



Royal College of Nursing
20 Cavendish Square
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Dame Donna Kinnair
Chief Executive & General Secretary

Mr Jeremy Hunt MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Select Committee

Sent by email on 6 April 2020

Dear Jeremy,

As the Chief Executive and General Secretary of the largest nursing professional body and trade union in the world, with 450,000 members, I am submitting the enclosed written evidence to your Inquiry on Coronavirus Preparedness. I expect to discuss this thoroughly with you and your Committee during oral evidence at the earliest available opportunity.

Nursing staff are at the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic. Everywhere there are people, there are nursing staff. We provide care in hospitals, our communities and in people's own homes. We are unwavering in our professionalism and dedication to protecting the health and wellbeing of us all in this time of worry and uncertainty. However, our safety and ability to care for patients is being fundamentally compromised by the lack of adequate and correct supplies of vital personal protective equipment (PPE) and the slow and small-scale roll out of COVID-19 testing.

Our members are facing impossible decisions between their own or their family's health and their sense of duty. The distribution and adequacy of PPE has led nursing staff to share equipment, buy their own supplies or to reuse single-use PPE. Although there are announcements that millions of pieces of PPE are being distributed, they aren't reaching the frontline across all health and care settings. All staff, in all settings, must have enough supply of PPE that meets the required specifications. We are pleased that discrepancies within PPE guidance have been addressed by new UK Government guidance published last week. No less than full implementation of this guidance will do.

COVID-19 testing for all health and care staff symptomatic with possible COVID-19 can no longer be delayed and must be rolled out at pace and scale to ensure that everyone who has a role to play in keeping our health and care services going, can be tested. This will provide reassurance to staff that their safety is paramount and will also enable staff to be deployed safely and effectively preventing unnecessary self-isolation and worry.

I look forward to your substantive response.

Yours sincerely,

Dame Donna Kinnair
Chief Executive and General Secretary

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The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes
excellence in practice and shapes health policies

