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UK develops customizable anti-viral FFP3 masks for medical staff

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The United Kingdom's NHS is producing masks to fight against COVID-19 and microparticle infection. QE Facilities Ltd is leading the way to become the first NHS body in the country to start to manufacture FFP3 masks. It is the wholly-owned subsidiary company of Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust, based in the North East of England.

FFP3 (Filtering Face Piece 3) masks can protect staff against fine particles and airborne viruses and prevent the spread to others. They are used in all clinical and non-clinical settings. Each mask is individually fitted to staff members to achieve good contact between the skin and the face seal of the mask.

FFP3 mask has four layers, one of which is an anti-viral layer, which has been proven to kill covid on contact and is also non-allergenic. On completion, the masks are individually packed and are UV-sterilised.

The design of these masks ensures compliance and comfort with maximum protection. The mask will include a headband rather than the standard straps and has also been designed to fit better on our face which will be a much more comfortable fit. These masks are currently going through testing by the British Standards Laboratory and will be certified by the end of August.

Anthony Robson, managing director for QE Facilities said: “We have invested in state-of-the-art machinery from Germany and our teams have undergone training to run and manufacture these masks. Every part and stage has had to be precision-engineered to make sure that these masks meet the standard and are effective at filtration".

Working in partnership with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, the masks are being made in Plant-Based Valley, in Seaton Delaval, Blyth Valley and forms part of the North East NHS’s desire to produce high-quality PPE locally.

The team is also designing plastic nose pieces for NHS radiology staff to complement FFP3 masks usage while using the MRI machine. The production of FFP3 masks has been an ongoing project with QE Facilities Ltd with a new manufacturing machine installation. Once up and running, QE Facilities Ltd will be able to produce 18 masks every minute and discussions are ongoing for contracts in both the public and private sectors.