

Using Personal Protection Equipment in Social Work and Care Roles



14 April 2020

Using the right personal protection equipment (PPE) is not role specific. Each work situation is different and you need to take that into account when assessing whether you need to use PPE and making a decision about the most appropriate equipment for the task you need to carry out. Used appropriately, PPE will keep you and the people you are working with safe. The most important advice for all staff in every situation is to wash your hands regularly and thoroughly using the correct method, use hand sanitiser, and refrain from touching your face.

HOW IS COVID-19 SPREAD?

There are two routes by which COVID-19 can be spread:

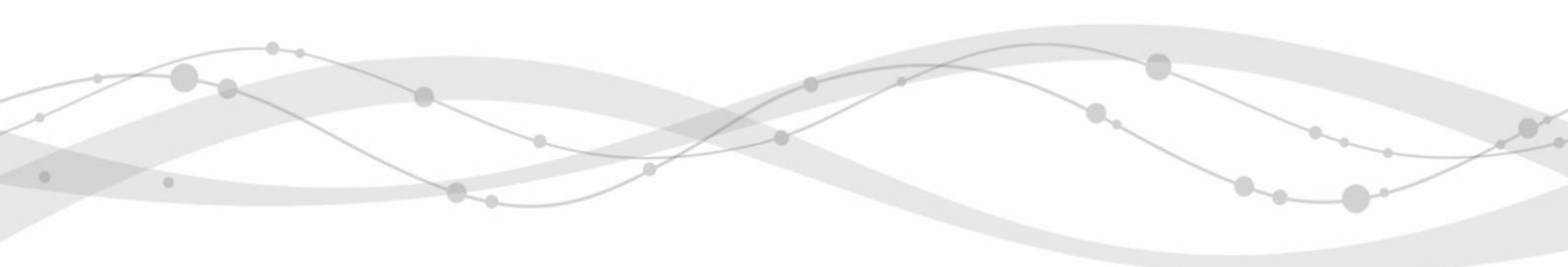
- **DIRECTLY** from close contact with an infected person (within 2 metres) where respiratory secretions can enter the eyes, mouth, nose or airways. This risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person who has symptoms. This is why social distancing wherever possible is important.
- **INDIRECTLY** by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching own mouth, nose, or eyes. The virus can survive on environmental surfaces for up to 72 hours. This is why regular hand-washing and avoiding touching your face is important.

COVID-19 IS NOT SPREAD THROUGH SKIN TO SKIN CONTACT.

WHAT SHOULD YOU CONSIDER BEFORE PUTTING ON PPE?

Before you enter any situation which might require PPE, make sure you have completed a risk assessment. Factors you should take into account might include:

- Do you know how to use PPE correctly? Badly fitted and the wrong application of PPE can cause more risks, as you need to touch your face to put it on: always wash your hands thoroughly or use hand sanitiser, and make sure you've received training in how to use PPE.



- *Are you providing the service in someone's home or another environment where you are not able to gauge cleanliness and hygiene? Or is it in an office, school or other location you know is cleaned regularly?*
- *Will you be able to stay 2m away from people at all times? If you are not familiar with the layout of someone's house, you may not be able to guarantee this. Are you visiting a household in which the situation is likely to be highly charged and people in the household are likely to be unpredictable e.g. children jumping on you or an adult being aggressive towards you?*
- *Will you be working with people who have symptoms of COVID-19 (a cough or fever)? If you do not know this beforehand then you can ask before entering someone's home. If you do not trust the information you have, assume they are symptomatic until you can prove otherwise.*
- *Are you working with clients who may be likely overly familiar or likely to spit or bite?*
- *Are you working with clients who are particularly vulnerable, for example they may be shielding because of a serious health condition? If so, you should wear a facemask for **their** protection. Information about people who are in the shielding category is listed on SWIFT (AIS/CCM).*

Remember, too, to always explain to clients why you are wearing PPE, so that they understand why these precautionary measures are needed and that this is about keeping everyone safe. Acknowledge that these are unusual circumstances so that they are not unnecessarily worried.

HOW SHOULD YOU PUT ON PPE?

You can access [online learning](#) on how to put on and take off PPE. You must complete this online learning before using PPE as used incorrectly can be dangerous.

HOW SHOULD YOU DISPOSE OF USED PPE?

All waste items including PPE, disposable wipes must be removed using the correct technique and placed in a plastic rubbish bag, double bagged and tied. This should be stored for 72 hours before being put in the general waste bins.



