



20 April 2022

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health & Social Care

Sent by email: mb-sofs@dhsc.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

We write as leaders of a range of healthcare professions and specialisms to ask for your immediate action to protect healthcare workers and enable them to continue to work safely and healthily.

As you are well aware, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to place a significant burden on health and care services affecting both the workforce and those we care for. Recent media reports regarding the removal of testing from admissions to hospitals and potential plans to remove cohorting of patients with known or unknown COVID-19 status are a cause of significant concern to the alliance we represent.

As SARS-CoV-2 remains a hazard group 3 biological hazard as classified by the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens, exposure to the virus through work activities must be controlled and managed under COSHH Regulations in line with health and Safety Law.

We propose a simpler and safer approach to managing the risk of transmission based on two measures:

- The clear acceptance of the airborne transmission of SARS-COV-2 and what that means for indoor environments and the provision of respiratory protective equipment (RPE). This includes FFP3 and similar respirators which are effective and approved by the Health and Safety Executive for protection against airborne pathogens whereas the surgical masks currently provided to staff are not.
- Extending the current vaccine booster programme to health and care workers in front-line, patient facing environments which carry risk.

It is our contention that these two measures would reduce staff absence and increase staff wellbeing, enabling the workforce to better address the backlog.

Notwithstanding the desire to 'live with covid', COVID-19 remains a core patient safety issue that must be managed and monitored. We recognise the urgent need to manage the elective backlog and treat emergency patients presenting in hospitals. This will be more effectively done if balanced with transparent processes and governance that allow staff to deliver care as safely as possible.

We have written in more detail to the Deputy Chief Nursing Officer outlining the scientific and legal basis of our concerns. We would be happy to provide any further detail you require and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

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Dr Barry Jones MD FRCP, Chair of CAPA -Covid Airborne Protection Alliance

*CAPA

- ARTP - Association for Respiratory Technology & Physiology
- BAPEN – British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
- BIASP – British and Irish Association of Stroke Physicians
- BDA – British Dietetic Association
- BOHS - British Occupational Health Society
- BSG - British Society of Gastroenterology
- College of Paramedics
- CSP – Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
- FreshAir NHS
- GMB Union
- HCSA - Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association
- MSDUK Med Supply Drive UK
- NNNG - National Nurses Nutrition Group
- QNI - Queen's Nursing Institute
- RCSLT – Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
- Unite the Union
- Doctors Association UK
- Trident H&S