

South West COVID-19 Workforce Cell Bulletin – 17 April 2020

This weekly bulletin aims to provide a summary of key information and updates on COVID-19 guidance that has been shared to date. It should be read in conjunction with the national COVID-19 advice and guidance hosted by [Health Education England](#) and [NHS England and NHS Improvement](#).

COVID19workforce.sw@hee.nhs.uk / Out of hours emergencies: 01454 252 679

This bulletin covers:

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Medical - Almost 3,000 final-year medical students have now signed up to join the COVID-19 frontline, and hundreds will begin this week (April 13). [Read the full story here](#)

Postgraduate medical trainees continue to provide a significant contribution to service and are an essential part of plans to support the response to COVID-19. Therefore, it has been agreed to cease all planned rotations in May, June and July. [Read the letter in full here](#)

Letter from the four Statutory Education Bodies to all trainees, including information on management of ARCPs. [Read the letter in full here](#)

As NHS Nightingale Hospitals become operational, it is anticipated there may be requests for medical and dental trainees to be redeployed into them. Guidance for postgraduate medical and dental trainees has been uploaded to our website. [Frequently asked questions for trainees are updated regularly on this page.](#)

Nursing and Midwifery Returners - As part of system-wide planning, our Bring Back Staff (BBS) team are working with our key stakeholders to support our colleagues working in health and social care. In this unprecedented situation we are

working with those who have relevant skills and knowledge to support the national response.

We are supporting the [Your NHS Needs You campaign](#) asking former registrants to consider returning to support our health and care services.

We are also working in partnership with the Chief Nursing Officers from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on UK-wide policy and guidance to support the deployment of additional nurses and midwives to support patients and families during the covid-19 outbreak.

This includes registered nurses and midwives and colleagues from our own organisation and other arm's length bodies (ALBs) who are registered nurses and midwives.

Nursing and Midwifery Students – Over 15,000 nursing and midwifery students from across the country have now opted to join NHS frontline staff in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have over 1,600 students in the south west opting in to paid placements. We are exploring ideas to take a longer term view on students so that we have a more structured plan, which allows a level of flexibility and some opportunity to replenish and replace students in a timely way.

These students were the first to be contacted by their university and asked about their interest and whether they would like to opt-in to a paid placement.

This has now been extended to include all nursing cohorts eligible for the extended paid-placements as part of the revised education programmes permitted by the COVID-19 legislation.

All second- and third-year undergraduate nursing students, second- and third-year midwifery students, and postgraduate nursing and midwifery students are also being contacted by their university to discuss their options.

AHPs – we are continuing to develop proposals to provide safe and beneficial opportunities for our AHP students that allows them to keep developing their skills while supporting the NHS at this difficult time. Universities are asked to contact their eligible AHP students to discuss their options for using their education programme to help with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The HEE-led COVID-19 AHP student data collection is now live for eligible second and third year undergraduate and postgraduate students to note and then report their preferences for opting-in to paid clinical practice. The details of students who opt-in will be reported by HEE to the 'Regional Workforce Cells' who will place students with NHS provider organisations.

This data collection is to support the [AHP Student Support Guide and the joint AHP leads letter \(available here\)](#).

Guidance for students who do deploy is [here](#).

Pharmacy

As the NHS mobilises to support increasing numbers of patients suffering with symptoms of COVID-19, we are working closely with partners to support pharmacy workforce planning, education and training. We are pleased to share new guidance with you, which aims to facilitate the safe and effective deployment of undergraduate pharmacy students.

New [Joint Guidance: Facilitating deployment of pharmacy undergraduate students to support the pharmacy workforce](#) has been issued that defines guiding principles for how employers might support safe and effective deployment of pharmacy students within pharmacy settings, during the emergency period. Current advice is that students only deploy in a way/at a time that will not interrupt their amended schedule of assessment.

This guidance can be accessed via HEE's new Coronavirus (COVID-19) [information for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians web page](#).

Bring back staff (BBS) medical support worker

We know some individuals that have volunteered to come back may not be suitable for a return in a registered medical role but could be suitable for work as medical support workers. The role of a medical support worker is suitable for those who have had medical training but have been out of clinical practice for a significant period and do not wish to take on the role of a doctor. It is also suitable for those who do not yet have GMC registration, for example, international medical graduates or refugee doctors currently living in the UK. The document attached to the bulletin email outlines the role and job description.

The BBS team will flag those individuals we feel might be suitable as a medical support worker in our daily email allocations. If you have any questions please contact Marc.Lyall@hee.nhs.uk

Information and guidance around Quality during the Covid-19 pandemic

Health Education England is stopping all routine education quality activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our focus remains on the quality of the clinical learning environment and its impact on the safety of learners and patients.

Our principles, expectations and information on how to raise concerns during this time are set out in the documents below:

HEE [statement on stopping quality visits during Covid-19](#)
[Escalating concerns process during Covid-19](#)
[Quality Principles during Covid-19](#)

e-Learning for Healthcare

Online a-Learning for Healthcare resources on [COVID-19](#) are free to all health & care professionals worldwide with over 600,000 visits from almost 50 countries to date. Thank you for continuing to share our content on the [COVID-19 e-learning programme](#).

Constantly updated and now includes:

- Essential Guidance from the NHS, UK Government, WHO and BMJ
- Public Health England – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Infection Prevention and Control
- Resources for Staff Working in Critical Care Setting
- Resources for Staff Working in Acute Hospital Setting
- Resources for Staff Working in Primary Care and Community Setting
- Resources for Return to Work Healthcare Staff
- Resources for Staff being Up-Skilled or Redeployed (Nurses and AHPs)
- End of Life Care COVID-19
- Resources for Paramedics
- Resources for Pharmacy Staff
- Equipment Quick Guides
- Staff Wellbeing and Resilience during Covid-19
- Returning Clinicians (excluding GPs)
- Learning path for health and social care workforce

Supporting the wellbeing of the NHS workforce:

HEE is recruiting experienced medical educators, academics and others to support educational functions. These roles, undertaken remotely, will support the welfare of our junior doctors at a time of increased stress.

[Read the full story here](#)

Our NHS people are doing extraordinary things in the face of an extraordinary challenge, and so need an extraordinary level of support. All NHS people will have access to a range of support through one point of contact:

- a free wellbeing support helpline 0300 131 7000, available from 7.00 am – 11.00 pm seven days a week, providing emotional support from trained volunteers and onward signposting to specialist financial advice, bereavement care and coaching
- a 24/7 text alternative to the above helpline - simply text FRONTLINE to 85258
- [online](#) peer to peer, team and personal resilience support, including through [Silver Cloud](#), and free mindfulness apps including [Unmind](#), [Headspace](#) [Sleepio](#) and [Daylight](#)

More information on support can be found [here](#).

Useful links

- [PHE guidance on COVID-19 personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- [Routine decontamination of reusable, non-invasive, patient care equipment](#)

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): adult social care action plan](#)
- [Bringing staff back to the NHS FAQs](#)
- On Friday 17 April at 7pm England's Deputy Chief Nurse, Mark Radford, will be hosting a webinar and answering student nursing and midwives questions, providing advice and guidance.
[You can join the webinar via this link](#)
- SuppoRTT - HEE has a series of webinars for doctors who are coming back from a break from clinical practice into an unprecedented and uncertain period of clinical work.
[Find out more about upcoming webinars here](#)
[Watch recordings of previous webinars here](#)

FOR ANY QUERIES OR ISSUES, PLEASE EMAIL:
COVID19WORKFORCE.SW@HEE.NHS.UK

Produced by Health Education England, NHS England and NHS Improvement – working across the south west

SOUTH WEST COVID-19 WORKFORCE CELL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Contents:

- Working from home costs
- Staff stranded abroad
- Student nursing contract
- Agency nursing
- ICU support from veterinary colleagues
- Midwife returners
- NHS staff accommodation booking
- Visas for overseas clinical staff

Q: Some organisations are paying staff an additional amount per month to cover working at home costs, based on information from [HMRC](#).

Organisations can provide the following information to staff to enable them to claim tax relief against increased costs. Please see form of words and a link below:

When your employer requires you to work from home (as we currently do) you can claim tax relief against the increased costs of electricity, heating etc. From Monday 6 April 2020 (the new tax year) you are able to claim £6 a week. This is above the normal rate of £4 per week for home workers.

You can claim it via your self-assessment form if you normally complete one, or if not, you can fill in a P87 form. This can be accessed online through your [Government Gateway account](#) or by filling out a [postal P87 form](#).

Q: An employee is stuck abroad to a travel ban or quarantine and unable to return to work, what should they be paid?

Employers should explore the individual circumstances with the employee. Where staff are in quarantine, they should be treated as self-isolating and paid accordingly. Where employers are satisfied an employee is stuck abroad due to COVID-19 and there is no reasonable prospect of them being able to return to work, the national temporary COVID-19 special leave should be used.

Q: How do we get a copy of the national contract for student nurses starting work? We have some 3rd year students starting locally.

Guidance from NHS Employers on the job descriptions and bandings for the potential paid placements that students could be deployed into during the pandemic period can be found [here](#).

Q: Trusts have reported cases agencies charging enhanced rates for non-ICU staff who are currently coming from other areas to assist in critical care.

National guidance has been issued on agency use during COVID-19 pandemic and can be found [here](#).

This includes a section specially on pay rate escalation. The guidance also requires that candidates are required to be asked specifically about their willingness to work on wards impacted by Covid-19.

If these issues continue to cause problems they should be escalated to the workforce cell at: COVID19workforce.sw@hee.nhs.uk.

Q: Is it possible to get support from veterinary colleagues? They are a group well versed in anaesthetic and cannulation skills, triage, prescribing, independent practice, and EOL care.

Yes, they can be a clinical support worker and London response teams are developing a job description. More information to follow.

Q: What is required from midwifery colleagues in helping to bring NHS staff back?

Local arrangements are now well established to process the expressions of interest from retired staff who are prepared to return to work in the NHS. The pre-employment checks for returners are being undertaken at a regional level and then staff are deployed to the organisations that they have specified an interest in working for. In addition, some individuals are contacting their local Trust directly and joining the Trust bank.

Q: We are having difficulty getting through to the hotel booking line for NHS accommodation

We know there have been a high volume of queries from HRD colleagues and NHS organisations about the hotel booking line for NHS staff. The CTM call line and booking remains in use, however they now have online booking available at: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NHS_Hotel

Q: We have a qualified, overseas doctor who is unable to return to their home country but wishes to help in the NHS. How can we get them working in our Trust?

The status of the doctor will need to be checked with the GMC, more advice can be found [here](#). If the doctor is not eligible to practice in the UK, it might be possible to offer them work in other non-qualified roles.

UKVI has set up a dedicated email account for customers with immigration queries related to coronavirus, including questions about urgent, compelling, compassionate cases. Customers can contact: CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk

[Changes to the VISA process have been introduced as a result of COVID-19 and information on the current position is available here.](#)