

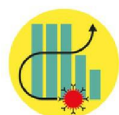
[News](#) [Sport](#) [Money](#) [Business](#) [Opinion](#) [Israel](#) [Ukraine](#) [Royals](#) [Life](#) [Style](#) [Travel](#)[See all News](#)

## Three nurses forced to wear bin bags because of PPE shortage test positive for coronavirus

Exclusive: Frontline workers were pictured wearing clinical waste bags on heads and feet at Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow last month

Bill Gardner

8 April 2020 • 9:00pm



Latest UK cases: 25,987 -4%  
[See figures for your area](#)



Start your free trial today  
[Subscribe now](#)

Three NHS nurses who were forced to wear bin bags due to a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) have all tested positive for coronavirus, The Telegraph has been told.

The three frontline staff were pictured wearing clinical waste bags on their heads and feet at Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow last month. The hospital was the first in the country to declare a critical incident after being overwhelmed by Covid-19 patients.

Frontline staff told how they were contracting the virus from patients because bosses had failed to provide them with proper masks, caps and aprons.

It came as nursing leaders warned that a lack of protective equipment continued to "fundamentally compromise" the care they can give patients, despite repeated assurances from the Government.

According to a senior source at Northwick Park, the three nurses pictured wearing the bin bags were all diagnosed with coronavirus at a North London testing centre last week.



PLAYLIST

On one ward, more than 50 per cent of staff, including the matron and ward manager, were found to have contracted the virus, it is understood.

Staff at the hospital have been warned not to speak to the press about continuing shortages of PPE, the source said.

Last month, one of the nurses in the picture told the Telegraph: "We had to use our initiative. We had no other choice or we could catch the virus ourselves.

"We need proper PPE kit now, or nurses and doctors are going to die. It's as simple as that.

“We’re treating our own colleagues on the ward after they caught the virus from patients. How can that be right?”

“There are so many younger people here on ventilation - many with asthma, or diabetes. They can’t stop coughing, they just cough and cough and cough and they can’t help it.

“But there’s little we can do apart from try to help them breathe. Sometimes the body just gives up, and they die. We can’t save them.

“And the worst part is that we can’t allow their relatives in to say goodbye.

“Even our own families don’t want us to come home in case we bring back the disease. What can we do?”

“There’s too many Covid patients coming in to cope with. We put on our brave smiles but inside we’re terrified. I don’t know what will happen next.”

It comes after the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) suggested that the Government could be significantly underestimating the number of medics going off work due to coronavirus.

On Sunday, Matt Hancock, the Health Secretary, claimed that only 5.7 per cent of hospital doctors were off sick because of Covid-19, but an RCP survey of more than 2,500 frontline workers found the rate was actually 14.6 per cent.

Officials have said millions of pieces of kit have been distributed and a hotline has been established to help frontline staff get PPE where it is needed most.





A nurse wears bin bags on her feet because of a lack of PPE equipment

According to the Royal College of Nursing's chief executive and general secretary, Dame Donna Kinnair, however, nurses are still being forced to share equipment, buy their own or reuse kit.

In a letter to the parliamentary health committee chairman and former Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, Dame Donna said nurses are being forced to choose between their sense of duty and the safety of themselves and their families.

"Nursing staff are at the front line of the Covid-19 pandemic," she wrote in the letter, dated April 6. "Our safety and ability to care for patients is being fundamentally compromised by the lack of adequate and correct supplies of vital personal protective equipment and the slow and small-scale roll-out of Covid-19 testing.

"Our members are facing impossible decisions between their own or their family's health and their sense of duty."

A spokesman for London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust, which runs Northwick Park Hospital, said: "We can confirm that a number of staff members working in our Covid-19 positive areas have tested positive for the coronavirus.

"This is unfortunate but not unexpected, as it corresponds with the experience of healthcare workers across the world. We are providing full support to those of our staff members who become unwell, and wish them a swift recovery."

Responding to suggestions that staff had been prevented from speaking out about shortages of PPE, the spokesman said: "We are actively working to support staff to raise concerns through the appropriate trust channels."

---

## Breaking News Alerts Newsletter

Sign up to receive instant updates on the biggest news stories



Sign up

---

Related Topics

NHS (National Health Service), Pandemics and epidemics, Coronavirus, Health



**More stories**



**No wonder our high streets are dying with councils like this in charge**



**The inside story of why Harry and Meghan aren't invited to the society wedding of 2024**



**Woman mowed down and killed boyfriend after she 'lost her cool' in an argument**



**Jenrick challenges BBC Today presenter over failure to ask about Israeli hostages**



**All the things we don't want men to do**



**Prince Harry: I was treated less favourably over police protection**

## More from News



**Monica Galetti condemns TV focus on chefs' tantrums**



**Armed police descend on Aberfan, south Wales, with two schools in lockdown**



## YouTuber who 'crashed plane for views' jailed for six months



## Jenrick challenges BBC Today presenter over failure to ask about Israeli hostages



## **Live** Ukraine-Russia war live: Putin to visit Saudi Arabia and UAE



## Maori MPs accused of being 'offensive' to King Charles at opening of parliament



### More from The Telegraph



## FTSE trading goes down as London Stock Exchange hit by 'incident' - latest updates





**'We can't go uphill – the 20mph speed limit makes no sense'**



**Traders with prior knowledge of Hamas attacks made millions shorting Israel, claims report**



**'Avalanche of landlords' to sell before tax breaks cut in half**



**Cleverly pledges to deliver biggest ever reduction in net migration**



**Armed police descend on Aberfan, south Wales, with two schools in lockdown**

**The Telegraph**

[Back to top](#) ^

Follow us on:



[Help Centre](#)

[About us](#)

[Telegraph Extra](#)

[Reader Prints](#)

[Branded Content](#)[Syndication and Commissioning](#)[Guidelines](#)[Privacy](#)[Terms and Conditions](#)[Advertising Terms](#)[Fantasy Sport](#)[UK Voucher Codes](#)[Betting Offers](#)[Modern Slavery](#)[Tax Strategy](#)[Broadband and Mobile Deals](#)[Wine Cellar](#)[The Chelsea Magazine Company](#)[Newsletters](#)[Manage Cookies](#)

© Telegraph Media Group Limited 2023