



## NHS Scotland COVID-19 pandemic: Guidance on risks to staff health

### Purpose

It is critical that essential services are maintained during the outbreak whilst minimising the risk to staff health. This guidance is for NHS employers, staff and managers, so everyone understands what they need to do to look after their own health in respect of Coronavirus (COVID-19). This guidance also provides information on critical and key workers in NHS Scotland.

**NHS employers should replace any local guidance on risks to staff health with this guidance with immediate effect.**

### Critical and key workers

For the purposes of COVID-19, the term critical worker refers to workers who are needed to perform certain functions where, if these functions were not performed, even for a short period of time, and requiring a physical presence, serious damage to the health and welfare of the population could be caused.

The term key worker refers to workers who are needed to perform certain functions where, if these functions were not performed, there could be a significant impact to the health and welfare of the population.

We are considering which staff would be classed as critical, which staff would be classed as key and the numbers of staff in these categories. It is important to note that staff groups who fall into these categories will change as the COVID-19 outbreak progresses.

We are of the view that many clinical and non-clinical roles within territorial health boards would fall into the critical and key worker categories. These roles would include porters, domestics, catering, laundry, CDU, Laboratory staff, depending on the needs of the service at any given time. Staff from national boards such as SAS and NHS 24 and other national boards such as NSS would also be critical to the running of the NHS in Scotland. Our current estimation is that a small number of administration roles would not fall into the definition of a critical or key worker.

Planning assumptions will need to consider the definitions alongside planned reductions to non-essential services.

Critical and key workers will be considered for additional support and measures such as additional testing to help maintain essential services. This would ensure that staff who test negative for COVID-19 can immediately return to their key or critical posts (provided they do not have an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19). Further detail on this will follow.



## **Those at risk of severe illness from (COVID-19)**

Those who have an increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) currently fall into two categories, those at risk of severe illness and those at even higher risk due to complex health issues.

**Staff in these categories are strongly advised to stay at home as much as possible and significantly reduce unnecessary social contact.** This advice may change as the outbreak progresses. NHS employers should be exemplar on this and should be advising staff to follow this advice. This advice applies equally to staff that are identified as critical and key workers.

Information on who is currently included in these groups and the guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

## **Risk assessments**

Staff in these risk groups who have chosen not to follow government advice must not be in roles where they are working with patients.

Risk assessments will be required for staff in these risk groups who have chosen not to follow government advice. Staff in these circumstances should be redeployed to lower risk settings. Risk assessments should also be provided to those with caring responsibilities for those in these risk groups. Reasonable and workplace adjustments should be made, where required.

Working from home for these risk groups should be considered, where possible.

The advice on risk assessment may also be subject to change as the outbreak progresses.