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Guidance

COVID-19 infection prevention and control guidance: occupational health and staff deployment

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Prompt recognition of cases of COVID-19 among healthcare staff is essential to limit the spread.

Health and social care staff with symptoms of COVID-19 should not come to work.

As a general principle, healthcare staff who provide care in areas for suspected or confirmed patients/individuals should not care for other patients. However, this has to be a local decision based on local epidemiology and the configuration of the organisation.

A risk assessment is required for health and social care staff at high risk of complications from COVID-19, including pregnant staff. Employers should:

- discuss with employees who are at risk or are pregnant the need to be deployed away from areas used for the care of those who have, or are clinically suspected of having, COVID-19; or, in the primary care setting, from clinics set up to manage people with COVID-19 symptoms – refer to the guidance published by the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecology (<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/2020-03-30-occupational-health-advice-for-employers-and-pregnant-women-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf>)
- ensure that advice is available to all health and social care staff, including specific advice to those at risk from complications

Bank, agency and locum staff should follow the same deployment advice as permanent staff.

As part of their employer's duty of care, providers have a role to play in ensuring that staff understand and are adequately trained in safe systems of working, including donning and doffing of personal protective equipment. A fit testing programme should be in place for those who may need to wear respiratory protection.

In the event of a breach in infection control procedures, staff should be reviewed by occupational health.

Occupational health departments should lead on the implementation of systems to monitor staff illness and absence.