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Amanda Pritchard

Chief Executive
NHS England
Skipton House
London
SE1 6LH

Sent via email

28 March 2022

Dear Amanda,

Re. Continuation of free testing for NHS staff

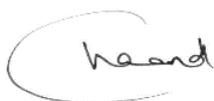
I was reassured that NHS England has decided to maintain the policy that NHS staff who test positive for COVID will not be required to attend work and that the COVID-related sickness absence and pay will remain in place. I am, however, writing to ask for your reassurance that regular free COVID testing of NHS staff will also remain in place beyond 1 April, to protect healthcare workers and patients.

I appreciate that there have been stated funding concerns around the continuation of these measures, but we cannot be in a position where staff and patients' health and safety are compromised because of funding. Any reduction in routine testing or for those with symptoms will inevitably result in the increased spread of infection from healthcare workers to their colleagues and patients. Furthermore, it will also result in higher COVID-related absences which still account for 30% of all NHS staffing absences. Clearly, at a time when the NHS faces the largest backlog of care, amidst workforce shortages, we cannot afford to see any further reductions in staffing capacity. I understand that conversations have been ongoing with the Treasury around additional funding for these measures and I would be happy for this letter to be shared with them.

Additionally, given the rising rates of COVID, we also have concerns about the Government's policy on wider testing, which will lead to fewer tests being conducted and allow COVID to spread unchecked, adding more pressure on our health service, threatening its ability to function properly.

I would appreciate your reassurance that regular free COVID testing of NHS staff will remain in place beyond 1 April.

Yours sincerely,



Chief executive officer: Tom Grinyer

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Dr Chaand Nagpaul CBE
BMA council chair