

Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust
Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust
Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust

F.A.O. Chief Executives, Chairs and Boards of NHS Trusts on Merseyside

Dear Colleagues,

17th June 2020

re: COVID-19 and NHS Charges

We are writing to you as NHS staff to deliver a petition entitled "Coronavirus: End the Hostile Environment to Fight the Pandemic" which addresses a critical question of Public Health during the ongoing battle to contain COVID-19.

Anyone can be infected with Coronavirus or infect others. Everyone is part of the community at risk. Everyone must now feel confident to seek treatment as needed, and to aid in tracing contacts of anyone identified as infected with the virus, a strategy promoted by the World Health Organisation. But currently, the Hostile Environment and the regime of charging certain patients for access to the NHS, acts to instil fear and to inhibit prompt take up of care, even when a specific treatment is covered by an exemption. Even before COVID-19, this policy has led to great suffering. It is now contrary to any effective public health response.

We ask you to read our petition online at <https://tinyurl.com/ybk8zofx> . This had been signed by more than 700 people as of 16th June (685 online in addition to the 29 original signatories). We have also released a short explanatory video (<https://youtu.be/XL3K2xOUIaY>) and brought the petition to the attention of the press (http://labournet.net/other/2006/MAMH_PR_17.6.20.pdf). This is an issue of widespread concern to healthcare staff, committed to and bound by professional ethics, and to the public.

We ask you to remove the barriers to an effective response to the pandemic on Merseyside, by taking three measures:

- * take down all hostile publicity re NHS charges and the impact of debt on visas etc.
- * suspend the NHS charges and stop reporting patient details and debt to the Home Office
- * convey to the public on Merseyside that your hospital intends to treat everyone, freely and regardless of immigration status, as part of the effort to contain COVID-19

We look forward to discussing these issues with you, and hope that you can show leadership by acting to safeguard human rights and public health at this critical time.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jonathan Folb (Consultant Microbiologist, LUHFT)
on behalf of Merseyside Action for Migrant Healthcare