

# Guidance For The Risk Assessment Of The Conduct Of AME Medical Examinations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 is an unprecedented public health challenge and strain on the NHS. The Government has a strategy for both the public health measures and the reorganisation of NHS and other facilities to deal with the effects. As a result, AME practice will also be affected according to the individual AMEs personal circumstances, their clinical practice, and what is happening in the aviation industry.

**As at the beginning of April 2020 we expect the need to perform medicals now and over the next few weeks to be minimal for the following key reasons.**

- There are significantly restricting public health measures in place including individual isolation for those with medical conditions, working from home where possible, and social distancing though individual measures and the closure of social enterprises such as gyms, pubs and non-food shops. Private/Leisure flying is included in this category.
- Many doctors and other clinical staff are being redeployed (and re-trained) in the NHS and many recently retired staff and volunteers returning to the workforce. Medical clinics are being closed or access restricted. Working in such clinical settings increases the risk of transmission and secondary effects should be minimised.
- The commercial aviation industry has shut down by a figure of >90% but some flights still continue to support national infrastructure including Police, HEMS, Offshore Oil & Gas and Cargo flights. Air traffic Control also must continue.

In recognition of the likely effects on the aviation medical examination system over the coming months of the pandemic, the recently published general exemption (ORS4 1354) has stated that where facilities for revalidation are not available, the validity period of unexpired medical certificates can be extended until 22<sup>nd</sup> November (effectively by carriage of a copy of the exemption with the licence & medical).

The exemption allows fit licence holders to continue to support national infrastructure and those flights the wider industry (e.g. essential cargo and repatriation flights) continues to need. However, some pilots/ATCOs due to their circumstances in relation to the timing and conditions of the exemption may need renewal medicals.

The Government restrictions/advice and the state of the pandemic are moving quickly, and the need for and risk of performing medicals will change as the various measures are imposed and lifted over the coming weeks/months.

An important aspect to us as the CAA is the effect on the aviation industry's ability to recover, so we are thinking about alleviating problems in the exit from this as well as the current situation. Therefore, during the 'COVID disruption period' we advise, if you have not done so already, you maintain a dynamic risk assessment of your practice for yourself and the checklist below includes some, non-exhaustive, suggestions for how you might approach this now, and through the whole COVID period back to 'normal service'.

The CAA does not need to review your arrangements or your risk assessments as they are your responsibility, and reflect your own status, your practice arrangements, and your pilot/ATCO clientele. There are too many variables in this dynamically moving situation and individual AME/pilot circumstances can change quickly. It is advised that you make a record of your decision-making in this area in case you or the pilot/ATCO is questioned.

## Checklist for AME Risk Assessment

- 1) Am I, the AME, safe?
  - a. Review your own health status
  - b. Refer to the Government / PHE guidance on self-isolating, social distancing and other population movement advice including non-essential travel
  - c. You should make yourself aware of the day-to-day pandemic situation in your area and the areas from where your pilots would be travelling
  
- 2) Is the pilot/ATCO appropriate or safe to attend the medical?
  - a. Our view is that AME medicals are essentially a work activity for you and professional pilots/ATCOs (not leisure pilots), but this is conditional on the extant need or otherwise for a medical at any point in time. Some pilots & ATCOs are a higher priority for national infrastructure (e.g. HEMS, SAR, Police, Cargo, Repatriation) and may have not been able to use the exemption but need urgently to return to work. Those who have been laid off for a period do not have such an immediate need
  - b. What is the pandemic situation in their home area location
  - c. Do they have symptoms or recent contact with cases
  - d. Have they had the infection (+/- antigen/antibody testing as these become available)
  
- 3) Are my premises and clinical procedures safe?
  - a. Clinical facilities used may be at risk by being co-located with the NHS facilities supporting the COVID medical response
  - b. Are alternative premises available? (The CAA will notify you about an option to temporarily approve other practice locations shortly)
  - c. Do I have Government-recommended PPE and other protection procedures suitable for undertaking the relevant activities? Am I competent and confident in their use?

An example risk assessment recording form is provided below.

## Example Recording Form for AME Risk Assessment

Issue	Considerations	Assessment / Actions taken
Am I, the AME, safe?	Review your own health status	
	Refer to the Government / PHE guidance on self-isolating, social distancing and other population movement advice including non-essential travel	
	You should make yourself aware of the day-to-day pandemic situation in your area and the areas from where your pilots would be travelling from	
	Other	
Is the pilot/ATCO appropriate or safe to attend the medical?	Our view is that AME medicals are essentially a work activity for you and professional pilots/ATCOs (not leisure pilots), but this is conditional on the extant need or otherwise for a medical at any point in time. Some pilots & ATCOs are a higher priority for national infrastructure (e.g. HEMS, SAR, Police, Cargo, Repatriation) and may have not been able to use the exemption but need urgently to return to work. Those who have been laid off for a period do not have such an immediate need	
	What is the pandemic situation in their home area location	
	Do they have symptoms or recent contact with cases	
	Have they had the infection (+/- antigen/antibody testing as these become available)	
	Other	
Are my premises and clinical procedures safe?	Clinical facilities used may be at risk by being co-located with the NHS facilities supporting the COVID medical response	
	Use of alternative premises (The CAA will notify you about an option to temporarily approve other practice locations shortly)	
	Do I have Government-recommended PPE and other protection procedures suitable for undertaking the relevant activities? Am I competent and confident in their use?	
	Other	

Signed

Date

AME Name

AME Number

