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Stocks of FFP3 Respirators

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Dear all,

I am writing to you for awareness and advance communication around the requirements to use stocks of FFP3 respirators, which are beyond their expiry date, but which have passed stringent quality assurance testing. These have been approved for use by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Health Protection Scotland (HPS). A letter will also be issued to all staff from the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer.

As you are aware, the global supply chain for PPE remains challenging, specifically for FFP3 respirators which form part of the personal protective equipment (PPE) required in Intensive Care Units and when performing Aerosol Generating procedures in patients with confirmed or suspected COVID infection.

We are working with partners within Scotland as well as across the 4 UK nations and globally to ensure continued supply and distribution. NHS Boards are being kept up to date with a daily bulletin by NHS National Procurement.

We have, however, retained 1.5 million FFP3 masks in the national stockpiles which had recently gone out of date. We have now received an independent test report which confirms that this stock has passed a series of stringent quality assurance tests. This stock can now, therefore, be deployed for use across the NHS, if there are no other supplies available. While we will continue to seek new stock, it may be necessary to deploy this stock very soon, in order to allow time for fit-testing of staff and to minimise the level of ongoing fit-testing.

To confirm, NHS England have also approved this stock for use (see attached letter from Professor Keith Willets), and we will be issuing similar guidance / FAQ for staff in NHS Scotland.

With best wishes

Professor Fiona McQueen
Chief Nursing Officer