

Airline Staff to Help Man 4,000-Bed COVID-19 Hospital



Airline staff are amongst thousands of personnel to man a new field hospital which opened in East London today for COVID-19 patients.

[NHS Nightingale, housed in the Excel conference centre.](#) opened its doors to 500 COVID-19 patients with the capacity to increase to 4,000 beds fitted with oxygen and ventilators. The centre will care for less urgent virus cases transferred from stressed ICU units in London hospitals.

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Numerous events scheduled to take place at the centre incoming days and weeks have been cancelled or postponed.

At full capacity, it will have 80 wards containing 42 beds and need put to 16,000 staff.

As airlines ground their fleets, crews are being furloughed under the UK government job retention scheme which guarantees to pay up to 80% of salaries.

Carriers, Virgin Atlantic and Easy Jet have contacted their crews requesting staff to support NHS medics in NHS Nightingale field hospitals in London, Manchester (up to 1,000 beds) and Birmingham (up to 2,000 beds).

Many [airline staff are trained in first aid](#) and are security cleared. They will perform non-clinical support roles under close guidance of nurses and senior clinicians.

The St John Ambulance first-aid charity is also providing hundreds of trained volunteers to assist nurses and physicians.

NHS Nightingale was set up with the help of the UK military drawing from experience in field hospitals in war zones. From consultations to open day, the hospital took fewer than two weeks to establish.

Similar field hospitals are being established in conference venues, stadiums and fairgrounds around the world in the [fight against COVID-19](#).

In the U.S., New York's central park is the site of a field hospital for up to 68 patients. In Sao Paulo, Brazil, a major concert venue has been turned into a temporary hospital with 200 beds and, in the Iranian capital, Tehran, the authorities have set up a field hospital for 2,000 patients.

Similar set ups have appeared in Italy, Spain and the Gaza Strip.

At the height of the virus crisis in China, two hospitals were built in ten days for 2,600 patients.

Source: [NHS England](#)

Image credit: [BBC](#)

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