

23 March 2020

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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Royal College of Nursing
20 Cavendish Square
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Dame Donna Kinnair
Chief Executive & General Secretary

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Dear Prime Minister,

In my role as the Chief Executive and General Secretary of the largest nursing union and professional body in the world, I am writing to you to express the serious concerns of our members – and the wider health and care workforce – regarding the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) and COVID-19 testing for staff.

Our members have been unstinting in their dedication and professionalism to protecting the health and wellbeing of United Kingdom – they must be supported by the Government and health sector in return.

Over the weekend, there were increasing reports of a lack of PPE available to frontline staff - not just in hospitals, but in GP surgeries, care homes and community nurses visiting people in their homes. Our members tell us that they simply cannot obtain enough equipment, in particular face masks that offer a higher level of respiratory protection (FFP3 masks).

While we welcome the announcement of further stocks being distributed to health and care settings, we will be closely monitoring the situation to make sure these stocks are reaching the right places.

We are also receiving reports from members regarding the confusion over the guidance on what PPE to use and in what circumstances. We are aware that the UK NHS Pandemic Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Guidance does not completely align with that of the World Health Organisation (WHO), specifically guidance on the use of eye protection and gowns. Nursing staff across the country are working around the clock to deal with this crisis and deserve absolute clarity on how the government and their workplace are protecting them from the virus given discrepancies between the UK and WHO infection prevention guidance.

Finally, priority COVID-19 testing for health and social care workers is an absolute must. Our members need this in order to do their job while keeping themselves, and their patients, safe.

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Nursing staff across the country are rising to the challenge of this unprecedented situation. Our members are coming out of retirement, students interrupting their studies, and nursing staff are deploying from non-clinical settings, all to support the frontline in the battle against COVID-19.

We ask you to personally intervene and act to ensure enough supply of PPE and testing for COVID-19 is available for all nursing staff and our colleagues across the health and care system.

Sincerely,



Dame Donna Kinnair
Chief Executive and General Secretary

CC: Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

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