

COVID-19 Notice

Tuesday 23 June 2020

PPE Fit Testing Review



You may be aware that an audit review of fit testing for respiratory masks is ongoing within the HSC system. This is being done on a precautionary basis.

During the pandemic period fit-testing of masks was conducted across the other HSC Trusts by independent contractors throughout Northern Ireland.

It has emerged that one independent contractor, which conducted fit-testing of masks during the pandemic, had inadvertently applied a fit-testing setting not normally used in Northern Ireland. This should have been readjusted to the UK Fit Testing requirements.

We are advised that any risk to staff is likely to be low.

The HSC system is now carrying out a validation and audit exercise of all fit-tests conducted by this independent contractor to provide assurances that they met the required standard.

The Public Health Agency has been asked by the Department of Health to undertake a Serious Adverse Incident review.

Here in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service we carried out almost all fit testing internally. However, as part of the review process NIAS is also undertaking a validation and audit exercise of all fit-tests to provide assurances. This is almost complete and to-date we are aware of two tests which were undertaken when the machine was calibrated to the setting not normally applied in Northern Ireland. Staff involved have been informed and have been previously retested using the correct protocol.

Additional measures across the HSC will also be put in place to review and monitor fit testing outcomes moving forward. Fit testing will be carried out under the correct NI setting.

Any staff affected will be retested as a matter of urgency if required.

We fully recognise that the issues raised may cause some concern and we very much regret that. We would again stress that these checks are being taken as a precautionary step to reassure staff that the masks are being fitted to the highest safety standards. We would ask staff to highlight any concerns if they feel their PPE equipment does not properly fit.