

Rt. Hon Matt Hancock MP
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By email

Dear Secretary of State

We all want to act responsibly and make sure that staff are able to provide treatment and care without putting themselves or those they are helping at risk.

Over the last fortnight we have worked with your officials to flag the problems that staff are experiencing in relation to availability of personal protective equipment (PPE).

We know that considerable efforts are being made to solve the logistical problems associated with supply and distribution of materials and that you have just shared a hotline number. However, there is still significant work to do to generate staff confidence on this matter. Confusion over gaps between PHE and WHO guidance; changes to PHE advice and fear that decisions are predicated on dwindling supply lines are all adding to the challenges that teams are facing across the sector.

With urgency, we would ask that you instruct employers to take the following measures to protect staff and the people they care for:

- Explain clearly to staff the scientific evidence employers are using when they make decisions about the provision and use of PPE
- Make sure staff can access the correct PPE for the work they are doing and confirm what measures are being taken to address supply and distribution issues
- Carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments to keep staff safe
- Give staff access to those risk assessments to give them confidence and reassure them that everything is being done to keep them as safe as possible.
- Follow national and local infection control guidelines
- Give staff clear instructions on what to do in the event of PPE not being available
- Support staff to report problems with PPE and ensure recording and investigation of incidents
- Provide suitable and effective training and instruction to staff on how to use PPE once it is issued

We are getting a particularly high volume of issues with PPE raised by colleagues in the Ambulance, community and domiciliary care sector. As you know, staff in these environments are less able to control risks in the settings they go in to, so I would welcome your assurance that you could emphasise these points with their employer representatives as a matter of extreme urgency, please.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Gorton', followed by a period.

Sara Gorton
Head of Health
UNISON

Cc:

Lee McDonagh DHSC
Prerana Issar, NHS England and Improvement
Danny Mortimer NHS Employers