

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The LMC is constantly receiving reports of PPE shortages. There have been many examples locally of supplies not being delivered or being insufficient. This is slowly improving but, in our view, should not have happened at all. It is an absolute priority that Hot sites, red hubs (or whatever these are being called in each locality) have the quantity and quality of PPE that they need. This also applies in situations where clinical staff decide that a home visit is necessary. Locally, there are plans in place that cannot be operationalised, simply due to the lack of appropriate PPE.

We acknowledge that this has been a major issue across the nation and that there is much needed support being given to practices from CCGs locally to access urgent supplies. We also applaud the local business and schools that are stepping up to donate what our practices need.

We are conscious that front line staff are extremely vulnerable to become infected if they do not have the right protective equipment. GPs and their staff should not put themselves at risk by interacting with patients without the appropriate protective equipment and procedures. In this current situation of "Total Triage" we envisage that the number of patients requiring a face to face interaction will be very small, of the order of 1 – 2 per 100 consultations. The simple adage "No PPE – No See" has been adopted in many areas and is one that needs to be considered by every clinician placed in a vulnerable position.

In these situations, it is our considered opinion that GPs and their clinical staff should follow PHE Guidance on the use of PPE to ensure it is available in situations where it is most needed. Currently this guidance is:

The recommended PPE ensemble for healthcare workers within a metre of a patient with possible or confirmed COVID-19 is:

- Fluid repellent facemask
- Apron
- Gloves
- Eye protection

Furthermore, we would advise that at this stage all patients and members of the public should be treated as potential COVID carriers.

Equally as important as having the right PPE is wearing and taking it off in the correct manner. Of particular note:

- Bare below elbows is recommended and regular washing of hands and forearms.
- Removal of the PPE is the time of most risk according to experts and especially important not to put hands near mouth at any time. Wash hands and forearms straight away after taking off PPE.

If any GP or practice has any issues over PPE, please do not hesitate to contact the LMC office.



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This [BMA GPC preparedness](#) document begins with the following:

Safety and preservation of a finite workforce to help support delivery of health care within an extremely challenging and pressurised time is an immediate priority. This requires a rapid shift in thinking and culture as never before to enable a sustainable and safe way of operating for the benefit of all. This will be hard and must not be underestimated but is crucial to achieve the end goal of minimising lives lost within the resource limits that GPs and their teams will be operating under. As a profession and as individuals health care workers have a duty to their communities and patients.

Key principles

- Health Care Worker safety is paramount
- Protecting Health Care Workers protects patients
- Everything possible should be done to reduce infection transmission
- Procedures and pathways should be evidenced based

And ends with:

Key things to remember

Healthcare workers are force multipliers. Their training and experience is invaluable moving into this crisis, if they become unwell, this will impact on the service and it will cost lives. Their priority should be to protect themselves first.

- Things will get worse before they get better
- GPs are going to be faced with some very difficult decisions
- They should put their needs first
- They should be led by their moral and ethical values, others may not share their views and values
- All healthcare workers should respect and support each other
- All healthcare workers have a responsibility to protect and look after each other

As a clinician, you will make a decision about how you proceed and that will be the right decision for you.

