

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC –

Guiding Principles for Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professional (NMAHP) Staff

INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognised that this is an unprecedented and highly challenging time for us all. The COVID-19 pandemic places a lot of pressure on us as a profession, and we are in no doubt that you are concerned and will be faced with issues that require you to make significant adjustments from your normal routine procedures in order to care for your patients.

This guidance has been developed as we widely recognise these pressures which will inevitably be exacerbated by staff shortages due to sickness and/or self-isolation. You're Senior Nurses and Midwives are regularly working hard to mitigate the risk of staff shortages which means that you may end up working in unfamiliar circumstances or surroundings or in clinical areas outside of your usual practice for patients benefit.

For our nurses and midwives, we know that as clinical activity increases during this pandemic, the normal nurse to patient ratio will be significantly affected; for AHPs, this may be seen in the reduced level of interventional intensity; a modified prioritisation level, or some patients not receiving Allied Health Professional intervention at all.

This will become an increasing challenge, and will require temporary changes to practice. It will be stressful, and it is recognised that you will have concerns about both the professional practicalities and implications of working in such circumstances. There is no doubt that as NMAHP professionals and our other colleagues, we always endeavour to provide the best possible care at all times; and that of course, even in these difficult times, we continue to strive for this. However, the increasing daily demands, the reducing workforce, and the stretching of staff to patient ratios will make this difficult to achieve at all times.

GUIDANCE

This guide is aimed at providing you with a set of principles to support your decision-making during the pandemic, and most importantly, providing some comfort to you in the knowledge that you have the support and understanding of your professional regulator, namely the [Nursing and Midwifery Council \(NMC\)](#) and [Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\)](#), and us as an organisation.

These guiding principles are intended to help you with these difficult situations and reassure you that on some occasions, the provision of care is the best possible care that can be

delivered under the circumstances that you are working within and the professional decisions you make will be supported.

The NMC, in addition to the Code, has published its approach to the exercise of its functions during this time of unprecedented demand, including the introduction of a three month extension to completing revalidation requirements, and further information can be found [HERE](#)

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1

- *In line with your professional Code and Standards, use your **professional judgment**, working with other colleagues across all disciplines to assess risk.*

The [NMC](#) have developed specific guidance around the application of the Codes during this pandemic. Additionally the HCPC has published its response to the requirements of registrants during this pandemic and further information can be found at [HCPC](#).

CLINICAL ASSESSMENT AND ASSURANCE

General Wards

During this pandemic, you will use the NHSGGC Care Rounding and early warning scoring documents as the main care assurance tools.

This reflects prioritisation of delivery of fundamental care to meet the needs of our patients along with patient safety over data collection and other quality improvement work.

The care rounding/care planning document which will be completed by Registered Nurses/Midwives, Health Care Support Workers, and Allied Health Professionals, is tailored to meet individual patient needs to promote safety and well-being. Whilst the early warning scoring chart will support identification of the deteriorating patient as per normal practice, the underpinning aim is to maintain patient safety and wellbeing. In this regard, risk assessments where appropriate should link directly to the overarching care plan and not to risk-specific care plans.

Even more than ever it is essential as registrants that we document a summary of communication with families in relation to the patient's condition, as this update is more than likely to be by phone, therefore concise detail is vital for record keeping purposes.

Guiding Principle 2

- *Find the best way to provide care for people while recognising and working within the limits of your competence.*

In light of the above, all data collection and uploading of audit information is being suspended with immediate effect for the foreseeable future; there is no expectation that the NHSGGC Care Assurance and Improvement Resource, known as CAIR Dashboard, will be populated with process data.

Guiding Principle 3

- *In line with **your professional Code and Standards**, use **professional judgement** in the delegation of activity.*

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) regulatory standards are designed to be flexible and to provide a framework for decision-making in a wide range of situations. Nurses and midwives may be concerned about their accountability for delegation to ‘others’ out-with normal practise during the pandemic. The NMC supplementary information to the Code – **Delegation and Accountability** – sets out clearly that delegation of an activity may be from a registered person to a nonregistered person, carer or family member. The overarching principle is that you should only delegate tasks and duties that are within the other person’s scope of competence, making sure that they fully understand the instructions given.

In NHS Scotland, we had agreed to adopt [Northern Ireland’s Deciding to Delegate: A Decision Support Framework for Nursing and Midwifery.\(Jan 2019\)](#)

Guiding Principle 4

- *Refer to [NHSGGC Rostering Policy](#) in support of manpower allocation.*

NHSGGC is fully supportive of the decisions Lead Nurses/Midwife and Chief Nurses/Midwife will need to make in managing the depleted workforce capacity with supply/demand, bearing in mind that they may need to revise, possibly significantly, established procedures in order to care for patients in the unique and highly challenging but time-bound circumstances of the peak of a pandemic.

The process for this will be in accordance with the current practice of assuring safe staffing based upon Red, Amber and Green (RAG) rating. This will be done in conjunction with clinical data and taking account of environmental factors and skill mix.

Guiding Principle 5

- *Regular **Clear and Effective** multidisciplinary huddles to support manpower deployment based upon the most up to date workforce and clinical data.*

The importance of multi-disciplinary team (MDT) working as a way of managing capacity cannot be underestimated, and clear roles and responsibilities are paramount. It will likely be the case that areas and scopes of responsibility will change during the course of the pandemic; and staff will require to work flexibly in ways never anticipated previously. Communication is key to managing the demand, and the importance of regular multi-professional and -department huddles cannot be underestimated.

Guiding Principle 6

- *Professional leaders will be **visible** in clinical areas, **communicating effectively** with staff **ensuring clear direction, advice, support and reassurance.***

Leadership, at all levels of the organisation, will be the cornerstone of practice much needed in the days and weeks ahead; and none more so than professional leaders. It is fortunate that in NHSGGC, we have many effective leaders; and it will be their key skills and behaviours which will be so important in providing support, care and reassurance for staff of all disciplines across the organisation

Guiding Principle 7

- *Working as part of a team, do so **collegiately**, with **respect, kindness and professionalism.***

Collegiate MDT-working will be essential, as will be the importance of 'shared' responsibility for decisions. There are inevitably going to be challenges ahead and professional and respectful conduct and behaviour will be necessary to support each other through.

Guiding Principle 8

- *Staff's **health and wellbeing** is paramount. **Look after yourself and others.***

The safety and wellbeing of staff is paramount in winning the fight against coronavirus. It will be the case, as aforementioned, that your normal routine of day to day work will change significantly; and the need for rest and relaxation will be vital in keeping you both physically and emotionally resilient. With this at the forefront of new arrangements to deal with the virus, Rest and Recuperation Centres have been developed and are available for staff on each site. These centres, together with the availability of Mindfulness tools, offer much needed support for you. It is important to look after yourself and others. Look out for signs of fatigue and stress amongst colleagues and treat them with care and compassion, directing and enabling them to use the support mechanisms available.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) has developed a suite of supportive material available [HERE](#)