

UPDATE 16.4.20

The government have indicated that the restrictions on work, lifestyle and business activities of the population of the United Kingdom are going to continue the “lockdown” as we know it. Subsequent to this, and following the enactment of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) 2020 on the 26th of March and guidance issued by Public Health England (PHE) we have clarified the advice issued by the association on the 23rd of March.

We should be in no doubt that the public sentiment along with government regulation and advice is that in the current time we should do our bit to prevent and minimise the transmission of Covid-19 with enhanced social distancing. We appreciate that the statutory instrument specifically states that dental services, opticians, audiology services, chiropody, chiropractors, osteopaths and other medical or health services, including services relating to mental health can remain open. It has never been the case that the government have mandated for Chiropractic practices to be closed. Members of the public are permitted to travel to meet a medical need, which includes consulting a Chiropractor. The statutory instrument does not provide detail on in what context we should be open and how to meet our obligations to minimise the transmission of Covid-19. The advice issued on the 23rd of March was to cease routine care and only provide care on an emergency or acute care basis whilst heeding government guidance on good hygiene and infection control.

We appreciate that much of the guidance issued by Public Health England has related to possible or confirmed cases of coronavirus. Understandably that raised questions about what is suitable infection control. What are the requirements if you see a patient who is not in these categories to meet your obligations under Principle A of The Code as outlined in the statements by the GCC on the 24th and 27th of March? Public Health England issued updated guidance on Covid-19 infection protection and control on the 12th of April. The requirements as to what level of infection control is expected in any setting when there is a sustained transmission of Covid-19, as we are experiencing now are outlined in table 4.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879111/T4_poster_Recommended_PPE_additional_considerations_of_COVID-19.pdf

The minimum level of PPE that is required is disposable gloves and an apron on a single use basis. If there is a likely risk of contamination with splashes, droplets of blood or bodily fluids then a fluid resistant mask with or without eye/face protection must be used on a sessional basis. It is up to each individual practice to risk assess the likelihood of such contamination. It is important to remotely screen out anyone that may be a possible case such as those who report a raised temperature and/or new persistent cough before they attend and do not provide care to confirmed or possible cases of Covid-19. Careful consideration should be given before providing care to the vulnerable groups and particularly those in the extremely vulnerable (shielded) group. The extremely vulnerable should not travel to your practice and if you provide care in their home wear a mask in addition to gloves and an apron.

This guidance is from Public Health England and ultimately as per the statements from the GCC it is up to the registrant to decide how and who is cared for. The guidance from PHE specifies what is considered adequate protection and infection control for Chiropractors. The guidance from PHE is being monitored and updated regularly and so it is incumbent on you to regularly review it for updates/changes.

It is crucial that we lead our communities in a responsible manner at this time, which can take on many guises including staying in contact with the members of your practice particularly those in quarantine. Many will remember not only what you did as a Chiropractor but as a figure in the community. We are here to support you at this time and beyond and we will get through this together.

Paul McCrossin
UCA President on behalf of the UCA executive.