

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

NHS urges trusts to raise awareness around Covid-19

NHS leaders are calling on all hospital trusts and other healthcare providers to ensure additional information and guidance around social distancing, hand hygiene and PPE measures are widely promoted and accessible to staff working at all levels within their organisation.

This will involve looking at new and more effective ways to ensure those colleagues who might not have regular access to internal intranets, staff briefings, mobiles, apps and webinars – which may include porters, cleaners, agency, shift workers and support staff - also receive regular information updates on Covid-19 and the precautions they should be taking to protect themselves and others.

It comes as part of an additional drive to reduce the risk of contracting the virus among NHS staff, and particularly those identified at additional risk.

Every NHS employer across England – from ambulance services to hospital trusts and community teams - are being supported to immediately review their communications efforts and make adjustments where necessary to ensure that they reach every member of staff that they need to.

A number of trusts across England have already undertaken innovative approaches to this, and NHS England and Improvement is pulling together this good practice as well as working with a range of partners including, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to help others to do so.

This includes working with the health service's digital delivery arm NHSX on providing information in alternative and accessible formats, and also ensuring widespread access to support including British Sign Language.

Other tailored trust support and case studies in development include:

A dedicated app for peer-to-peer support

- A diverse forum created to deal with raising concerns along with reviewing lessons learned
- Development of inclusive and supportive approaches to PPE education with a PPE helper scheme
- Strategies taken on deploying risk assessment across hospitals, primary care and small GP practices

The heightened awareness around communications materials and advice is especially vital for temporary and agency staff and those from BAME backgrounds, who are currently over-represented among those who have died from complications of coronavirus.

Prerana Issar, NHS Chief People Officer, said: "It's essential that every single NHS colleague has access to information that will help keep them safe. Employers need to take particular care to reach those with less access to internal communications such as porters, cleaners, agency and shift workers, as well as colleagues who don't speak English as a first language".

Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust has been hailed for tackling awareness head on with bespoke communications, tips and action cards aimed at porters, cleaners and catering staff which are displayed in wards, on poster sites and communal staffing areas.

The organisation worked with its Black Asian Minority Ethnic staff network to ensure accessibility for a range of staff by producing infographic action cards for housekeepers, ward hosts and porters on a range of issues.

Information aimed at 5,000 colleagues, especially those in support service roles and individuals who do not speak English as a first language, are available, covering effective cleaning and decontamination of patient's rooms, safety guidelines for transferring patients with COVID-19 and working in communal and high risk acute areas.

Hand hygiene advice is also provided for during transfers at the commencement of shifts, before and after work breaks and at the end of shift rotas.

Ashley Flores, Nurse Consultant and Deputy Director of Infection Prevention, Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust said: "Producing the Action cards was a great opportunity to communicate information about the COVID-19 to the Facilities team. We very much appreciate all the hard work undertaken by hostesses, housekeepers and porters, and their important contribution to the control of infection. It is hoped that the action cards were useful in providing succinct guides on certain aspects of their work, to enhance safety for staff and patients."

NHS South East has also launched a new Covid-19 BAME Disparity Work Programme and Advisory Group to ensure robust risk assessments are carried out. In addition each of the six systems in the region has developed plans describing how they are responding to disparities across both the BAME workforce and the communities they serve. Once reviewed, recommendations and best practice methods will be shared across the system.

In London, the **Chelsea and Westminster Foundation Trust** has ensured all 600 of its portering and cleaning staff, employed through a facility service provider (ISS), are given the same level of protection, training and care as those directly employed by the NHS.

The Trust worked alongside ISS to provide PPE training. The Trust has tried to ensure that every member of staff entering the Intensive Treatment Unit (ITU) has undergone a risk assessment and has the right level of training on PPE, approved by ISS.

Additionally, the Trust's senior executive team have all spent time on the Covid-19 ITU, allowing leaders to see emerging issues, engage with staff and respond to concerns. Staff have also been given the opportunity to put questions to Chief Nurse Pippa Nightingale during Infection, Prevention and Control training sessions, looking at the use of PPE, handwashing and environmental risks.

Thomas Simons, Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development at the trust, said: "Porters and cleaners are critical members of our team, working alongside our clinicians and other trust staff every single day. When Covid-19 hit, we quickly recognised these staff would be entering the trust's Intensive Therapy Units multiple times each day. By taking an inclusive approach in partnership with our staff supplier, these colleagues know what they need to do to manage risks of transmission, and keep themselves, their colleagues, and our patients safe from harm."

Ends

For further information please contact the NHS England and NHS Improvement media team on nhsengland.media@nhs.net or 01138 250958/9

Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust provide emergency and non-emergency services to residents of east Surrey, north-east West Sussex, and South Croydon, including Crawley, Horsham, Reigate and Redhill.

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust operates over two main hospital sites, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital and West Middlesex University Hospital, both of which have major A&E departments, and across 12 community-based clinics within North West London. The Trust provides services to a community of over 1.5 million people.

Further examples

Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The Trust has taken additional steps to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of its BAME staff, all of whom have received communication by email along with a letter to their home address encouraging them to discuss and arrange a risk assessment with their line manager.

The letter also provided details of the route to take for covid-19 testing for individuals and their households, how to raise concerns and signposts reminders to various support resources available across the Trust.

In addition, weekly virtual drop in sessions are in operation, led by the Chair of the BAME staff network. The initial meeting – for staff to share and raise any concerns - was attended by the Chief Executive Officer, every subsequent meeting has been attended by the Medical Director.

Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is one of the most successful, teaching NHS Trusts in the country. It offers more nationally-accredited specialist services than any other group of hospitals in the UK and manages over one million patient 'engagements' every year.

Thistlemoor Medical Centre in Peterborough

The general practice looks after nearly 30,000 diverse patients and around 80% of consultations require language interpretation through trained staff. The main staff and local population groups are from Eastern European and Asian backgrounds.

To protect staff, it has now disbanded its longstanding walk in triage service and instead introduced a new telephone system, allowing for greater contact with patients, using dedicated ways of accessing the service without the need to attend the practice by email, SMS, video conferencing and web-based communication.

The Practice advertised the change in operation using social media and sent messages via text to patients in their own language, alerting them to the changes in operation.

This Information was also translated and uploaded to the Practice website in several different languages for patients to understand the new way of communicating, editorials were also carried in local papers. As part of the change, the Practice has now created a non-patient administration zone, a red zone for patients that needed specific help with possible Covid-19 symptoms and an amber zone for all other patient facing activity.

The practice also reviewed the risk of adverse outcomes to members of staff and ensured those most vulnerable were protected from patient facing roles.

- Doctors of the World has written information on Covid-19 in over 50 languages:

<https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/what-to-do-if-you-or-someone-you-live-with-has-coronavirus-symptoms/>

NHS England and NHS Improvement is making case studies available to support NHS employers to improve information awareness for all members of staff, these will be updated in the coming days and weeks.