock of PPE to wholesalers for adult social care. As of 8th April, we have released **23 million** items of PPE to the seven designated wholesalers for onward sale to social care providers. This includes **11.4m** facemasks **9.8m** aprons and **1.7m** gloves, made available to social care providers via the seven main social care wholesalers. We continue to work with wholesalers to support this route of access to PPE.

Wholesaler arrangements are in place with: Careshop, Blueleaf, Delivernet, Countrywide Healthcare, Nexon Group, Wightman and Parrish and Gompels. Care providers can order PPE from these seven wholesalers using their contact details in [Annex A](#).

We have confirmed with these wholesalers that they should be supplying PPE to CQC registered social care providers. There are alternative arrangements in place for the NHS.

The wholesalers model is England only. Each devolved nation has its own pandemic influenza stockpile which it has allocated to its own providers. In England, PHE allocated a portion of England's stockpile to primary care and social care providers and used private sector wholesalers, as the route to market. For this portion of the stock we ask these wholesalers supply only to England. If any of these wholesalers source their own stock of these items, they are, of course, free to supply across all the countries.

Notwithstanding this, our PPE strategy is UK-wide, and aims to make sure that frontline workers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have the PPE they need to stay protected whilst taking care of patients. Through this four-nation approach, we are working closely with the devolved administrations to ensure on-going supply across the UK.

b) Local Resilience Forums

To further support the care sector to access PPE, starting in the week beginning 6th April 2020, we have authorised the release of a further **34 million** items of PPE across



Department of Health & Social Care

38 LRFs, including **8 million** aprons, **4 million** masks and **20 million** pairs of gloves. These stocks are intended primarily for social care and primary care health services.

We will continue to make drops of PPE for distribution by the LRFs to meet priority needs for the time being. Further deliveries will be made this week starting with the LRFs identified as being in the highest need of resupply, followed by additional LRF drops as they communicate ongoing need within their local areas. We will keep in close touch with local partners as LRFs undertake this new role, to enable the best possible planning and distribution of stock locally; and we will work jointly to improve the flow of information, to target stock where it is most needed.

The LRFs have been advised to make decisions about the allocation of PPE equipment on basis of the most pressing clinical need, in line with published guidance. The LRFs have been instructed that PPE is intended to support:

- Urgent need in vital services, where service providers have explored their usual routes for PPE and there remains an urgent need for additional stock;
- Those who currently have close, unavoidable contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, including highly vulnerable groups. This includes, but is not limited to, adult social care (including care homes, personal assistants, home care, and supported living);
- Those that can outline their needs in line with the latest clinical guidance.

If a care provider has been unsuccessful in obtaining PPE through their BAU suppliers or the seven social care distributors listed above, they can approach their LRF to set out their PPE needs.

c) The National Supply Disruption Response

To further support the system, we have mobilised a National Supply Disruption Response (NSDR) system to respond to emergency PPE requests, including for the social care sector. Providers who have an urgent requirement for PPE, which they are unable to secure through their business as usual channels, should contact the **NSDR** via the 24/7 helpline: 0800 915 9964 (Freephone number in the UK), and a Direct Line from overseas: 0191 283 6543.

The NSDR has three core functions to support deliver of emergency PPE.



Department of Health & Social Care

- **24/7 helpline** - It operates a 24/7 helpline for providers who have an urgent requirement (e.g. require stock in less than 72 hours) for PPE, which they have been unable to secure through their business as usual channels. Call handlers take details from requestors about the PPE needs, including ensuring they have tried to use business as usual routes first; whether the provider is managing Covid-19 patients; details to ensure the need for PPE is in line with the national guidance; and the provider's current levels of stock cover. The call handlers log these details into a system that automatically prioritises cases in line with the information provided.
- **Case management** - It incorporates a case management function. We have increased capacity in the last two weeks to 80 staff because of the high volume of cases being managed. The case management team access the cases directly via the system, and work through them in a prioritised process. This process involves triangulation of data, including e.g. deliveries recently received by the organisation; contact with the organisation to understand the volumes requested and when they can receive a delivery.
- **Express freight desk solution** - It coordinates an express freight desk solution. Once the case has been reviewed and approved by the case management team, the freight desk is instructed to pick, pack and deliver an allocation of PPE to the provider. The NSDR is focussed on fulfilment of urgent requests, so we will prioritise shipping products which are available at the time of picking. Once a delivery has been received the NSDR case will be closed.

All care providers that can show an immediate urgent need for PPE and have not been able to access this through the wholesalers, or their LRF, are able to raise a request for an emergency pack of PPE through the NSDR. The NSDR does not have access to the full lines of stock held at other large wholesalers or distributors, but can mobilise small priority orders of critical PPE to fulfil an emergency need.

Between 16th March and 9th April 2020, the NSDR has delivered nearly 3,000 emergency packs of PPE. The longest wait time for a call handler has been less than 10 minutes. Over 90% of calls to the NSDR hotline have been answered within 1 minute.

Before calling the NSDR hotline, please ensure you are able to provide the following details to the call handler:



Department of Health & Social Care

- Name, email and telephone number of the requestor;
- Name, email and telephone number of a contact for the next 24 hours (e.g. out of hours cover if the original requestor will be unavailable);
- Delivery address, including postcode; and named contact for receiving deliveries;
- Confirmation that your organisation is able to receive the delivery outside of normal business hours;
- Number of COVID-19 patients being treated (confirmed and suspected);
- Number of beds in your organisation (if appropriate);
- How long your current PPE stock provides cover for (e.g. <24 hours; 1-2 days, or more than 2 days);
- Which products you are requesting and in what quantity

At present we are receiving a very high volume of requests and are working as quickly as possible to resolve priority cases first. We are working in parallel to improve our systems so that we have better management information on cases that will ensure we are able to respond efficiently.

6. Future Supply Routes for the Adult Social Care Sector

To support the current efforts and scale up the logistic capacity of the supply chain overall DHSC, NHSE&I, NHS Supply Chain, Clipper Logistics and the Armed Forces have worked together to develop a Parallel Supply Chain (PSC) to support the normal supply chain. The PSC already supplies PPE to hospitals, and the LRFs. This is supporting improved speed and reliability of delivery, whilst relieving pressure on the established supply chain.

We are developing the PSC to take orders directly from health and social care providers and dispatch directly to them. We are working with e-commerce experts to launch a new web-based system for procuring PPE which will be managed in line



Department of Health & Social Care

with the published guidance from Public Health England, integrated with NHS Supply Chain's central PPE logistic operations and shipped directly to providers via Royal Mail.

We are working this week with a range of social care providers to pilot the PSC to ensure this system can work well for the social care sector, ahead of rolling this out over the coming weeks.

7. Future Supply

We are working around the clock to ensure we are buying and making more PPE to see us through this pandemic. We have set up a new unit to identify and buy PPE supplies from across the globe as well as encouraging UK manufacturers to produce PPE in a national call to action. More information can be found in strand 3 of the [PPE plan](#).



Department of Health & Social Care

Annex A – Social Care Distributors Contact Details

| Social Care Distributors |
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| Careshop coronavirus@careshop.co.uk www.careshop.co.uk |
| Blueleaf 03300 552 288 emergencystock@blueleafcare.com * www.blueleafcare.com |
| Delivernet 01756 706 050 lee.morris@delivernet.co.uk www.delivernet.co.uk |
| Countrywide Healthcare 01226 719 090 enquiries@countrywidehealthcare.co.uk www.countrywidehealthcare.co.uk |
| Nexon Group 0800 999 5006 Covid-19@nexongroup.co.uk www.nexongroup.co.uk Hours 8:00am until 5:00pm Monday to Friday. |
| Wightman and Parrish 01323 445 001 sales@w-p.co.uk www.w-p.co.uk |
| Gompels Healthcare Ltd 0345 450 2420 sales+phe@gompels.co.uk www.gompels.co.uk Delivery: in 1-3 working days M-F Stock: Only aprons and face masks supplied by PHE |