



**The Guardian Service Ltd**  
**A Report and Analysis of COVID-19 Concerns**  
**March to August 2020**

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**9<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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## Overview of The Guardian Service:

### Investing in an open culture

The principle aim of our service is supporting organisations to develop and sustain a truly open culture - a culture where all staff speak up and leadership actively listen up. Our service offers our clients and their employees an alternative and independent option to complement existing in-house channels. This approach raises opportunities, issues and insight that otherwise stay anchored below the surface of organisations. By helping these to surface, we act as guardians to our clients and their employees. We currently provide this support to over 120,000 employees across England, Wales and Scotland.

### Our model

Our model provides staff with direct and confidential access to a dedicated Guardian 24/7. Our Guardians have the experience and skills to support the right resolution for the individual and the organisation. This includes everything from a simple conversation up to the formal raising or 'whistleblowing' of a serious concern or allegation. The Guardian also has immediate access to the relevant leadership (including the CEO and Board as necessary) to escalate an issue if and when needed.

### Key elements of our service

- Dedicated lead Guardian for your organisation, with further capacity available if needed
- Guardian will hold meetings on or off-site, in person or by phone, email, or range of digital platforms
- Support individuals to decide on their choice of resolution, including Informal and formal routes, facilitated meetings and confidential escalation
- Clear escalation processes for all issues to protect the organisation, staff and customers
- Full privacy and confidentiality
- Leadership receives monthly detailed and de-personalised reports on activity and trends with targeted advice on addressing concerns
- Regular meetings between Guardian, Board and leadership team so the organisation at the highest level is fully engaged with an open culture
- Online survey to capture service user experience
- Marketing material to support in-house communication teams to engage employees and raise visibility of Guardians and organisational commitment.

### Organisational and employee benefits

Our experience shows bringing The Guardian Service into an organisation opens up a wide range of benefits including:

- Highly visible commitment to open culture by leadership
- Performance improvements and greater innovation
- Enhanced customer and staff experience driven by frontline feedback
- Improved staff engagement, retention and reduced staff sickness levels
- Reduced risk of whistleblowing and reputational damage due to positive early action
- Proactive approach reduces employee stress, management time and legal costs of grievances and tribunals - average cost of a grievance is c £35-45k
- Provide leadership with real time feedback
- Demonstrates commitment to transparency to Board, regulators and external scrutineers.
- Could these benefits help your organisation? For a conversation or more information call:

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The Guardian Service  
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## Introduction:

The Guardian Service reports monthly to our client service users. Each report deals specifically with all concerns for an individual client. Throughout the year we produce consolidated reports on relevant topics taking a view on issues across our complete client base.

This report is a high-level overview only, of the concerns raised to GSL Guardians across all our NHS clients (circa 120,000 NHS Employees) in the UK in respect of COVID -19. The first concerns recorded were in Mid-March. This report spans the period of March 2020 to the end of August 2020. This is the second report on COVID-19 concerns from the Guardian Service and this document builds on the first report covering Mid-March to April 19<sup>th</sup> 2020 and is now a complete record of all concerns raised to the end of August 2020.

Our service users will have received an expanded report listing in detail the 175 concerns raised to our Guardians.

To protect confidentiality the information is recorded by Trust type - General/Acute (1) or Mental Health (2) and concerns are classified under the following headings:

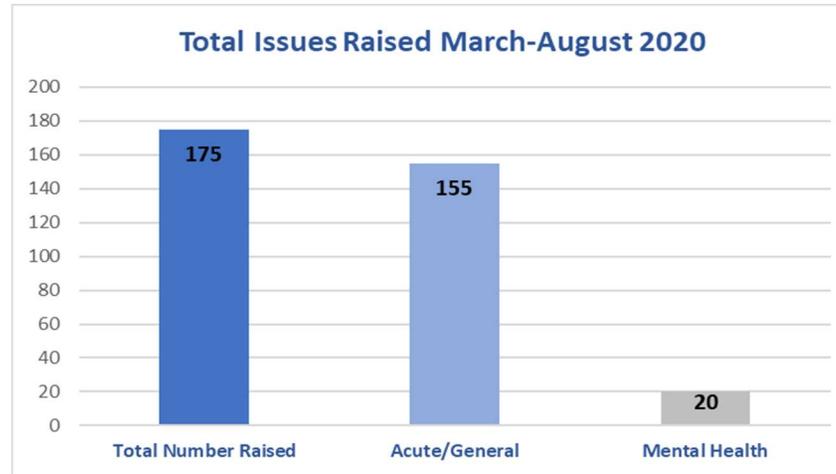
- Personal Protection Equipment (**PPE**)
- Rules and protocols for COVID-19 (**R&P**)
- Change of duties (**CD**)
- Working from home (**WFH**)
- Sick leave (**SL**)
- Pay (**Pay**)
- Family concerns and general information (**FC&GI**)
- Training and education (**T&E**)
- Other (**O**)

Each concern raised was escalated within each client according to agreed protocols for that client and a response or resolution (where possible) was relayed to the staff member. This is a generic report, and each client will have received COVID-19 data and details specific to their organization in their monthly report.

In the majority of instances, concerns related to COVID-19 were seeking information and clarification and a result of staff anxiety levels. In a minority of instances concerns were of a serious patient and/or staff safety nature requiring a “Red Alert” escalation.

A total of 125 individuals contacted a Guardian in the period. As is normal in these circumstances an individual can raise a series of concerns across a number of categories. This report contains 175 actual concerns. In many instances, the concern raised by an individual was also expressed on behalf of several colleagues. The following charts provide an overview of the data.

From March to August – Overall Totals Chart

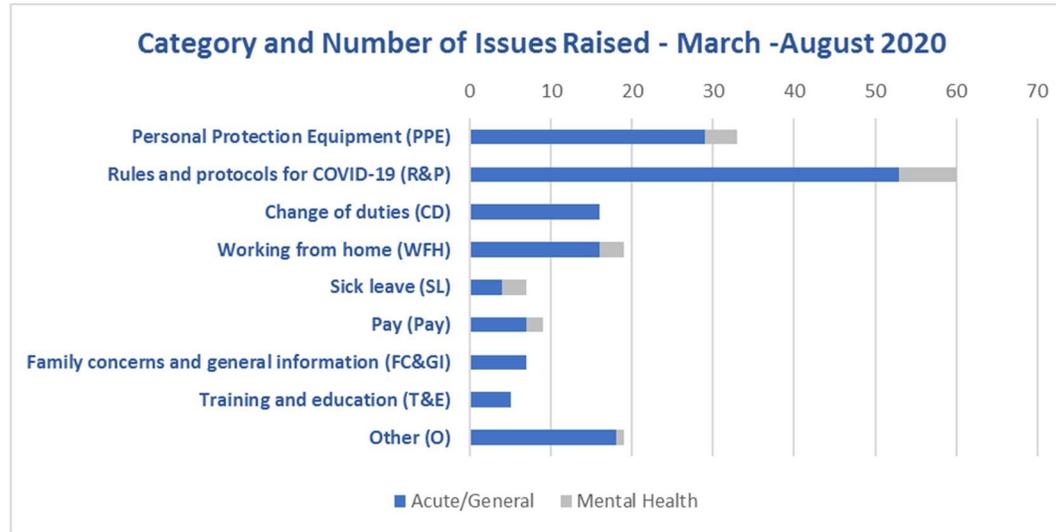


From March to August – Overall Totals Table

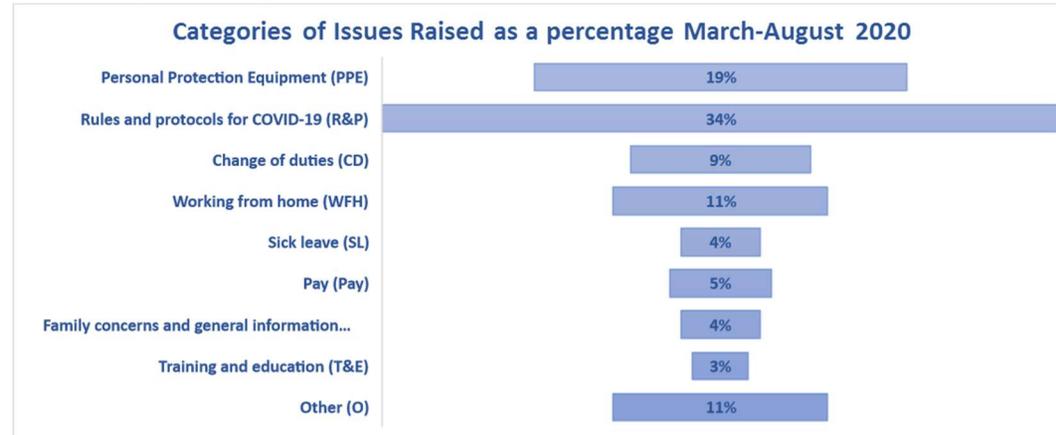
Concern Category	Total Number Raised	Acute/General	Mental Health
Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)	33	29	4
Rules and protocols for COVID-19 (R&P)	60	53	7
Change of duties (CD)	16	16	0
Working from home (WFH)	19	16	3
Sick leave (SL)	7	4	3
Pay (Pay)	9	7	2
Family concerns and general information (FC&GI)	7	7	0
Training and education (T&E)	5	5	0
Other (O)	19	18	1

KEY: Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) - Rules and protocols for COVID-19 (R&P) - Change of duties (CD) - Working from home (WFH) - Sick leave (SL) - Pay (Pay) - Family concerns and general information (FC&GI) - Training and education (T&E) – Other (O) – Acute/General Trust (1) – Mental Health Trust (2)

From March to August – Overall Totals – Acute/General versus Mental Health



From March to August – Overall percentages



## Commentary:

Of the 175 concerns received, 44.5% were received in the first six-week period from Mid-March to the 19<sup>th</sup> April. By the end of April, we noted drop in COVID-19 concerns across the board. 24% of all concerns were received in May, 16.5% in June, 10.5% in July and 4.5% in August. Concerns arising in Acute/General Trusts dominated with only a 11% of concerns emanating from Mental Health Trusts.

34% of all concerns raised related to Rules and Protocols (**R&P**) in terms of the handling of COVID-19 issues, followed by 19% in relation to personal protection equipment (**PPE**). These two issues far exceed the remaining 7 categories. They accounted for 53% of all concerns raised. 9 concerns were classified as red alerts, all of which related to either **R&P** and **PPE** or both and in one instance to working from home (**WFH**).

### Category Table by Period:

Concern	To April 19 <sup>th</sup>	To May 31 <sup>st</sup>	To June 30 <sup>th</sup>	To July 31 <sup>st</sup>	To Aug 31 <sup>st</sup>
Personal Protection Equipment ( <b>PPE</b> )	19	9	1	4	0
Rules and protocols for COVID-19 ( <b>R&amp;P</b> )	26	14	12	5	3
Change of duties ( <b>CD</b> )	3	7	4	1	1
Working from home ( <b>WFH</b> )	7	5	5	1	1
Sick leave ( <b>SL</b> )	5	1	1	0	0
Pay ( <b>Pay</b> )	4	1	2	1	1
Family concerns and general information ( <b>FC&amp;GI</b> )	6	0	0	1	0
Training and education ( <b>T&amp;E</b> )	5	0	0	0	0
Other ( <b>O</b> )	3	5	4	5	2
Totals	78	42	29	18	8

**Period 1:** March 9<sup>th</sup> to April 19<sup>th</sup> - 6 weeks – 42 days **Period 2:** April 20<sup>th</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> - 6 weeks – 42 days **Period 3:** June – 4.28 weeks - 30 days  
**Period 4:** July – 4.43 weeks – 31 days **Period 5:** August – 4.43 weeks – 31days

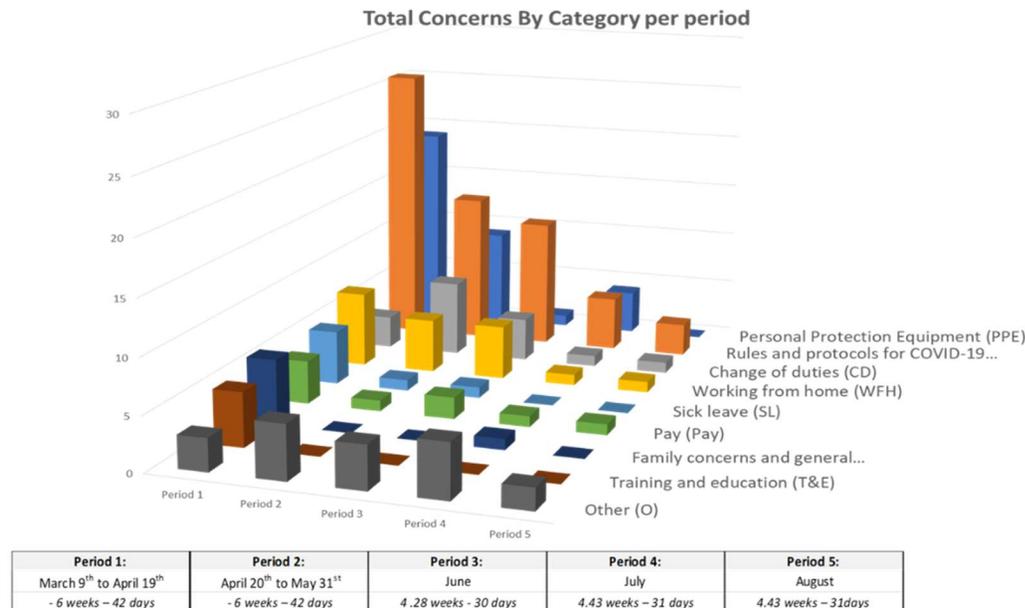
### Personal Protection Equipment (PPE):

Concerns regarding **PPE** rapidly diminished from the end of April onwards. 58% of all **PPE** concerns were received in the first six weeks, 27% in the month of May, 15% over the months of June and July and zero concerns were received in the month of August. The data reflects the changing and improving situation nationally in the supply of **PPE**. It should be noted that where staff raised **PPE** as a concern there was a considerable level of stress and anxiety exhibited.

### Rules and Protocols (R&P)

The issue of consistency in the implementation of **R&P** represented the highest percentage of concerns raised in the entire period. Whilst this category also decreased in absolute numbers, it remained the single largest concern for staff as clearly indicated in the chart below. We believe the constant changes in protocols from Government added to this issue. None-the-less it is important that Trusts place a greater emphasis on this aspect for COVID-19 management. Consistency of implementation, practice and unambiguous communication are essential to support staff. In many instances concerns raised related to inconsistency of implementation or even contradictory implementation despite clear communication.

### Category Chart by Period:



KEY: Personal Protection Equipment (**PPE**) - Rules and protocols for COVID-19 (**R&P**) - Change of duties (**CD**) - Working from home (**WFH**) - Sick leave (**SL**) - Pay (**Pay**) - Family concerns and general information (**FC&GI**) - Training and education (**T&E**) – Other (**O**) – Acute/General Trust (**1**) – Mental Health Trust (**2**)

### Remaining Categories:

As one can observe from the chart on the previous page the remaining categories decreased considerable from the first period and in some instances reducing to zero. There was one exception. The “Other” category has continued to register with 4 to 5 concerns appearing each month. This increase relates to concerns such as BAME risk assessment procedures and outcomes, and personal concerns that do not sit under the main categories. We continue to evaluate these “Other” concerns in terms of themes and will consider a change or addition to the category list should a dominant theme emerge in the future.

As we are now in the second wave, we do expect an increase in COVID-19 concerns to be raised. However, with the experience gained from the first wave we also expect a change in the nature of concerns raised. We will continue to monitor COVID-19 concerns and intend to produce a follow-up report at year end.

If any further information or further clarification is required, please contact the undesigned.

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