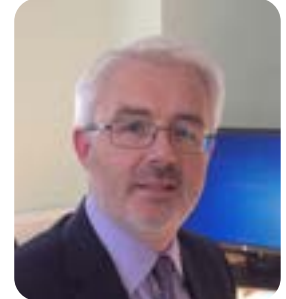


# Caring Today, Planning for Tomorrow



**12 May 2020**

Dear Colleagues,



The safety and wellbeing of staff is a top priority for the Trust. While the vast majority of the public value our staff and appreciate the work you are all doing, as evidenced by the weekly applause for health care workers, a small minority continue to assault our staff – verbal and physical. This is always unacceptable, but particularly so at this time when staff are putting themselves at greater risk to provide a service to those who need us. Most worryingly, this has included a number of incidents which have involved staff being both verbally and physically abused by service users using the threat of COVID-19 infection. The Trust is aware of similar incidents reported by other UK Ambulance Services and by PSNI colleagues which have included staff being deliberately coughed on and spat on, with reference to intentionally causing infection.

I have had discussions about this disgraceful behaviour with PSNI colleagues and they have assured me of their full support in bringing prosecutions against any individual involved in such behaviour. They have also advised that incidents of this nature can be considered Attempted and/or Actual Grievous Bodily Harm.

To that end, I would encourage you all, that should you be subjected to such behaviour, you should regard it as a physical assault and report it to (N)EAC, on-call duty officer and your line manager as soon as possible as outlined on the Management of Aggression Action Card 1, which can be accessed on SharePoint and the App. Incidents must also be recorded on Datix.

We will endeavour to provide you with all the support that we can in such circumstances, and will be exploring further what more can be done in this regard.

**To consistently  
show compassion,  
professionalism  
and respect to the  
patients we care for**

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All such incidents should be reported to the PSNI. When providing a statement to PSNI, please encourage the Officer taking your statement to pursue this under legislation entitled Offence of Assaulting an Ambulance Worker. As Chief Executive, I will also be providing a Service Impact Statement to support a prosecution and want to assure you of my full support in pursuing a prosecution.

We will continue to consider what further steps can be taken to protect our staff from such unacceptable behaviour, and if you have any suggestions in this regard please forward them to Mark Cochrane who will consider with the Management of Aggression Working Group. In the meantime we will continue to do all we can to ensure such incidents are rigorously pursued.

I would like to thank you all for the exceptional work you continue to in the face of such risks.

Yours sincerely,

**Michael Bloomfield**  
Chief Executive

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