

ITAPS / Medical and Dental = 71.38% = 192/269 staff
ITAPS / Nursing & Midwifery = 75.92% = 435/573 staff

Part of the fit testing process is ensuring that individual knows how to fit check their mask and ensure that the seal is tight and provides adequate protection. This is critical as it is recognised that even where a successful fit test has been completed, it is the fit of the individual mask on the wearer at the time of exposure that is of critical importance.

3.0. What has Changed?

Under the current pandemic conditions, the NHS supply chain has been unable to provide a consistent stock of masks. In practice, this means that we have had very limited stock of the FFP3 masks on which staff have previously been tested. Under current supply chain conditions, no Trust has any control over the types of mask that are provided. PHE guidance has changed a number of times in recent weeks and has meant that we have used up some supply in fit-testing groups of staff where a surgical mask is now considered adequate protection.

Each week we receive deliveries of different types of mask which has meant that some staff have repeatedly been fit tested and moreover that we have used stock that might otherwise be used to protect patients and staff. Currently we have seven different types of mask in stock and approximately 2000 staff who require repeated fit testing as the mask type changes. Each test takes between 15 and 30 minutes. Even with our now increased fit testing offer over 7 days per week it would take a number of weeks to test all staff on all available masks.

This would also mean that Infection Prevention Control (IPC) resource would be diverted to support the programme of testing which otherwise could be supporting staff in clinical areas to use PPE effectively, safely and consistently.

4.0 What Have We Done to Maximise Fit Testing?

We have undertaken a number of actions to maximise fit-testing opportunities for staff as detailed below:

- UHL has purchased ten Portacount machines (quantitative testing) which reduce the time taken to undertake a fit test from 30 to 15 minutes. These machines are in use across the trust.
- UHL has successfully worked with system colleagues to acquire additional fit-testing kits in order to maximise opportunity for testing
- UHL have established a team of staff trained to undertake fit testing clinics which could run throughout the day, including evening and weekends across the trust.
- UHL has successfully identified areas where testing should be prioritised and has targeted testing in this areas to all staff groups.
- Vulnerable staff, those with underlying health conditions, have been fit tested and provided with PPE appropriate to the activity they undertake

The Board should be appraised of the steps taken to mitigate the testing situation. These mitigations include:

- The least harm would be obtained by releasing FFP3 national emergency stock prior to fit testing.
- This is not in line with standard practice outside a pandemic situation but is consistent with the requirement on employers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 “to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees.”
- To note that we would not expect staff to work in covid positive areas without fit testing where they were not comfortable with the mask fit.
- It should also be noted that the covid crisis is not ‘business as usual’.
- The decision to derogate will be reviewed on a daily basis, as part of the PPE Strategic and Tactical group discussions, with a view to returning to the full programme of testing as soon as the supply of FFP3 masks stabilises.
- The opinion of the Head of Health and Safety was sought and utilised for decision making
- The opinion of the Consultant in Medical Microbiology and Lead Infection Prevention Doctor was also sought and his view can be found in Appendix 2.

In addition to all the above, a risk assessment has been completed and is attached.

8.0 Recommendations

The Board is asked to receive this report as assurance of the Executive plan to derogate from the HSE requirements to fit test for each particular mask type, with a plan to revert back to normal procedures as soon as the current supply of masks stabilises.