**04.04.21 Hospitals and PPE**

Dear Executive Directors, Directors and Governors

As you may be aware a number of hospitals have reconfigured their ward facilities to provide additional beds for the treatment of COVID-19 cases. This has meant an increase in prisoners under escort being located outside of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) facilities on re-purposed or expanded facilities referred to as Full Face Protection (FFP) or Red wards. Local hospital management teams have delegated authority from PHE and DHSC to designate the level of PPE required on FFP wards. We have recently seen a small number of cases where the local hospital mandates a higher specification of PPE than HMPPS risk assessments and Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) require for a prisoner escort. In one particular case, a hospital refused HMPPS staff entry into a newly designated COVID ward without them wearing FFP3 masks.

To avoid a repeat of such situations HMPPS has written to NHS England  and PHE requesting a national agreement for the management of instances where HMPPS staff need to enter a treatment area where higher specification PPE is required. Under the HMPPS proposal, health partners responsible for the location are being  asked to provide additional PPE to any prison member of staff required to enter a treatment area where PPE above the HMPPS specification is required as a condition of entry. Furthermore where an FFP3 mask is required, HMPPS has asked for assurances that the hospital will provide a face fitting process at the point of entry to ensure that staff member is adequately protected. We await a formal response to this proposal and will continue to pursue a national agreement for the management of such cases.

In the interim, we recognise that an impending agreement with PHE and NHSE does not assist prisons experiencing this issue as a live scenario. Therefore we have produced interim guidance for the management of such scenarios. This document does not override HMPPS Face Protection Strategies and/or HMPPS Safe Operating Procedures and risk assessments, instead it only refers to instances where a prisoner is located in part of a hospital where the hospital PPE requirement exceeds the level of equipment HMPPS provides under existing SOPs agreed with PHE and DHSC.

**Interim guidance**: Tactical options for the management of an instance in a hospital where PPE requirements exceed HMPPS provision. The following options should be considered in order:

**Please note that an FFP3 is not automatically required in a COVID treatment area. The latest DHSC guidance states that an FRSM is sufficient PPE as a default. An FFP3 is only recommended in an area where an Aerosol Generating Procedure (AGP) is taking place; for instance where a patient is receiving respiratory support via a Ventilator. Staff do not require an FFP3 mask routinely in a COVID area and do not need one where an AGP is taking place UNLESS they cannot remain 2 metres or more away from the AGP itself.**

Carefully examine the escort risk assessment in relation to the prisoner health condition and security status. Can the restraints be removed so that staff can observe the prisoner from outside of the risk area. Y/N

Discuss with Hospital the possibility of locating the prisoner in a single room away from the shared ward. This will allow one member of staff to observe the escort from outside of the room while the other follows cuffing arrangements in accordance with the escort risk assessment wearing appropriate PHE Table PPE.

If FFP is mandated by local NHS Infection Prevention Control, HMPPS staff must explain that Face-fit-test is required. HMPPS will cooperate with any NHS request and accept a Face-fit-test from the hospital.

If FFP is mandated by local NHS Infection Prevention Control, and Face-fit-test for HMPPS staff is not available staff will comply and ask for guidance on face-fit to wear the RPE correctly. NB. Staff must understand that this option does not protect against AGP.

If FFP is mandated by local NHS Infection Prevention Control and face-fit-test is not available from the Hospital, FFP will be worn and a minimum of 2 metres distance from any AGP must be achieved. (This may prompt a review of the escort risk assessment restraint decision. In this scenario where possible hand-cuffs should be removed and staff observe the prisoner from a safe distance).

If the escort risk assessment does not allow for restraints to be removed and 2 metres from the AGP cannot be achieved then the staff member handcuffed will don a Battery Powered Respirator (BP-RPE) for the duration of the AGP supplied by HMPPS. The second staff member will observe the escort from outside of the risk area.

 As patient condition and ward configurations may change rapidly careful monitoring of this will be required. BP – RPE should be taken and deployed if required.

Please direct any further queries on this matter to the HMPPS H&S team via H&S leads in establishments.