



Royal College of
General Practitioners



Scottish Care
Voice of the independent care sector

Jeane Freeman MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH3 3DG

30 March 2020

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Re – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for community health and social care workers

We are writing to you jointly during this unprecedented time to raise our continued concerns about the level of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) being provided to health and social care staff who are providing vital care within communities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

These are unprecedented times for our health and social care workforce and this challenge has been met with resilience, adaptability and perseverance from all those working within the NHS and social care services. However, those that we represent – GPs, community nurses and social care staff – have never been more concerned, not just for the safety of themselves and their teams, but for patients too.

Our members tell us that their confidence to care for the public during this time is being impacted by uncertainty over the level of PPE being supplied to them. This is particularly relevant for aprons and eye protection, which many believe to be providing inadequate protection. We welcome the recent announcement, following similar concerns raised by medical professionals across the UK, that guidance on PPE will be updated. It is imperative that this updated guidance recommends a consistent approach to the level of PPE required across both acute and community settings, in particular in terms of what constitutes an 'aerosol generating procedure' (for example, taking throat swabs from symptomatic patients). We also call for this guidance to consider lessons which may have already been learned in other countries regarding the protection of community-based health and social care teams when caring for unwell Covid-19 patients who present a high viral load.

As the number of patients with Covid-19 increases, our members will increasingly be caring for the most sick and vulnerable within their own homes in communities across Scotland. Many of these people will already be showing advanced symptoms of Covid-19, but many more may be asymptomatic, although are likely still be infectious. Providing this vital care has never been more important, but our members tell us that they are apprehensive about delivering this care, given the current level of PPE that they have been provided with. In short, they are fearful that the level of protection that they have been provided with will not be enough to shield them from the worst effects of Covid-19.

While we welcome news that further stocks of PPE are being distributed to frontline services, our members are continuing to get in touch to raise concerns over the levels of PPE



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available in GP surgeries and out into the community. This PPE needs to reach those areas of the health service that need it most, with community care receiving an equitable distribution of these supplies. In particular staff caring for those in nursing and care homes as well as sheltered housing complexes will require supplies as many of their patients will continue to receive care within the community should they fall ill.

We are calling for assurances to be provided and urgent action to be taken to protect those who are going above and beyond to care for the most sick and vulnerable within the community at this incredibly difficult time. We need our health and social care workforce to be healthy and protected as they deal with the greatest public health challenge of our lifetime.

We would be more than happy to discuss this further with you and your team in the coming days.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Carey Lunan
Chair, RCGP Scotland

Theresa Fyffe
Scotland Director, RCN

Donald Macaskill
CEO, Scottish Care