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Dear Colleagues

Joint statement regarding workforce response to coronavirus from Professor Dame Sue Hill, Chief Scientific Officer, NHS England and NHS Improvement; Dr Rob Orford, Chief Scientific Advisor (Health), Welsh Government; Professor Ian Young, Chief Scientific Advisor, Department of Health Northern Ireland; and Karen Stewart, Healthcare Science Officer, Scottish Government

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

The World Health Organization has declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a pandemic, and the Prime Minister has declared that the UK is moving into the delay phase of fighting the virus, which will put the NHS and wider health and care services 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 the healthcare science workforce will respond rapidly and professionally. We 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 requires health and care professionals to be flexible in what they do and to utilise all the skills they have to support the broader multiprofessional team, especially in areas such as critical care. It may entail working in unfamiliar circumstances or surroundings or working in clinical areas outside 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. It is important that we stick to the core principles of our profession and use judgement in

applying those scientific principles to situations that you may face. However, these also need to take account of the realities of a very abnormal emergency situation. We want you, as healthcare science professionals, to use your unique skill set and professional judgement to assess risk, to prioritise the services that need to be provided and to make sure patients continue to receive high quality safe services. 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 healthcare scientists may need to depart, possibly significantly, from established procedures and accreditation processes to provide scientific services for patients 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. The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) has 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 health and care professionals 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 their usual scope of practice. The HCPC has already released a joint statement to explain this: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/news-and-events/news/2020/how-we-will-continue-to-regulate-in-light-of-novel-coronavirus/>

We are now working with the HCPC to enable people who have recently left the register to come back to work, and to invite our final year healthcare science students to come into clinical practice to support us over the next few months. We also recognise that the recruitment, training and assessment of healthcare science trainees in the system may need to be slowed down or paused or done differently. We ask for your support as we work with the relevant education and training bodies in each of the four health administrations in the UK to agree the solutions and understand the impact. We ask you to ensure that healthcare science trainees in the system get the support they need to continue their training when this emergency situation is in a different phase. In the meantime, enabling them to work in new and different ways to support our response to COVID-19 and enhance their development will be beneficial to all.

Finally, we would like to thank you all for all the efforts you are already making. The healthcare science workforce across the NHS and public health and care services has already made major contributions to the response to COVID-19. We are very proud of our professions' response to this challenge in all areas of practice. It has been exemplary. We are confident of the commitment, dedication and hard work that healthcare science professionals have and will continue to have in the very testing event of a significant epidemic in the UK. Your professionalism and work has never been more vital or more valued.

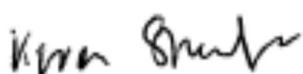


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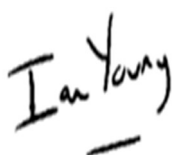


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