A message from Dame Clare Marx, Chair of the GMC

None of us has experience of a pandemic like this. Dealing with coronavirus is the biggest challenge to face the NHS since it was founded. And it’s going to ask a lot of us all.

For those on the NHS frontline, the call is to step in, while the rest of society steps back. The situation demands it. But let’s be in no doubt about what that will mean.

Doctors are leading the fight in a war with an enemy we don’t yet fully understand. As you race to respond, you will face being ill yourself, and juggling the care of loved ones.

The pressure will be immense.

There’s a reason our health service is held in such high regard. It’s the staff. It’s the skill, selflessness and resilience that you demonstrate to every patient, every day.

While this situation is without parallel in modern times, the values and behaviours required of our clinicians are well established. The tenets of being a good doctor have not changed.

Responding to this pandemic will require us to do things differently. It will require us to be flexible. And it will require us to work right to the edge of our comfort zone, and in some cases beyond.

You may be asked to work in unfamiliar circumstances or surroundings, or in clinical areas outside of your usual practice. Redeployment may become the norm.

You may, rightly, have questions about the implications of these changes. I want every doctor to know that we, as your regulator, understand the burden you are shouldering. This is new territory for everyone.

I want to assure you that [we recognise the implications of this unprecedented event](https://gmc-news.org/OUY-6SWVW-3F6HT3-4055X9-1/c.aspx), and that any concerns raised about your practice will take into account the extreme circumstances in which you are working.

We know you will make the care and safety of your patients your first concern. And we want to support you to do the right thing. In this national emergency, that means taking a measured approach to varying standards as the situation demands. In the peak of this outbreak, that could include departing significantly from established procedures.

Above all, we need doctors to apply their professional judgement. We urge GP practices, hospitals, trusts and health boards to give clinicians the information, equipment and support they need to do this, to minimise risk to staff as well as patients.

The priority for the GMC now is to do everything in our power to ensure clinicians are able to deliver care to those who need it.

This testing time requires us to pull together. We’ve already contacted 15,000 doctors who left the register in the last three years and many more of you have been in touch wanting to help – thank you. People’s individual circumstances may result in it being medically contraindicated for them to undertake front line duties but they will be able to make a contribution by carrying out duties, that support those with patient facing responsibilities.

Doctors who have been out of practice can still play a part in helping the health services. [If you know of colleagues who may be wondering how best they can deploy their skills, please do share this link with them](https://gmc-news.org/OUY-6SWVW-3F6HT3-4055XA-1/c.aspx) – all additional capacity is vital and will make a real difference.

The nature of being a doctor is to go above and beyond to deliver the care our patients require. But in this crisis situation, compassion, civility, and self-care will matter more than ever.

Please be kind to each other, and to yourselves. And may I, as both a doctor and a member of the public, thank you for all you do.