

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated 28th May 2020

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Introduction

In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease in Hubei Province, China to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO and public health authorities around the world are taking action to contain the COVID-19 outbreak, however, long term success cannot be taken for granted.

We all have a role to play in preventing the further spread of COVID-19 when the time comes for workplaces to reopen. Without an available vaccine or effective treatment, well-organised risk management is key to creating 'COVID-safe' work environments. This will involve measures such as redesigning workspaces for easier social distancing, equipping staff to work safely and productively from home, and developing other policies and protocols that limit physical contact with minimal disruption to work.

We acknowledge that we must play a role if we are to stop the spread of this disease.

What is coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses belonging to the family of Coronaviridae, which infect both animals and humans. Human coronaviruses can cause mild disease similar to a common cold, while others cause more severe disease (such as MERS - Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and SARS – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). A new coronavirus that previously has not been identified in humans emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

Risk

The WHO have raised the risk to the public to 'very high' (its top level of risk assessment although has said there is still a chance of containing the virus if it's chain of transmission is broken – Dated 28th February 2020) the risk of catching COVID-19 depends on where you live or where you have travelled recently. The risk of catching it within the UK workplace with effective risk controls in place and employee compliance is low.

Signs and symptoms

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- A high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- A loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

If any employee feels unwell or shows the signs / symptoms described above or are tested positive then the NHS guidelines are to be followed (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>) and the Managing Director is to be made aware. Similarly, if any employees close (co-habiting) family members shows the signs / symptoms or are tested positive then the above shall apply.

Responsibilities of our Employees

We acknowledge that we have a role to play in preventing the spread of this disease and have taken sensible actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring that workers have access to appropriate hygiene facilities such hot water, soap and bins to get rid of used tissues.

We will advise employees to maintain good hygiene standards around the workplace by following the latest advice from the World Health Organisation's (WHO) website which includes the following basic protective measures:

- Wash your hands frequently with alcohol-based hand wash or wash with soap and water
- Maintain social distancing - maintain at least 2 meters (6 feet distance) between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching eyes, mouth and nose
- Practice respiratory hygiene
- Stay informed and follow the advice given by health care providers

Self-isolation

Stay at home for 7 days if you have either a high temperature or a new continuous cough - this will help to protect others in your community while you are infectious.

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital, and you do not need to contact NHS 111 to tell them you are staying at home.

Anyone who meets one of the following criteria should not come to work:

- Has a high temperature or a new persistent cough?
- Is a vulnerable person (by virtue of their age, underlying health condition, clinical condition or are pregnant)
- Is living with someone in self-isolation or a vulnerable person.

Procedure if you feel ill at work

If an employee develops a high temperature or a persistent cough while at work, they should:

- Inform their line manager
- Return home wearing a mask immediately
- Avoid touching anything
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow

After which you should follow the guidance on self-isolation and not return to work until the period of self-isolation has been completed.

Our Responsibilities as an Employer

We will help prevent the spread of infections in our workplace, and protect our customers, contractors and employees.

We acknowledge that we can reduce working days lost due to illness and stop or slow the spread of COVID-19 if it arrives at one of our workplaces. As such:

- We will ensure that our workplaces are clean and hygienic
- We will keep everyone updated on actions being taken to reduce risks of exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace
- We will ensure employees who are in a vulnerable group are strongly advised to follow social distancing guidance
- We will ensure employees who are in an extremely vulnerable group and should be shielded are supported to stay at home
- We will make sure everyone's contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date
- We will make sure managers know how to spot symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and are clear on any relevant processes, for example sickness reporting and sick pay, and procedures in case someone in the workplace is potentially infected and needs to take the appropriate action

- We will make sure there are places to wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, and encourage everyone to do so regularly
- We will provide hand sanitiser and hand towels for staff, and encourage them to use them
- We will ensure that the routine maintenance and assessment plans continue to be undertaken so that the site remains safe to return to work
- Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) will be wiped with disinfectant regularly
- We will promote regular and thorough handwashing by employees, contractors and customers
- We will supply sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace, and ensure these dispensers are regularly refilled
- We will display posters promoting handwashing
- We will make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water
- We will ensure that employees are aware that washing kills the virus on your hands and prevents the spread of COVID19
- We will advise employees and contractors to consult national travel advice before going on business trips
- We will brief employees, contractors and customers that if COVID-19 starts spreading in our community, anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more) needs to stay at home. They should also stay home (or work from home) if they have had to take simple medications, such as paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin, which may mask symptoms of infection.

Policy

Visits and meetings

Working from home: In an attempt to restrict employee movement then all employees who are able should work from home with immediate effect. Any unnecessary travel will not be undertaken.

External visits should be avoided wherever possible. If absolutely necessary all employees are to call ahead prior to leaving home / work - we will ask the host to confirm that no employees are self-isolating and that no one is feeling unwell. If responses are positive, we shall proceed, if the responses are negative, then you will explain to the destination / client that we will not be attending, and that a solution to completing the work will be discussed.

Social distancing: Wherever possible employees are to avoid large groups of people and are to limit personal contact (hand shaking etc.) with clients and their representatives.

All meetings within our offices will be postponed. We will use alternative solutions such as Microsoft Teams / Zoom / Skype etc. to hold meetings wherever possible.

We will plan for the minimum number of people needed on site to operate safely and effectively.

Working from Home & Wellbeing

It is our policy to make sure individuals who are advised to stay at home under existing government guidance do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 as well as those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms and or are self-isolating.

We will monitor the wellbeing of people who are working from home and helping them stay connected to the rest of the workforce, especially if the majority of their colleagues are on-site. In addition, we will keep in touch with off-site workers on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security.

We will provide support for workers around mental health and wellbeing. This could include advice or telephone support and review current guidance for advice on who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable groups.

Equality in the workplace

It is our policy to treat everyone in the workplace equally. We will take account of the particular circumstances of those with different protected characteristics. We will involve and communicate appropriately with workers whose protected characteristics might either expose them to a different degree of risk or might make any measures we are taking challenging for them.

We will consider whether we need to put in place any particular measures or adjustments to take account of your duties under the equality's legislation. We will make reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage and assess the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.

We will also ensure that the steps we take do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others, for example, those with caring responsibilities or those with religious commitments.

Returning to work

Returning to work in the current COVID-19 environment / pandemic means we all need to reconsider how we work. We cannot just return to work as normal because the threat from the virus is still prevalent and we need to support the NHS and Public Health England.

The safety, health and wellbeing of all people is our priority and this policy has been produced to enable us come back to work. Social distancing remains in force and should always be of utmost importance.

This policy document is not exhaustive and there may be some tasks we will have to manage dynamically. If 2m social distancing cannot be maintained, then we will discuss and implement measures to manage the risk.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 we have a duty to take all reasonably practicable steps to safeguard employees and non-employees and includes:

- Keeping up to date with covid-19
- Planning and implementing all reasonably
- Implementing practicable risk reduction measures

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 we are required to make a “suitable and sufficient” risk assessment, keep it updated and review it as necessary.

We acknowledge that PPE is considered a last resort in terms of the hierarchy of controls, however, under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 we have a duty to provide suitable PPE, which must be:

- Appropriate for risks and conditions
- Capable of fitting correctly
- Assessed as suitable and effective, so far as reasonably practicable, to prevent or adequately control the risk
- Maintained, cleaned and replaced as appropriate
- Provided with adequate information, instruction and training
- With all reasonable steps to ensure PPE properly used

Social Distancing

Our objective is to maintain 2m social distancing wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when travelling between sites.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular activity, we will consider whether the activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between our staff.

To achieve this, we will consider within our risk assessment:

- Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using ‘fixed teams or partnering’ / ‘cohorting (so each person works with only a few others).

Social distancing applies to all parts of our business, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens and similar settings.

Coming to work and leaving work

It is our objective to maintain social distancing wherever possible, on arrival and departure and to ensure handwashing upon arrival.

To achieve this, we will consider within our risk assessment:

- Staggering arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics.
- Providing additional parking or facilities such as bike racks to help people walk, run, or cycle to work where possible.
- Limiting passengers in company vehicles.
- Reducing congestion, for example, by having more entry points to the workplace.
- Using markings and introducing one-way flow at entry and exit points.
- Providing handwashing facilities, or hand sanitiser where not possible, at entry/exit points and not using touch-based security devices such as keypads.
- Defining process alternatives for entry/exit points where appropriate.

Moving around buildings and worksites

It is our objective to maintain social distancing wherever possible while people travel through the workplace.

To achieve this, we will consider within our risk assessment:

- Introducing more one-way flow through buildings.
- Regulating use of high traffic areas including stairs and walkways to maintain social distancing.

Workplaces and workstations

It is our objective to maintain social distancing between individuals when they are at their workstations. For people who work in one place, workstations should allow them to maintain social distancing wherever possible. Workstations should be assigned to an individual and not shared. If they need to be shared, they should be shared by the smallest possible number of people.

To achieve this, we will consider within our risk assessment:

- Layouts and processes to allow people to work further apart from each other.
- Where it is not possible to move workstations further apart, arranging people to work side by side or facing away from each other rather than face-to face.
- Managing occupancy levels to enable social distancing.
- Avoiding use of hot desks and spaces and, where not possible, cleaning workstations between different occupants including shared equipment.

Meetings / gatherings

It is our objective to reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and gatherings and maintain social distancing during meetings and gatherings.

To achieve this, we will consider within our risk assessment:

- Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.

- Only absolutely necessary participants should attend meetings and should maintain 2m separation throughout whilst transmission during meetings, for example, avoiding sharing pens and other objects.
- Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
- Where site visits are required, site guidance on social distancing and hygiene should be explained to visitors on or before arrival.

Common areas

It is our objective to maintain social distancing in common areas of the work area (internal and external).

To achieve this, we will consider within our risk assessment:

- Staggering break times to reduce pressure on breakrooms or canteens.
- Using safe outside areas for breaks.
- Reconfiguring seating and tables to maintain spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.
- Encouraging staff to remain on-site and, when not possible, maintaining social distancing while off-site.

Accidents, security and other incidents

In an emergency, for example, an accident or fire, people do not have to stay 2m apart if it would be unsafe. People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.

Visitors and contractors

Where possible we will encourage visits via remote connection/working. Where site visits are required, site guidance on social distancing and hygiene should be explained to visitors on or before arrival. The risk assessment will consider the permissible numbers of visitors to the workplace and their location, arrival times etc. Where contractors / service engineers etc. are required to enter the workspace, we will establish if schedules for essential services and can be revised to reduce interaction and overlap between people. We will maintain a record of all visitors (for track and trace purposes). We will ensure that visitors / contractors are provided with suitable induction / briefing (maintaining social distancing) and remove physical sign in / scan in points etc. to reduce the likelihood of transmission.

Training and information

We will provide clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival. We will establish host responsibilities relating to COVID-19 and provide any necessary training for people who act as hosts for visitors.

Cleaning and sanitisation

It is our objective to make sure that our site that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart, including:

- An assessment for all sites, or parts of sites, that have been closed, before restarting work.
- Carrying out cleaning procedures and providing hand sanitiser before restarting work.

To keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces we will ensure:

- Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses, using usual cleaning products.
- Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, such as door handles and keyboards, and making sure there are adequate disposal arrangements.
- Clearing workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area.
- We limit or restrict the use of high-touch items and equipment, for example, printers or whiteboards.

If we are required to clean after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then we will refer to the [specific guidance](#).

To help everyone keep good hygiene through the working day we will:

- Use signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
- Provide regular reminders and signage to maintain personal hygiene standards.
- Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.
- Establish clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Enhance cleaning for busy areas.
- Where possible, provide paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in handwashing facilities.
- Introducing enhanced cleaning of all facilities regularly during the day and at the end of the day.

PPE and face coverings

PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment, such as face masks. PPE should be used as normal and in accordance with the workplace risk assessment and safe methods of work you have already been trained in.

We do not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 unless the risk assessment identifies this requirement. Social distancing will negate the need for this in normal circumstances.

It is important to know that the evidence of the benefit of using a face covering to protect others is weak and the effect is likely to be small, therefore face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk, including minimising time spent in contact, using fixed teams and partnering for close-up work, and increasing hand and surface washing. These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk in the workplace and government would therefore not expect to see employers relying on face coverings as risk management for the purpose of their health and safety assessments.

Wearing a face covering is optional and is not required by law, including in the workplace. If you choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off.

We will support workers in using face coverings safely if they choose to wear one. This means we will tell workers:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you have touched it.
- Continue to wash your hands regularly.
- Change and wash your face covering daily.
- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it is not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste.
- Practise social distancing wherever possible.

Handling goods, merchandise and other materials, and onsite vehicles

To reduce transmission through contact with objects that come into the workplace and vehicles at the worksite we will consider:

- Cleaning procedures for goods and merchandise entering the site.
- Cleaning procedures for vehicles.
- Introducing greater handwashing and handwashing facilities for workers handling goods and merchandise and providing hand sanitiser where this is not practical.
- Regular cleaning of vehicles.
- Restricting non-business deliveries, for example, personal deliveries to workers.
- Revising pick-up and drop-off collection points, procedures, signage and markings.
- Where possible and safe, having single workers load or unload vehicles.

Shift patterns and working groups

It is our objective to change the way our work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each employee has.

To achieve this, we will consider within our risk assessment:

- As far as possible, where staff are split into teams or shift groups, fixing these teams or shift groups so that where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same people.

Communications and training

It is our objective to make sure all workers understand COVID-19 related safety procedures and are kept up to date with how safety measures are being implemented or updated.

To achieve this, we will:

- Provide clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.
- Engage with workers and worker representatives through existing communication routes to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.
- Develop communication and training materials for workers prior to returning to site, especially around new procedures for arrival at work.
- Provide ongoing engagement with workers (including through trades unions or employee representative groups) to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments.
- Provide awareness and focus on the importance of mental health at times of uncertainty. The government has published [guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).
- Use simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language.
- Use visual communications, for example, whiteboards or signage, to explain changes to schedules, breakdowns or materials shortages to reduce the need for face-to-face communications.
- Communicate the approaches and operational procedures to suppliers, customers or trade bodies to help their adoption to promote to share experience.

Return to Work & Risk Assessment

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (and others) we are required to make a “suitable and sufficient” risk assessment, keep it updated and review it as necessary. The risk assessment shall be documented and shall consider (where necessary):

- Worker anxiety
- Workforce demographics and individual vulnerabilities (incl. age, pregnancy, mental health, relevant illness, BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic))
- Workstation layout (separation, barriers, removal of shared desk use)
- Canteens, kitchens and toilets
- Signage, cleaning, and welfare arrangements
- Commuting options
- Shared vehicles
- Shift patterns and phased return
- First aid and fire warden provision
- Fire alarm testing, PEEPs, evacuations, assembly, points (update of FRA if required)
- Balance 2 metre separation against:
 - Other mitigation measures (PPE, barriers, duration of proximity)
 - Necessity/alternatives

Environmental and workplace considerations for risk assessment

Workstations options

- Every other desk is vacant - remove chairs and monitors, or tape off
- Desks are physically repositioned to increase distances
- Establishing cleaning rules after every use
- Recording who uses which workstation and equipment will be needed for tracking

Meeting rooms options

- Small meeting rooms to be used for individuals or allocated to the more vulnerable.
- Set capacity limits on larger meeting rooms and enforce by removing chairs or demarcating where chairs can be.
- Establish meeting etiquette while entering and leaving to ensure distancing, cleaning after use.

Kitchen areas options

- Create queuing system to allow for distancing
- Mark spacing on floor or use barriers
- Increase cleaning, including by all employees
- Close off multi-user fridges?
- How are people to make drinks safely? – may need increased cleaning and ongoing reminders
- Disposable towels only to be used

Internal doors

- Where possible, could some of these be propped open to reduce the need for touch (fire prevention measures must be continued to be adhered to).

Entrance and exits

- One-way system marked with distancing.
- Staggered starting and finishing times
- Wipes and sanitizer available at both sides

1st aid and Fire

- If rotation/phasing is required then adequate cover for 1st aiders and fire wardens must be provided.
- Testing of fire alarm systems should continue
- Fire evacuation practices - You should consider the familiarity of your occupants with the procedures and the results of the last fire drill it may be appropriate to postpone a drill for a time.
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) must continue to be put in place as part of your overall Emergency Evacuation Procedures and fire risk assessment.

First aid

- Ensure first aiders are briefed as to how to manage suspected case of Covid-19 cases as per government advice.
- Provide PPE: face masks and shields, gloves, clothes coverings
- Method to dispose of clinical or suspect Covid-19 waste.
- Provide sanitizers and wipes with first aiders and first aid kits

Ventilation

Where provided and necessary we shall consider the ventilation of the premises within the risk assessment and will include:

- Ensure regular airing with windows (even in mechanically ventilated buildings)
- Instruct building occupants to flush toilets with closed lid

RIDDOR:

Some incidents must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive as required by the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). Where applicable, the Responsible Person will complete the relevant Form F2508 using the on-line reporting procedure at www.riddor.gov.uk or by calling 0845 300 99 23.

The HSE have clarified their position on Covid-19 and state the below:

You must only make a report under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) when:

- An unintended incident at work has led to someone's possible or actual exposure to coronavirus. This must be reported as a dangerous occurrence.
- A worker has been diagnosed as having Covid-19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work. This must be reported as a case of disease.
- A worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus.

Emergency Planning

We will follow good practice in emergency planning, preparedness and response by adopting the following steps:

- We will develop a response plan for if someone in the workplace becomes ill with suspected COVID-19. This includes the immediate response e.g. isolate the individual and contact the local health authority and also how you plan to identify persons who may be at risk without stigma or discrimination

- We will explore ways of remote working (teleworking) that will allow workers to continue their work from home
- We have a business continuity plan which covers COVID-19, and
 - How we will continue to function if workers, contractors and suppliers cannot come to our place of business
 - We will communicate to workers and contractors about the plan and their role in it
 - We will ensure the plan addresses mental health and social consequences of a case of COVID-19 in the workplace and working alone / remotely

Arrangements:

The Responsible Person will:

1. Ensure that this policy is implemented
2. Ensure all employees and others who may be affected by it are provided with a copy
3. Ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and safe system of work is developed, documented, implemented, reviewed and updated as necessary
4. Ensure that we share the results of the risk assessment with the workforce.
5. Ensure that suitable training and information / instruction is provided to all those affected
6. Keep updated with the changing guidance and update the policy and risk assessment as required
7. Monitor the arrangements in particular social distancing and personal hygiene