

Offices and contact centres

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

This guide was updated on 26 November 2020.

What's changed

Updated guidance: new local restriction tiers information, directly below, and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (section 2.2).

Updated priority actions. Updated Introduction. Updated risk assessment information (section 1). New NHS Test and Trace section (section 2.1). Equalities progress report added (section 2.3). New ventilation advice (section 2.4). PPE section simplified, including 'Close Contact' definition (section 6.1). Updated outbreak advice (section 7.1.2). New canteen and restaurants advice (section 7.4).

Local restriction tiers

The government has announced that the current national restrictions will be replaced on 2 December with a regionally-differentiated approach, where different tiers of restrictions apply in different parts of the country.

There are 3 tiers for local restrictions:

- Tier 1: Medium alert
- Tier 2: High alert
- Tier 3: Very High alert

It is right to target the toughest measures only in areas where the virus is most prevalent and where we are seeing sharper increases in the rate of infection.

From (and including) 2 December, most businesses and venues will be allowed to open, following COVID-19 Secure guidelines.

<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>

Offices and contact centres can, if COVID-secure, open under all tiers.

Priority actions to take - what businesses need to do to protect staff and customers

1. **Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment.** Share it with all your staff. [Find out how to do a risk assessment.](#)
2. **Clean more often.** Increase how often you clean surfaces, especially those that are being touched a lot. Ask your staff and your visitors to use hand sanitiser and wash their hands frequently.
3. **Ask your visitors to wear face coverings** where required to do so by law. That is especially important if your visitors are likely to be around people they do not normally meet. Some exemptions apply. [Check when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own.](#)
4. **Make sure everyone is social distancing.** Make it easy for everyone to do so by putting up signs or introducing a one-way system that your staff and visitors can follow.
5. **Consider ventilation.** [Read advice on air conditioning and ventilation from the Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\).](#)
6. **Take part in NHS Test and Trace** by keeping a record of all staff and contractors for 21 days. From 18 September, this will be enforced in law. Some exemptions apply. Check ['Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace'](#) for details.

7. **Turn people with coronavirus symptoms away.** If a staff member (or someone in their household) or a visitor has a persistent cough, a high temperature or has lost their sense of taste or smell, they should be isolating. By law from 28 September employers must not require someone who is being required to self-isolate to come to work. Any employer asking an employee to break self-isolation to work is committing an offence.
8. **Consider the mental health and wellbeing aspects of COVID-19** for yourself and others. The government has published [guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Five more things to be aware of for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments:

- **Work from home if possible.** Office workers who can work effectively from home should do so over the winter.
- **Arrange work spaces to keep staff apart.** Consider using barriers to separate people and introduce back-to-back or side-by-side working.
- **Reduce face-to-face meetings.** Encourage calls or video conferences to avoid in-person meetings with external contacts, or colleagues outside someone's immediate team, wherever possible.
- **Reduce crowding.** Consider how many people can be in each space while remaining socially distant, and consider using booking systems for desks or rooms. Reduce the maximum occupancy for lifts.
- **Communicate and train.** Make sure all staff and visitors are kept up to date with the safety measures.

These are the priority actions to make your business safe during coronavirus. You should also read the full version of the guidance below.

How to use this guidance

This document sets out guidance on how to open workplaces safely while minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the workplace.

This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that as a business or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics. It contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, take into account agency workers, contractors and other people, as well as your employees.

To help you decide which actions to take, you must carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, just as you would for other health and safety related hazards. This risk assessment must be done in consultation with unions or workers.

Thinking about risk

In this section

1.1 Managing risk

1.2 Sharing the results of your risk assessment

Objective: That all employers carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment.

As an employer, you have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a hazard in the workplace and, as such, should be managed in the same way as other workplace hazards. This includes completing a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace and identifying control measures to manage that risk.

Failure to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and put in place sufficient control measures to manage the risk may be considered a breach of health and safety law.

Where the enforcing authority, such as the HSE or your local authority, identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they are empowered to take a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. Where serious breaches are identified HSE and Local Authorities have a range of measures they can take to ensure compliance. These include sending letters, serving improvement notices and prohibition notices and in cases where significant breaches are identified then prosecutions can be brought.

Your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have done everything you need to. There are interactive tools available to support you from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

You should also consider the security implications of any decisions and control measures you intend to put in place, as any revisions could present new or altered security risks that may require mitigation.

If you have fewer than 5 workers, or are self-employed, you don't have to write anything down as part of your risk assessment, but you may decide it would be helpful to.

Employers have a duty to consult on health and safety matters. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the work they do and how you will manage the risks from COVID-19.

This may be through consulting with any recognised trade union health and safety representatives or, if you don't have any, with a representative chosen by workers.

As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be. Employers and workers should always come together to resolve issues. If concerns still cannot be resolved, see below for further steps you can take.

Employers are expected to respond to any advice or notices issued by enforcing authorities rapidly and are required to do so within any timescales imposed by the enforcing authorities. The vast majority of employers are responsible and will join with the UK's fight against COVID-19 by working with the government and their sector bodies to protect their workers and the public. However, inspectors are carrying out compliance checks nationwide to ensure that employers are taking the necessary steps.

How to raise a concern:

- contact your employee representative
- contact your trade union if you have one
- contact HSE at:
 - HSE COVID-19 enquiries
 - Telephone: 0300 790 6787
 - Online: working safely enquiry form
 - <https://hse.gov.microsoftcrmportals.com/workingsafelyenquiries/>

1.1 Managing risk

Objective: To reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures, in order of priority.

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected. In the context of COVID-19 this means protecting the health and safety of your workers and visitors by working through these steps in order:

1. Ensuring both workers and visitors who feel unwell stay at home and do not attend the premises. From 28 September, by law businesses may not require a self-isolating employee to come into work.
2. In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
3. To help contain the virus, anyone who can work from home should do so over the winter. Public sector employees working in essential services, including education settings, should continue to go into work where necessary. Anyone else who cannot work from home should go to their place of work. The risk of transmission can be substantially reduced if COVID-19 secure guidelines are followed closely.
4. Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to ensure their employees can work safely. When in the workplace, everyone should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).
5. Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity can be redesigned to maintain a 2m distance or 1m with risk mitigations where 2m is not viable.
 - a. Further mitigating actions include:
 - b. further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
 - c. keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
 - d. using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
 - e. using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
 - f. reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)
6. Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, even though redesigning a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that 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 their staff.
7. You should ensure that steps are taken to avoid people needing to unduly raise their voices to each other. This includes, but is not limited to, refraining from playing music or broadcasts that may encourage shouting, including if played at a volume that makes normal conversation difficult. This is because of the potential for increased risk of transmission, particularly from aerosol transmission. We will develop further guidance, based on scientific evidence, to enable these activities as soon as possible.
8. If people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment. In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

- 1) If your building has been unoccupied for a period during any lockdowns, consider legionella risk and HSE advice. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm>

It is also important that people from different households or support bubbles meeting in a single group remain socially distanced. Further information on social contact rules, social distancing and the exemptions that exist can be found here. These rules will not apply to workplaces or education settings, alongside other exemptions.

The recommendations in the rest of this document are ones you must consider as you go through this process. You could also consider any advice that has been produced specifically for your sector, for example by trade associations or trades unions.

If you are currently operating, you will already have carried out an assessment of the risks posed by COVID-19 in your workplace. Use this document to identify any further improvements you should make. You must review the measures you have put in place to make sure they are working. You should also review them if they may no longer be effective or if there are changes in the workplace that could lead to new risks.

1.2 Sharing the results of your risk assessment

You must share the results of your risk assessment with your workforce. If possible, you should consider publishing it on your website (and we would expect all businesses with over 50 employees to do so). We would expect all businesses to demonstrate to their workers and customers that they have properly assessed their risk and taken appropriate measures to mitigate this. You should do this by displaying a notification in a prominent place in your business and on your website, if you have one.

Below you will find a notice you should sign and display in your workplace to show you have followed this guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-covid-19-secure-in-2020-notice>

Who should go to work

In this section

- 2.1 Supporting NHS Test and Trace
- 2.2 Protecting people who are at higher risk
- 2.3 Equality in the workplace
- 2.4 Ventilation

Objective: Office workers should work from home if they can. Employers should ensure workplaces are safe for anyone who cannot work from home.

Office workers who can work from home should do so. Public sector employees working in essential services, including education settings, should continue to go into work where necessary. Anyone else who cannot work from home should go to their place of work.

Employers should consult with their employees to determine who needs to come into the workplace. Extra consideration should be given to those people at higher risk.

When employers consider that workers should come into their place of work, then this will need to be reflected in the COVID-19 workplace risk assessment and actions taken to manage the risks of transmission in line with this guidance.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Considering the maximum number of people who can be safely accommodated on site.
2. Planning for a phased return to work for people safely and effectively.
3. Monitoring 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.
4. Keeping in touch with off-site workers on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security.
5. Providing equipment for people to work at home safely and effectively, for example, remote access to work systems.

2.1 Supporting NHS Test and Trace

Objective: To support NHS Test and Trace

To make sure individuals who are advised to stay at home under existing government guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance> to stop infection spreading do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19, and those who live in their household or are in their support bubble and those who are advised to self-isolate as part of the government's test and trace service. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/>

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Enabling workers to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate. By law, from 28 September employers must not knowingly require or encourage someone who is being required to self-isolate to come to work.
2. See current guidance for [employees](#) and [employers](#) relating to statutory sick pay due to COVID-19.
3. Ensuring any workers who have symptoms of COVID-19-a high temperature, new and persistent cough or anosmia-however mild, should self-isolate for at least 10 days from when the symptoms started. Workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 should self-isolate for at least 10 days starting from the day the test was taken. Where a worker has tested positive while not experiencing symptoms but develops symptoms during the isolation period, they should restart the 10-day isolation period from the day the symptoms developed. This only applies to those who begin their isolation on or after 30 July.
4. See [current guidance for people who have symptoms and those who live with others who have symptoms](#).
5. Ensuring any workers who have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace follows the requirement to self-isolate. See [current guidance for those who have been in contact with, but do not live with, a person who has tested positive for COVID-19](#).

2.2 Protecting people who are at higher risk

Objective: To support those who are at higher risk of infection and/or an adverse outcome if infected.

The Public Health England report Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19 shows that some groups of people may be at more risk of being infected and/or an adverse outcome if infected. Read progress update reports.

The higher-risk groups include those who:

- are older males
- have a high body mass index (BMI)
- have health conditions such as diabetes
- are from some Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds

You should consider this in your risk assessment.

Tiering and the clinically extremely vulnerable

Advice to clinically extremely vulnerable individuals on attending work differs depending on which Tier their local area is in.

In Tier 1: Medium alert and Tier 2: High alert, clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are advised to work from home where possible but can still attend work if they cannot work from home.

In Tier 3: Very High alert, clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are strongly advised to work from home, but can still attend work if they cannot work from home. Employers should consider whether clinically extremely vulnerable individuals can take on an alternative role or change their working patterns temporarily to avoid travelling during busy periods.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Providing support for workers around mental health and wellbeing. This could include advice or telephone support.
- See current guidance for advice on who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable groups.

2.3 Equality in the workplace

Objective: To make sure that nobody is discriminated against.

In applying this guidance, employers should be mindful of the particular needs of different groups of workers or individuals.

It is breaking the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic such as age, sex, disability, race or ethnicity.

Employers also have particular responsibilities towards disabled workers and those who are new or expectant mothers.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Understanding and taking into account the particular circumstances of those with protected characteristics.
2. Involving and communicating appropriately with workers whose protected characteristics might either expose them to a different degree of risk, or might make any measures you are considering implementing inappropriate or challenging for them.
3. Considering whether you need to put in place any particular measures or adjustments to take account of your duties under the equalities legislation.
4. Making reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage, and assessing the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.

5. Making sure that the steps you 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.

2.4 Ventilation

Objective: To use ventilation to mitigate the transmission risk of COVID-19. Ventilation can be used as a control measure to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Tiny airborne particles can travel further than droplets and in poorly ventilated spaces this can lead to viral particles spreading between people. Good ventilation can reduce this risk.

Good ventilation can be different for areas depending on how many people are in there, how the space is being used, and the particular layout of the area. Therefore you will need to consider the particular ventilation requirements in the area you are considering.

Read advice on air conditioning and ventilation from HSE.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm>

Social distancing for workers

In this section

- 3.1 Coming to work and leaving work
- 3.2 Moving around buildings and worksites
- 3.3 Workplaces and workstations
- 3.4 Meetings
- 3.5 Common areas
- 3.6 Accidents, security and other incidents

Objective: Ensuring workers maintain social distancing guidelines (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable), wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when travelling between sites.

You must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity can be redesigned to maintain a 2m distance or 1m with risk mitigations where 2m is not viable.

Mitigating actions include:

- further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- 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' (so each person works with only a few others)

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, even through redesigning a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that 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 staff.

Social distancing applies to all parts of a business, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing and workers should be specifically reminded.

Businesses that require additional space for essential work can hire function and event space at permitted venues. Businesses should not hire function or event space for non-essential purposes. Read further information on hiring function and event space.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/the-visitor-economy>

3.1 Coming to work and leaving work

Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible, on arrival and departure and to ensure handwashing upon arrival.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. 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.
2. Providing additional parking or facilities such as bike racks to help people walk, run, or cycle to work where possible.
3. Limiting passengers in corporate vehicles, for example, work minibuses. This could include leaving seats empty.
4. Reducing congestion, for example, by having more entry points to the workplace.
5. Providing more storage for workers for clothes and bags.
6. Using markings and introducing one-way flow at entry and exit points.
7. Providing handwashing facilities (or hand sanitiser where not possible), at entry and exit points and not using touch-based security devices such as keypads where possible.
8. Maintaining use of security access devices, such as keypads or passes, and adjusting processes at entry/exit points to reduce risk of transmission. For example, cleaning pass readers regularly and asking staff to hold their passes next to pass readers rather than touching them.
9. See government guidance on travelling to and from work. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers)

3.2 Moving around buildings and worksites

Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible while people travel through the workplace.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Reducing movement by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios or telephones or other electronic devices, where permitted, and cleaning them between use.
2. Restricting access between different areas of a building or site.
3. Reducing job and location rotation.
4. Introducing more one-way flow through buildings.
5. Reducing maximum occupancy for lifts, providing hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts and encouraging use of stairs wherever possible.
6. Making sure that people with disabilities are able to access lifts.
7. Managing use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing.



Example lift practices.

3.3 Workplaces and workstations

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.

If it is not possible to ensure working areas comply with social distancing guidelines (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable) then businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so take all mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Review layouts and processes to allow people to work further apart from each other.
2. Using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people comply with social distancing (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).
3. Only 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.
4. Only where it is not possible to move workstations further apart, using screens to separate people from each other.
5. Managing occupancy levels to enable social distancing.
6. Avoiding use of hot desks and spaces and, where not possible, for example, call centres or training facilities, cleaning and sanitising workstations between different occupants including shared equipment.

3.4 Meetings

Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
2. Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend meetings and should maintain social distancing (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable).
3. Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens, documents and other objects.
4. Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.
5. Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
6. For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

3.5 Common areas

Objective: To maintain social distancing while using common areas.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Working collaboratively with landlords and other tenants in multi-tenant sites/buildings to ensure consistency across common areas, for example, receptions, staircases.
2. Staggering break times to reduce pressure on the staff break rooms or places to eat and ensuring social distancing is maintained in staff break rooms.
3. Using safe outside areas for breaks.
4. Creating additional space by using other parts of the workplace or building that have been freed up by remote working.
5. Installing screens to protect staff in receptions or similar areas.
6. Providing packaged meals or similar to avoid fully opening staff canteens.
7. Encouraging workers to bring their own food.
8. Reconfiguring seating and tables to maintain spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.
9. Encouraging staff to remain on-site and, when not possible, maintaining social distancing while off-site.
10. Regulating use of locker rooms, changing areas and other facility areas to reduce concurrent usage.
11. Encouraging storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage spaces, for example, lockers and during shifts.

3.6 Accidents, security and other incidents

Objective: To prioritise safety during incidents.

In an emergency, for example, an accident, provision of first aid, fire or break-in, people do not have to comply with social distancing guidelines 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.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Reviewing your incident and emergency procedures to ensure they reflect the social distancing principles as far as possible.
2. Considering the security implications of any changes you intend to make to your operations and practices in response to COVID-19, as any revisions may present new or altered security risks which may need mitigations.
3. For organisations who conduct physical searches of people, considering how to ensure safety of those conducting searches while maintaining security standards.
4. Following [government guidance on managing security risks](#).

Managing your customers, visitors and contractors

In this section

4.1 Manage contacts

4.2 Providing and explaining available guidance

4.1 Manage contacts

Objective: To minimise the number of unnecessary visits to offices.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Encouraging visits via remote connection/working where this is an option.
2. Limiting the number of visitors at any one time.
3. Limiting visitor times to a specific time window and restricting access to required visitors only.
4. Determining if schedules for essential services and contractor visits can be revised to reduce interaction and overlap between people, for example, carrying out services at night.
5. Maintaining a record of all visitors, if this is practical.
6. Encouraging visitors to use hand sanitiser or handwashing facilities as they enter the premises.
7. Revising visitor arrangements to ensure social distancing and hygiene, for example, where someone physically signs in with the same pen in receptions.

4.2 Providing and explaining available guidance

Objective: To make sure people understand what they need to do to maintain safety.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Providing clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival, for example, signage or visual aids and before arrival, for example, by phone, on the website or by email. Consider the particular needs of those with protected characteristics, such as those who are hearing or visually impaired.
2. Establishing host responsibilities relating to COVID-19 and providing any necessary training for people who act as hosts for visitors.
3. Reviewing entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors to minimise contact with other people.
4. Coordinating and working collaboratively with landlords and other tenants in multi-tenant sites, for example, shared working spaces.
5. Informing visitors that they should be prepared to remove face coverings if asked to do so by police officers and staff for the purposes of identification.
6. Ensuring information provided to visitors, such as advice on the location or size of queues, does not compromise their safety.

Cleaning the workplace

In this section

- 5.1 Before reopening
- 5.2 Keeping the workplace clean
- 5.3 Hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets
- 5.4 Changing rooms and showers
- 5.5 Handling goods, merchandise and other materials, and onsite vehicles

5.1 Before reopening

Objective: To make sure that any site or location 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

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Checking whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.
2. Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings or you are unsure, advice can be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.

5.2 Keeping the workplace clean

Objective: To keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses, using your usual cleaning products.
2. Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly including door handles and keyboards, and making sure there are adequate disposal arrangements for cleaning products.
3. Clearing workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift.
4. Limiting or restricting use of high-touch items and equipment, for example, printers or whiteboards.
5. If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then you should refer to the [specific guidance](#).
6. Providing extra non recycling bins for workers and visitors to dispose of single use face coverings and PPE. You should refer to [guidance for information on how to dispose of personal or business waste](#), including face coverings and PPE.

5.3 Hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets

Objective: To help everyone keep good hygiene through the working day.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Using 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.
2. Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain personal hygiene standards.
3. Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.
4. Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
5. Enhancing cleaning for busy areas.
6. Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.
7. Providing hand drying facilities – paper towels, continuous roller towels or electrical driers.
8. Keeping the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open where appropriate.

5.4 Changing rooms and showers

Objective: To minimise the risk of transmission in changing rooms and showers.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Where shower and changing facilities are required, setting clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean and clear of personal items and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
2. Introducing enhanced cleaning of all facilities regularly during the day and at the end of the day.

5.5 Handling goods, merchandise and other materials, and onsite vehicles

Objective: To reduce transmission through contact with objects that come into the workplace and vehicles at the worksite.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Cleaning procedures for goods and merchandise entering the site.
2. Cleaning procedures for vehicles.
3. Introducing greater handwashing and handwashing facilities for workers handling goods and merchandise and providing hand sanitiser where this is not practical.
4. Regular cleaning of vehicles that workers may take home.
5. Restricting non-business deliveries, for example, personal deliveries to workers.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) and face coverings**6.1 Face coverings**

By law businesses must remind people to wear face coverings where they are required, for instance using signage or verbal reminder. If necessary, police can issue fines to members of the public for non-compliance. Businesses will not be required to provide face coverings for their customers.

Please be mindful that the wearing of a face covering may inhibit communication with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

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.

Face coverings are mandatory on public transport and in a number of indoor premises.

Face coverings are not mandatory in offices, although they are required for customers and staff in some businesses that are customer facing, such as:

- banks
- building societies
- post offices
- premises providing professional, legal or financial services
- estate agents
- auction houses

Staff in these settings must wear face coverings when in areas that are open to the public and where they are likely to come within close contact of a member of the public, unless they have an exemption. A close contact is someone:

- you have had face to face contact (within 1 metre for any length of time) or skin to skin contact with or someone you coughed on
- or, has been within 1 metre of you for 1 minute or longer
- or, has been within 2 metres of you on one or more occasions during a single day for at least 15 minutes in total (when all times added up together)
- has travelled with you in a small vehicle

People are also encouraged to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces where there are people they do not normally meet. If you choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and before and after taking them off.

[Find further detail on when and where to wear face coverings.](#)

Some people don't have to wear a face covering including for [health, age or equality reasons](#).

Employers should support their workers in using face coverings safely if they choose to wear one. This means telling workers:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and before 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've 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's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste
- practise social distancing wherever possible

Please be mindful that the wearing of a face covering may inhibit communication with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

You can make face-coverings at home. [Find guidance on how to wear and make a face-covering on GOV.UK.](#)

Workforce management

In this section

- 7.1 Shift patterns and outbreaks
- 7.2 Work-related travel
- 7.3 Communications and training
- 7.4 Staff canteens and restaurants

7.1 Shift patterns and outbreaks

7.1.1 Shift patterns and working groups

Objective: To change the way work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each employee has.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. 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.
2. Identifying areas where people directly pass things to each other, for example office supplies, and finding ways to remove direct contact, such as using drop-off points or transfer zones.
3. You should assist the Test and Trace service by keeping a temporary record of your staff shift patterns for 21 days and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed. This could help contain clusters or outbreaks. [Check what data you need to collect and how it should be managed.](#)

7.1.2 Outbreaks in the workplace

Objective: To provide guidance in an event of a COVID-19 outbreak in the workplace.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. As part of your risk assessment, you should ensure you have an up to date plan in case there is a COVID-19 outbreak. This plan should nominate a single point of contact (SPOC) where possible who should lead on contacting local Public Health teams.
2. If there are more than 5 cases of COVID-19 associated with your workplace in 14 days, you should contact your local PHE health protection team to report the suspected outbreak. [Find your local PHE health protection team.](#)
3. If the local PHE health protection team declares an outbreak, you will be asked to record details of symptomatic staff and assist with identifying contacts. You should therefore ensure all employment records are up to date. You will be provided with information about the outbreak management process, which will help you to implement control measures, assist with communications to staff, and reinforce prevention messages.

7.2 Work-related travel**7.2.1 Cars, accommodation and visits**

Objective: To avoid unnecessary work travel and keep people safe when they do need to travel between locations.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Walking or cycling where possible. When not possible, you can use public transport or drive. You must wear a face covering when using public transport.
2. Minimising the number of people outside your household, or [support bubble](#), travelling together in any one vehicle, using fixed travel partners, increasing ventilation when possible and avoiding sitting face-to-face..
3. Cleaning shared vehicles between shifts or on handover.
4. Where workers are required to stay away from their home, centrally logging the stay and making sure any overnight accommodation meets social distancing guidelines.

7.2.2 Deliveries to other sites

Objective: To help workers delivering to other sites such as branches, or suppliers' or customers' premises to maintain social distancing and hygiene practices.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Putting in place procedures to minimise person-to-person contact during deliveries to other sites.
2. Maintaining consistent pairing where 2-person deliveries are required.
3. Minimising contact during payments and exchange of documentation, for example, by using electronic payment methods and electronically signed and exchanged documents.

7.3 Communications and training**7.3.1 Returning to Work**

Objective: To make sure all workers understand COVID-19 related safety procedures.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Providing clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.
2. Engaging with workers through existing communication routes and worker representatives to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.
3. Developing communication and training materials for workers prior to returning to site, especially around new procedures for arrival at work.

7.3.2 Ongoing communications and signage

Objective: To make sure all workers are kept up to date with how safety measures are being implemented or updated.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Ongoing engagement with workers (including through trades unions or employee representative groups) to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments.
2. 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 \(COVID-19\)](#).
3. Using simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language and those with protected characteristics such as visual impairments.
4. Using visual communications, for example whiteboards or signage, to explain changes to schedules or breakdowns without the need for face-to-face communications.
5. Communicating approaches and operational procedures to suppliers, customers or trade bodies to help their adoption and to share experience.

7.4 Staff canteens and restaurants

Objective: To keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Hand washing facilities or hand sanitiser must be available at the entrance to canteens and their use should be supervised.
2. Break times should be staggered to ensure no overcrowding, so that staff can adhere to social distancing rules.
3. Queue points on the floor should be clearly marked to ensure social distancing is possible.

4. There should not be any sharing of food and drink by staff who do not share a household.
5. Minimise self-serving options for food and drink. As far as possible, food served and/or displayed should be individually wrapped to minimise contact and avoid spread of infection.
6. Increase the frequency of cleaning, especially hand touch surfaces, such as table tops, drinks levers, keypads, grab-rails, elevator buttons, light switches, door handles, and any surface or item which is designed to be, or has a high likelihood of being touched.
7. Plates, cutlery and glasses should be handwashed in hot soapy water or washed with detergent in a dishwasher rated for disinfection.
8. Canteens and restaurants should be thoroughly cleaned after each group of staff use them.
9. All doors and windows should remain open wherever possible to allow greater ventilation and prevent touching of window handles (subject to appropriate fly screening).
10. A system to reduce the use of cash for food or to facilitate the exclusive use of debit cards and contactless payment should be considered.
11. Where possible, cohorts of workers should be matched to zoned canteen areas (see below for description of cohort working).
12. Workplace canteens providing on-site (sit-in) services must now:

- ask at least one member of every party of customers or visitors (up to 6 people) to provide their name and contact details
- keep a record of all staff working on their premises and shift times on a given day and their contact details
- Keep these records of customers, visitors and staff for 21 days and make them available when requested by NHS Test and Trace or local public health officials to help contain clusters or outbreaks
- display an official NHS QR code poster so that customers and visitors can ‘check in’ using this option as an alternative to providing their contact details
- adhere to General Data Protection Regulations

You should collect this information in a way that is manageable for your establishment. If the information cannot be collected in advance, it should be collected at the point that visitors enter the premises. [Read further information about these requirements.](#)

Inbound and outbound goods

Objective: To maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission when goods enter and leave the site.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Revising pick-up and drop-off collection points, procedures, signage and markings.
2. Minimising unnecessary contact at gatehouse security, yard and warehouse. For example, non-contact deliveries where the nature of the product allows for use of electronic pre-booking.
3. Considering methods to reduce frequency of deliveries, for example by ordering larger quantities less often.
4. Where possible and safe, having single workers load or unload vehicles.
5. Where possible, using the same pairs of people for loads where more than one is needed.
6. Enabling drivers to access welfare facilities when required, consistent with other guidance.

7. Encouraging drivers to stay in their vehicles where this does not compromise their safety and existing safe working practice, such as preventing drive-aways.

Where to obtain further guidance

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): what you need to do](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for employers and businesses](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for employees](#)

Find advice and support from your [business representative organisation or trade association](#).

Download the 'Staying COVID-19 Secure' notice

- [Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020](#)
Poster to display in your workplace to show you have followed the guidance.