

## SUPPORTING ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT WORKERS IN THE EVENT OF A COVID19 EPIDEMIC IN THE UK

As we enter unprecedented times in the NHS, and wider health, social and wider care services, we wanted to write to you to firstly thank you for the exceptionally hard work you and your staff are doing and secondly offer to you our support.

The World Health Organisation has declared COVID19 outbreak to be a pandemic and prime minister has declared that Britain is moving into the delay phase of fighting the virus which will put the NHS and wider health and care services across the health and care sectors of all four nations under extreme pressure. This pressure will inevitably be exacerbated by staff shortages due to sickness or caring responsibilities. It will be a challenge, but we are confident that allied health professionals (AHPs) and their support workforce will respond rapidly and professionally and want to assure colleagues that we recognise this will require temporary changes to practice, and that regulators and others will take this into account.

A significant epidemic will require healthcare professionals to be flexible in what they do. It may entail working in unfamiliar circumstances or surroundings or working in clinical areas outside of their usual practice for the benefit of patients, individuals and the population as a whole. This can be stressful, and we recognise that you may have concerns about both the professional practicalities and implications of working in such circumstances.

We need to stick to the basic principles of AHP best practice. As registered AHPs you are expected to follow Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) guidance and use judgement in applying the principles to situations that you may face, however these also take account of the realities of a very abnormal emergency situation. We want AHPs, in partnership with patients and those individuals that we care for to use their professional judgement to assess risk and to make sure people receive safe care, informed by the values and principles set out in their professional standards of conduct performance and ethics. A rational approach to varying practice in an emergency is part of that professional response.

It is the responsibility of the organisations in which you work to ensure that you are supported to do this. They must bear in mind that clinicians may need to depart, possibly significantly, from established procedures in order to care for people in the unique and highly challenging but time-bound circumstances of the peak of an epidemic.

We expect employers, educationalists, professional bodies, and national NHS organisations to be flexible in terms of their approach and the expectations of routine requirements. Healthcare professional regulators, including the HCPC and GOsC, have already committed to take into account factors relevant to the environment in which the professional is working.

Due consideration should and will be given to AHPs and other staff who are using their skills under difficult circumstances due to lack of personnel and overwhelming demand in a major epidemic. This may include working outside an individual's scope of practice. The healthcare regulators have already released a joint statement to explain this.

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/registrants/updates/2020/how-we-will-continue-to-regulate-in-light-of-novel-coronavirus/>

<https://www.osteopathy.org.uk/news-and-resources/news/joint-statement-covid-19-coronavirus/>

We are also determined to ensure the long-term education of students are not compromised. This will be given appropriate consideration by the all the relevant bodies.

Finally, we would like to thank you all for all the efforts you are already making. Many AHPs and their support staff across the NHS and public health services have already made major contributions to the response to COVID-19. We are very proud of the response of the professions in all areas of practice in their response to this challenge. It has been exemplary. We are confident of the commitment, dedication, professionalism and hard work that the AHPs workforce have and will continue to have over the course of this significant pandemic.

Signed

**SIGNATURE**

Suzanne Rastrick OBE  
Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (England)  
NHS England & NHS Improvement, Health Education England and the Department of Health & Social Care

**SIGNATURE**

Ruth Crowder  
Prif Gynghorydd Proffesiynau Perthynol i Iechyd / Chief Allied Health Professions Advisor  
Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government



Jennifer Keane  
Chief Allied Health Professions Officer  
Department of Health, N Ireland

**SIGNATURE**

Carolyn McDonald  
Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (Scotland)

Scottish Government



John Barwick  
Chief Executive and Deputy Registrar  
Health and Care Professions Council

**SIGNATURE**

Professor Brian Webster-Henderson  
Chair  
Council of Deans of Health



Maurice Cheng  
Chief Executive  
The Institute of Osteopathy

**SIGNATURE**

Matthew Redford  
Interim Chief Executive  
General Osteopathic Council



Hannah Abbott  
President  
College of Operating Department Practitioners.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Burman', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Andy Burman  
Chair  
Allied Health Professions Federation