

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria St
London SW1H 0EU

26 March 2020

By email: matt.hancock.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Secretary of State

PPE for AHP frontline staff

On behalf of The Allied Health Professions Federation (AHPF), I am writing to welcome the Coronavirus Bill and its key aim to; “Increase the available Health & Social Care Workforce”. We are confident that many AHPs will be ready to assist the NHS once again as they are potentially recalled and we have already heard from many who plan to do so.

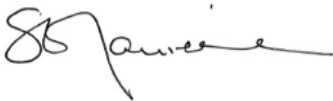
However, as with other professions, we do have concerns about accessibility to Personal Protective Equipment for NHS Frontline staff. Many of the Allied Health Professions, alongside Doctors and Nurses will be there at the forefront, supporting and helping patients manage and recover from COVID-19. But there have been a number of mixed messages from Government about the supply available and the distribution of the equipment to those that most need it. Would you please confirm that all NHS Frontline staff will be able to access this vital equipment and that they will be adequately equipped?

In particular there seems to be some confusion about which AHPs can receive these and under which circumstances. For example, Speech and Language Therapists undertake assessments, such as a dysphagia assessment (checking a person’s swallow function to see if they can eat and drink safely), that may involve their patient coughing, with the significant potential risk of infection to the therapists if they do not have personal protective equipment and their patient has COVID19. It is also crucial to have the appropriate type of PPE including FFP3 masks for aerosol generating procedures (AGP) undertaken by respiratory physiotherapists. It is critical that Trusts’ infection prevention and control teams consider the range of AHP assessments and interventions that may expose staff to risk, including when caring for COVID-19 suspected cases.

AHPS are also working in community settings or in peoples’ homes ensuring successful discharge from hospital, rehabilitation and community based rapid response services. The distribution and supply of PPE needs to include this workforce alongside GPs and practice or community nurses.

Secondly, the announcement and aim to test 25,000 people a day for COVID-19 was welcome, as identifying those that currently have the virus, as well as those that have already had it is key when combating this virus. But NHS Staff who are risking their own health to support the wider public need to know if they can safely carry out their duties. Therefore, we are calling for all NHS Frontline staff, including AHPs to be prioritised for COVID-19 testing, particularly as we have concerns about the mixed messages from government about this issue.

Kind regards



Steve Jamieson
Chair
Allied Health Professions Federation

The Allied Health Professions Federation (AHPF)

The AHPF's Vision is that; "The AHP workforce is positioned to improve the health and well-being of the population". Our mission is; The Federation provides collective AHP leadership and representation to influence national policy and guidance at a strategic level". In all areas, the AHPF promotes parity between mental and physical health.

The Allied Health Professions Federation (AHPF) is made up of twelve professional bodies representing Allied Health Professionals (AHPs):

- The Association for Music Therapy (BAMT)
- The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT)
- British Association of Dramatherapists (BADth)
- The British Dietetic Association (BDA)
- British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists (BAPO)
- British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS)
- Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT)
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)
- The College of Paramedics (CoP)
- The College of Podiatry (CoP)
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)
- Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR)

AHPs are the 3rd largest workforce in the NHS (after doctors and nurses) and deliver high quality services across health and social care. There are over 150,000 AHPs working within a range of surroundings including hospitals, people's homes, clinics, surgeries, the justice system, local authorities, private and voluntary sectors and primary, secondary and tertiary education.

AHPs focus on consistent, person-centred, preventative and therapeutic care for children and adults. They are registered, regulated and trustworthy professionals performing a crucial function in the NHS and social care. The breadth and depth of AHP skills and reach make them ideally placed to lead and support transformative changes.