

Council and unions at odds over PPE

The council's Chief Executive , Andrew Kerr, updated the council's Leadership Panel on their Skype call today saying that there are no supply issues in Edinburgh around PPE.

But we have heard from Unite the Union who tell us that this is not the experience of their members.

Des Loughney the Secretary of Edinburgh Trade Union Council told us:"Edinburgh TUC notes that the Chief Executive asserts that there is not a PPE problem. Our members are saying that there are problems with PPE in Edinburgh.

"There are problems with getting PPE to all those who need it – not just those workers in the NHS and Care homes but also to workers who provide a service to vulnerable members of the public in other contexts. There are problems in getting all the PPE that is necessary.

"There are problems in ensuring that employers give proper guidance and training in the use of PPE. Related to this is the problem of getting employers to carry out appropriate risk assessments for workers in close contact with vulnerable clients."

Unite the Union has issued this guidance to its members:



PPE UPDATE / ADVICE FOR UNITE MEMBERS

In response to ongoing concerns from staff, Unite find it necessary to provide clarity for Unite members.

Where the correct PPE is not provided, staff are at an unnecessary risk and this is unacceptable and not safe. All covid 19 related tasks should be risk assessed, and these risk assessments must be readily available to all.

Staff can and should refuse to undertake any procedure for which the correct PPE has not been provided.

Masks which have double date expired (ie where the use by date has expired, been re-dated and the second date has also expired), should not be used at this point, until such time as robust evidence of viability can be provided and confirmation provided on the safety of use.

Unite have been continuing to raise directly with Scottish Government all issues in relation to the supply of PPE. It has been confirmed that there is no issue with the supply of visors.

Single use visors and masks should not be cleaned and re-used under any circumstances.

This has been clarified and supported by Scottish Government. If you are asked or instructed to do this, you can legally refuse, and Unite the Union will fully support members who refuse to undertake tasks if appropriate PPE is not available or where member's safety is being compromised.

There are some visors and goggles which are manufactured as reusable and which can be safely cleaned according to the manufacturers protocol; however it is not always evident whether visors and goggles are single use or re-usable. This should be clarified and confirmed before use, and if there is any doubt staff should assume they are single use and should dispose of them after one use.

Items evidenced as reusable should in most cases be single person use only (i.e. not shared between staff). They must be cleaned in line with manufacturer's instructions. If cleaning instructions require alcohol wipes these must be provided and used. Detergent wipes are not suitable alternatives to alcohol wipes.

I hope this clarifies the Unite position and provides some assurances that Unite representatives are working tirelessly for you and your protection.

On behalf of all Unite members, Thank you for all the work and support you are doing throughout this extremely difficult global pandemic.

Regards

James O'Connell

Regional Officer

Unite the Union

Mr Kerr explained the position about PPE to the Leadership Panel of the council yesterday. In answer to a question from Deputy Leader Cammy Day about what PPE the council has available, and whether there are any supply issues, he responded: "We currently don't have any PPE supply issues. We've got sufficient supply.

"We continue to work to enhance that supply, and that's everything from taking very kind offers from other countries to supply directly to Edinburgh, as well as using the national system for PPE supply.

"There is a general supply issue – a national issue – to

Health and Social Care. That has been clarified in the last week when it has been agreed that all supplies will be put through the hubs. In our case that means the Health and Social Care partnership with one week's supply being supplied direct to care homes to make sure there was sufficient supply to every care home.

"This week that system was solid enough for care home supply and that has now been checked by the Care Inspectorate Any clinical issues are being dealt with by the Director of Public Health in each of the areas, reporting back to the Health and Social Care Partnership."

Director Stephen Moir explained in more detail: "The Chief Executive has outlined the health and social care provision from NHS National Services Scotland (NSS), from national health colleagues. That is a direct supply to the hubs which is covering our in-house social care service provision and the commission services that work alongside the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) which includes voluntary and private sector providers.

"From a council perspective, for our other service areas that aren't covered by the national health provision for PPE, we have our own established arrangements with our procurement team. We have set up a local hub for supplies management and distribution at the South Gyle Industrial Estate at our Clock Tower facility where we have our central print management unit.

"We have currently something like 1.6 million items of PPE on order, and we have a detailed breakdown and dashboard that is produced every Thursday. We share that with our trade unions to update them on progress with PPE supply management and distribution to our staff.

"That actually gives us a breakdown on where all the PPE is going to individual teams and locations across the city. The

Chief Executive is right, we're all aware of some of the challenges around PPE supply globally as well as within the UK.

"In terms of local sourcing and management of that, our procurement team have been doing frankly a phenomenal job. They are making sure we are securing both at good value but good levels of stock and supply and we're managing the distribution centrally to ensure that it gets to the prioritised teams in the right way."

Director Alistair Gaw confirmed the same message. He said supply of PPE for schools, early years or residential units is also a much improved picture.