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Dear Colleagues,

By now, I am sure you will be aware of Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock's announcement on Friday 5th June that 'all hospital staff, whether clinical or non-clinical, front-facing or office based, will be required to wear surgical masks in the workplace.'

For us, this means that all staff, whether clinical facing or not, will need to wear a surgical mask at all times. It will apply in all areas across the Trust, both in offices and departments, as well in all clinical areas. We will also be expected to wear a mask as we move around the building and in communal areas. The expectation is that this will be implemented within all NHS Trusts by Monday 15th June. Specific, national guidance is expected to support this roll-out, but has not yet been made available, so please bear with us as we try to implement the basic ask in the absence of additional information.

From Monday morning next, we will be issuing surgical masks (x2 per person per day) to all **non-clinical staff** on arrival at work at the entrances, to wear throughout the day on a sessional basis (am and pm, for example). If you work in a **clinical area**, where masks are already available to you, you **DO NOT** need to collect masks on arrival at work and you should continue to use the PPE available to you in your clinical area, in accordance with the relevant COVID-19 and infection control policies and procedures.

Pedal bins with **clinical waste bags** will be provided throughout the hospital in order to dispose of these masks. Please ensure you dispose of your mask appropriately and do not leave them anywhere for use the following day.

Instructions on how to safely don and doff a surgical mask are available [here](#).



I know that there will need to be some exemptions from wearing a surgical mask, for reasons which may include allergy, breathing difficulties, pressure effects or where reasonable adjustments are required. If this is an issue for you, please speak to your line manager, who will support you and escalate accordingly for any further guidance required.

It is recognised that some members of staff may not wish to wear a mask and this may lead to local issues and concerns. I would politely request that all staff support the implementation of this government issued guidance at UHP for now, while we await further guidance and as we continue to manage the ongoing risk of COVID-19 as a healthcare provider organisation.

It is highly likely that changes to this Government guidance and its local implementation will raise some issues, which will also impact the way the guidance evolves. It should be recognised that this is a fluid situation and the aim of this guidance is to provide the safest working environment for our staff, patients and visitors. Where it becomes clear that a better way is possible we will adopt that as early as we can.

In staff rooms and restaurants, when eating and drinking, obviously, you should remove your mask and keep it on your person. When walking to and from the restaurant however, you must put your mask on. In restaurants and rest areas, you must also maintain the 2M social distancing rules.

I do understand that this will raise a number of questions for many of you who are not used to wearing masks at work and there is currently likely to be more questions than answers, so I do apologise for this. Please note that as soon as any additional guidance is received, it will be cascaded through the normal managerial and communication channels. If you have any major questions which require an answer at the moment, discuss with your line manager or e-mail the control centre inbox at derrifordhospital.controlcentre@nhs.net

For anyone who may be concerned that the issuing of masks at this stage means that you are at a higher risk of contracting the virus in the workplace, please be assured that this is not the case. Issuing masks to all staff is an additional level of precaution in an effort to maintain social distancing, reduce the overall spread of the virus between people and maintain the same level of social distancing compliance within the workplace as we would be expected to do outside as members of the community. As always, I would like to thank you for your ongoing support with implementing the many fast changes to how we work as a healthcare provider in response to Covid-19.

Kind regards



Lenny Byrne
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