Personal Protective Equipment - Are you safe?
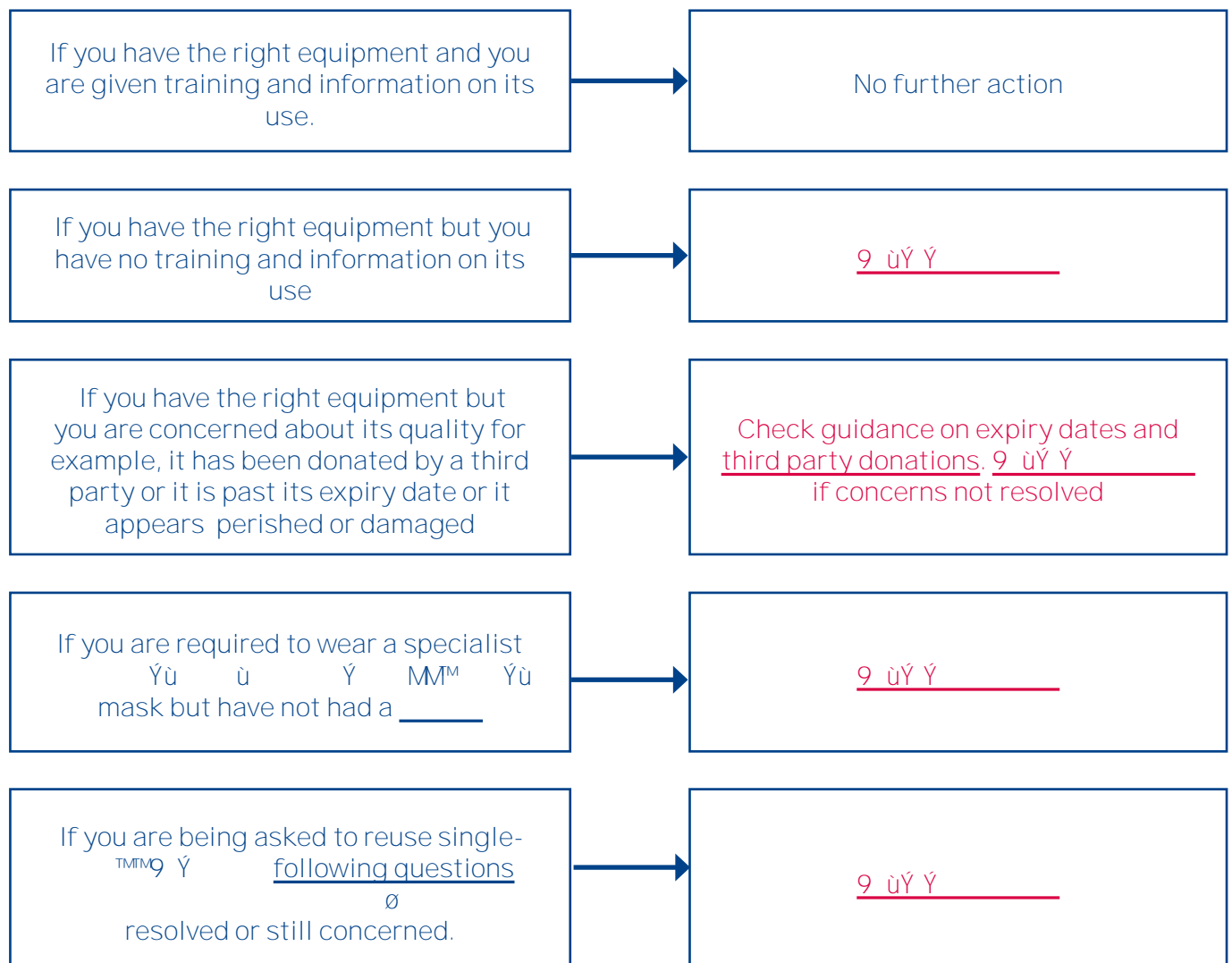
Personal protective equipment (PPE) in a health or social care environment can consist of gloves, eye protection including visors/goggles, aprons, gowns and face masks. PPE is there to protect you from exposure to harmful sustances. In a pandemic situation it can also help to prevent the transmission of infection from staff to patients who are vulnerable. The type of equipment you will need will vary dependent on the type of environment you are working in and what procedures are being carried out.

Under the COSHH regulations hse.gov.uk/coshh and hseni.gov.uk/articles/coshh, your employer is required to assess the risk of exposure to biological hazards at work including exposures to coronavirus, follow the UK infection prevention and control guidelines and put measures in place to reduce the risk of exposures by amongst

personal protective equipment.

The UK infection prevention and control guidance outlines what type of equipment is needed for different environments and scenarios. Before raising any concerns about equipment - check current guidelines.

If you have the right equipment and you are given training and information on its use.	No further action
If you have the right equipment but you have no training and information on its use	9 ùÝ Ý
If you have the right equipment but you are concerned about its quality for example, it has been donated by a third party or it is past its expiry date or it appears perished or damaged	Check guidance on expiry dates and third party donations. 9 ùÝ Ý if concerns not resolved
If you are required to wear a specialist Ýù ù Ý MMᵐ Ýù mask but have not had a _____	9 ùÝ Ý
If you are being asked to reuse single-ᵐᵐ9 Ý following questions Ø resolved or still concerned.	9 ùÝ Ý

Escalation steps

- Raise your concerns with your line manager/supervisor, in writing is preferable, and where they exist, let your RCN safety representative know of your concerns. Also, see RCN *Raising Concerns* guidance. You should never be discouraged from reporting a legitimate concern via your organisation's incident reporting mechanisms. The Health and Safety Executive describe an incident as an undesired circumstance which has the potential to lead to an injury or ill health.

- Document your concerns using your organisations reporting mechanisms for example, Datix and IR 1 forms and through your line manager. It may help to take photos of equipment you feel is of poor quality.

- If there is a helpline available or dedicated staff contact them for advice on PPE.

- If appropriate, ask your RCN safety representative to check whether the employer has reported via RIDDOR.

- Your manager/supervisor should respond in a timely manner (ideally before you are put into a situation where you may be at risk).

- If your concern for safety is not resolved then the report must be escalated in accordance with your local policy to a board director responsible for health and safety, stating your concerns for personal safety and that have not received a satisfactory response from your supervisor/manager.

- You should not be bullied or harassed for raising legitimate concerns.

- Contact the RCN if you need support with any of these issues, if you are being bullied or harassed so that we can support your cause and advise on escalation to external bodies. The RCN would advise you not to approach the media, post on social media or any external body before speaking to us for advice. You should follow your local policy on speaking to the press and use of social media.

- If the employer does not provide appropriate PPE and a safe working environment, as an employee you can refuse to care for a patient but you must follow RCN guidance before making this decision.

It is unacceptable and a breach of safety regulations for nursing staff to be put at risk due
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Remember to take frequent breaks and make sure you remain hydrated.