RCN led publication of COVID-19 risk assessment tool in collaboration with partners including BAPEN.

As the Omicron variant of COVID-19 takes hold across the UK, it is crucial for workers to be protected from the virus, for their own safety, for the safety of their patients and carers and to ensure the resilience of healthcare services.

BAPEN has previously produced guidance on reducing the risk of transmission and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and respiratory protective equipment (RPE) in the context of COVID-19, particularly with regard to insertion of nasogastric or nasojejunal tubes. Over the past few months, we have been grateful to the RCN for their leadership and for working with key partners including the NNNG, RCSLT, BDA, and others to develop a new risk assessment tool and resources which we hope will provide a consistent approach to assessing risk and identifying appropriate RPE for the whole workforce in a range of settings.

We encourage all staff to discuss risks they or their teams may be facing with their manager, using the new tool as a guide, and to ask that appropriate protections be put in place.

The resources include an overview of roles and responsibilities when it comes to protecting workers, and outlines of how to escalate issues when they are identified.

The tool is available to access here: https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/infection-prevention-and-control/COVID-19-workplace-risk-assessment-toolkit

More about the risk assessment tool

We are grateful for all the expertise of key individuals and would particularly like to thank Kevin Bampton, Chief Executive of the British Occupational Hygiene Society, Rose Gallagher, Professional lead, Infection prevention and Control, Royal College of Nursing, Kamini Gadhok, CEO of RCSLT, Dr Barry Jones, Chair of the Covid Airborne Protection Alliance (CAPA) and lead for BAPEN, Dr Christine Peters, Consultant Microbiologist FreshAirNHS and to the RCN for their leadership in the development of these resources and for hosting them on their website.

This is the first version of the tool and it includes a section for feedback which will enable us to iterate it further. We are also going to use any questions from members to develop FAQs. We anticipate some more professional bodies will join in supporting the toolkit as it becomes available to study.