

Manager's Guidance: COVID-19 Risk Assessments - supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff

As you may be aware there is emerging evidence that COVID-19 mortality is disproportionately higher in people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. The cause of this is being investigated and we recommend that a risk assessment is completed with BAME staff to identify those at higher risk, to **reiterate the protective equipment measures** and to **identify how to reduce the exposure** where possible.

The [risk assessment matrix](#) is already in use for staff who are pregnant or have a vulnerability due to an underlying medical condition and is now being extended to risk assess and identify mitigating measures for BAME staff members.

BAME staff members are encouraged to review the risk assessment and the linked guidance and if they identify a risk they should inform their line manager to arrange a risk assessment with them.

Completing the risk assessment matrix is expected to take 30 to 45 minutes, however we are conscious that there are some areas with a very diverse workforce and a significant number of staff who may require a risk assessment and therefore the following options can be considered:

- **Prioritisation:** the following two factors can be used to determine whose risk assessment should be prioritised:
 - Individual risk factors: older staff, multiple medical conditions, poorly controlled medical conditions
 - Workplace risk factors: staff who deliver direct patient care or have contact with patients' environments (e.g. bed linen), areas where the exposure to COVID is comparatively less well controlled e.g. home visits
- **Delegation:** the line manager can delegate the risk assessment to another person who is competent and has adequate knowledge of the work practices

Please inform your staff of the risk assessment matrix and how it is done, especially those who do not have access to emails. Support and guidance on preparing for and carrying out the risk assessment conversation is set out below.

If you need assistance, please contact Occupational Health via email OHAdministrator@gstt.nhs.uk or by telephone Ext: 020 7188 7188 ext 53688 or Option 1, 020 7188 4152 (84152), Mon – Fri, 09:00-17:00.

Supporting conversations about risk assessment within your diverse team of staff – a line managers' guide

It is important to have open, honest and compassionate conversations with all your staff, including regular and ongoing bank staff, about the risks they may be exposed to during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some staff may be feeling extremely vulnerable because of underlying health conditions or due to their protected characteristics. Ensuring staff can have this discussion and raise their concerns with you will help to reduce any apprehension they feel.

It's important to prepare for the conversation and remember to be sensitive - we all have different perspectives and ways of showing distress or anxiety. This may include being quieter, more vocal or wanting private space.

Acknowledging that some people will be deeply and directly affected by the effects of COVID-19, this is a time to reach out and understand some of the challenges our staff might be feeling.

Ensure your staff members are included in any decision making about them and that the conversation is culturally sensitive - taking into account their culture and traditions, religion or beliefs and language.

Below are some top tips to consider when preparing and having a conversation with your diverse staff groups in order to keep the risk assessment discussion factual, positive and effective.

Top tips for managers when having conversations regarding risk assessment:

1. Start with an open two way conversation, maybe explore what the best way is to check in, (could use the wellbeing guidance) as this is likely to be different for those working from home, on/off site, phone or skype.
2. Ensure your staff know you are approachable on this subject, be authentic and open in your concern.
3. Ask open questions about how they are feeling (they may respond with feelings of anxiety, anguish or anger). Ask how they feel the team is working together and whether they have any concerns or solutions they would like to raise.
4. Depending on how the conversation goes you may decide to reschedule carrying out the risk assessment and give your full attention to the general wellbeing conversation. If you do decide to reschedule, make sure to book a further discussion as soon as you can.
5. Keep staff updated of any changes, to duties, or new areas of work. Be mindful not to over load staff who are working from home, home working can feel isolating to some.
6. Ask questions, be curious and if you don't know the answer, be honest.
7. Show understanding as their concerns are real, validate their concerns and show compassion, try to remain positive and solution focussed.

Below are some examples of conversation starters.

- I understand you are concerned about potential risks of COVID-19, explain to me how you are feeling?
- What is going well with your current way of working?
- What are your challenges or frustrations with the current ways of working?

If you don't know how to respond?

- I was not aware that's how you were feeling/or this was occurring, this must have/been hard, I can't imagine how this is making you feel.
- I am sorry that you feel this way, I don't have the answer, let me find out and come back to you.

If you need more information

- Sounds like you've experienced a difficult situation, can you help me to understand it more?
- What is the impact now?
- What might we do to resolve and make the situation better? Let's revisit this to make sure you are feeling more supported.

If upon completing the risk assessment you are not sure how to proceed, you can contact the **Occupational health team** - call 020 7188 4152 or email OHAdministrator@gstt.nhs.uk. Open Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm

or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team equalitydiversityinclusion@gstt.nhs.uk

There will be a series of webinars for BAME staff to find out information and share their concerns.

Further information on Wellbeing support is split up into four sections:

- **Self-care** (wellbeing apps, like Headspace)
- **Support for teams and managers**
- **Personalised support** (e.g. our employee assistance programme)
- **Practical support** (e.g. our laundry service and travel information)

You can find more information on [our poster](#) or at [gti/wellbeing-support](https://gstt.nhs.uk/gti/wellbeing-support)

Further guidance can be provided through your HR Business Partner if capacity or prioritising staff to carry out the risk assessment appears to be a challenge.