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Part of
Support for businesses and self-employed people during coronavirus (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon/businesses-and-self-employed-people)

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance from Step 4

From:
> Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy) and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-digital-culture-media-sport)

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> 14 July 2021, see all updates (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/updates)

1. Contents (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19)

Offices, factories and labs

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, factories, plants, warehouses, labs and research facilities and similar indoor environments.

Applies to: England (see guidance for Wales (https://gov.wales/keep-wales-safe-work), Scotland (https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-returning-to-work/), and Northern Ireland (https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/node/23151))

From Step 4 the government is no longer instructing people to work from home if they can, so employers can start to plan a return to workplaces.

During this period of high prevalence, the government expects and recommends a gradual return over the summer.

You should discuss a return to the workplace with workers, and trade unions to make working arrangements that meet both business and individual needs.

Step 4 – from 19 July

This guidance applies from Step 4.

A new COVID-19 variant is spreading in some parts of England. There may be additional advice for your area. Find out what you need to do (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#if-youre-in-an-area-where-the-new-covid-19-variant-known-as-delta-is-spreading).

This guide was published on 14 July 2021.

Show all sections

Priority actions to take - what businesses should do to help protect staff and customers, Hide this section

Six steps to protect yourself, your staff and your customers during coronavirus.

1. Complete a health and safety risk assessment that includes the risk from COVID-19

Complete a risk assessment, considering the measures set out in this guidance. Also consider reasonable adjustments needed for staff and customers with disabilities. Share it with all your staff. Keep it updated.. Find out how to do a risk assessment (https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm).

2. Provide adequate ventilation

You should make sure there is a supply of fresh air to indoor spaces where there are people present. This can be natural ventilation through opening windows, doors and vents, mechanical ventilation using fans and ducts, or a combination of both. You should identify any poorly ventilated spaces in your premises and take steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas. In some places, a CO_2 monitor can help identify if the space is poorly ventilated. Read the advice on air conditioning and ventilation on the HSE website (https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm).

3. Clean more often

It's especially important to clean surfaces that people touch a lot. You should ask your staff and your customers to use hand sanitiser and to clean their hands frequently.

4. Turn away people with COVID-19 symptoms

Staff members or customers should self-isolate if they or someone in their household has a persistent cough, a high temperature or has lost their sense of taste or smell. They must also self-isolate if they or a close contact has had a positive COVID-19 result, or if they have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. If you know that a worker is self-isolating, you must not allow them to come to work. It's an offence to do this.

5. Enable people to check in at your venue

You're no longer legally required to collect customer contact details, but doing so will support NHS Test and Trace to contact those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 so that they can book a test. You can enable people to check in to your venue by by displaying an NHS QR code poster (https://www.gov.uk/create-coronavirus-qr-poster). You do not have to ask people to check in or turn people away if they refuse. If you choose to display a QR code, you should also have a system in place to record contact details for people who want to check in but do not have the app.

6. Communicate and train

Keep all your workers, contractors and visitors up-to-date on how you're using and updating safety measures.

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

| Introduction, Show this section |

This guide will help you understand how to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in the workplace.

Who this guide is for

This document is one of a set of documents about how to work safely in different types of workplace.

This one is designed to be relevant for people who work in or run factories, plants, warehouses, labs, research facilities, offices, contact centres, or operations rooms.

Factories, plants and warehouses include industrial environments such as:

- manufacturing and chemical plants
- food and other large processing plants
- warehouses
- distribution centres
- port operations

Labs include indoor research environments such as:

- engineering centres
- clean rooms
- prototyping centres
- wet labs
- wind tunnels
- computer labs
- simulators
- material development labs
- specialist testing rooms

Labs and research facilities require on site collaboration between people, often in close proximity. Flexibility of both shifts and floor layouts may be limited and there is a high use of multiple use items such as testing machines and apparatus, not all of which can be washed down.

We expect to update this document over time.

| How to use this guidance, Show this section |

This document gives you guidance on how to open workplaces safely while reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19. It provides practical considerations of how to apply this in the workplace.

You will need to translate this into the specific actions you need to take. These will depend on the nature of your business, including the size and type of business, how it's organised, operated, managed and regulated. You will also need to monitor these measures to make sure they continue to protect customers and workers.

This guidance does not supersede your existing legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment and equalities duties. It's important that as a business or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations. This includes those relating to equality between individuals with different protected characteristics. This contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations.

Remember this guidance does not just cover your employees. You must also take into account customers, agency workers, contractors and other people.

To help you decide which actions to take, you must carry out an appropriate assessment. This risk assessment must be done in consultation with unions or workers. You may also want to consult industry representatives.

> 1. Thinking about risk, Show this section

In this section

- 1.1 Overview
- 1.2 Managing risk
- 1.3 Sharing your risk assessment results

Objective: That all employers carry out a risk assessment that includes the risk of COVID-19.

As an employer, you must by law protect workers and others from risks to their health and safety. This includes risks from COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a workplace hazard. You must manage it 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
- 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.

1.1 Overview

Your risk assessment will help you decide if you have done everything you need to. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has tools to support you (https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm).

You should also consider the security implications of any decisions and control measures you intend to put in place. Any revisions could present new or altered security risks you may need to mitigate.

You do not have to write anything down as part of your risk assessment if you:

- have fewer than 5 workers
- are self-employed

However, you may still find it useful to do so.

Consult your workers

As an employer, you have a legal duty to consult workers 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.

You may do this by consulting with any recognised trade union health and safety representatives.

If you do not have any, you can consult 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 you still cannot do this, see below for other steps you can take.

Enforcement

Enforcing authorities identify employers who do not take action to comply with the relevant law and guidance to control public health risks. When they do, they can take a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. The HSE and your local authority are examples of enforcing authorities.

When they identify serious breaches, enforcing authorities can do a number of things. They include:

- sending you a letter
- serving you with an improvement or prohibition notice
- bringing a prosecution against you, in cases where they identify significant breaches

When an enforcing authority issues you with any advice or notices, you should respond rapidly and within their timescales.

The vast majority of employers are responsible. They will work 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.

From Step 4, Local Authorities will continue to have the power to place public health restrictions on businesses in cases where a serious and imminent threat to public health is identified.

How to raise a concern:

If you're an employee, you can contact:

- your employee representative
- your trade union if you have one

You can also contact HSE at:

HSE COVID-19 enquiries
Telephone: 0300 790 6787 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5pm)
Online: working safely enquiry form (https://hsegov.microsoftcrmportals.com/workingsafelyenquiries/)

1.2 Managing risk

Objective: To reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures.

As an employer, you have a duty to take reasonably practical steps to manage risks in the workplace.

You must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace to protect everybody's health and safety.

Consider reasonable adjustments for workers with disabilities, including hidden disabilities that are not immediately obvious.

How COVID-19 is spread

The main way of spreading COVID-19 is through close contact with an infected person. When someone with COVID-19 breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes, they release particles (droplets and aerosols) containing the virus that causes COVID-19. These particles can be breathed in by another person.

Surfaces and belongings can also be contaminated with COVID-19, when people who are infected cough or sneeze near them or if they touch them.

Managing risk and completing your risk assessment

To carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, you should consider the different ways the virus can spread and put in place measures to reduce the risk of each of these different ways.

You should use the guidance to consider the risk within your business and decide the appropriate measures to adopt.

This guidance suggests ways to reduce the risk of each of the different ways the virus can spread. You may also identify other measures to reduce risk when carrying out your risk assessment. Some of the measures may help reduce the risk of more than one of the different ways the virus can spread.

To reduce the risk of the virus spreading through aerosols, consider:

1. Providing adequate ventilation:

   – through doors, windows and vents
   – by mechanical ventilation using fans and ducts
   – through a combination of both

   This is because fresh air helps to dilute the virus in occupied spaces. If you have mechanical ventilation, you should maximise the fresh air your system draws in and avoid systems that only recirculate air and do not draw in a supply of fresh air.
2. Identifying any poorly ventilated spaces and taking steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas. A CO2 monitor could help you assess whether a space is poorly ventilated. If you can't improve ventilation in poorly ventilated spaces, minimise use of these spaces.
3. Encouraging use of outside space where practical. Identifying any areas of congestion in your venue and considering if any reasonable steps could be taken to avoid this.

To reduce the risk of the virus spreading through droplets, consider:

1. Putting in place measures to reduce contact between people, particularly between customers and workers. Where practical, measures could include:

– reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' or 'cohorting' (so each person works with only a few others)
– using screens or barriers to separate people from each other, or using back-to-back or side-to-side working, instead of face-to-face

Screens are only likely to be beneficial if placed between people who will come into close proximity with each other.
2. Encouraging the use of face coverings by workers or customers in enclosed and crowded spaces.

To reduce the risk of the virus spreading through contaminated surfaces, consider:

1. Advising customers and workers to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser frequently. This is particularly important before and after touching shared objects or surfaces that other people touch regularly.
2. Maintaining regular cleaning of surfaces, particularly surfaces that people touch regularly.

You should also make sure that workers and customers who feel unwell stay at home and do not attend the venue. By law, businesses must not allow a self-isolating worker to come to work.

If your building has been unoccupied for a period during any lockdowns, you should read the HSE advice on legionella risks (https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm).

You should consider the recommendations in the rest of this document as you carry out your risk assessment. You could also consider any advice that has been produced specifically for your sector, for example by trade associations or trades unions.

If you're currently operating, you will already have carried out a risk assessment. Use this document to identify any adjustments or further improvements you should make.

You must review the measures you have put in place to make sure they're still working or if there are changes in the workplace that could lead to new risks.

1.3 Sharing your risk assessment results

You should share your risk assessment results with your workforce.

If possible, consider publishing the results on your website. We expect all employers with over 50 workers to do so.

All businesses should show their workers and visitors they have:

- properly assessed their risk
- taken appropriate measures to mitigate this

2. Who should go to work, Show this section

In this section

- 2.1 Protecting people who are at higher risk
- 2.2 People who need to self isolate
- 2.3 Equality in the workplace

Objective: To support a safe return to the workplace. To help businesses engage with their workers to find an approach that best suits their needs.

The government is no longer instructing people to work from home if they can, so employers can start to plan a return to workplaces. During this period of high prevalence, the government expects and recommends a gradual return over the summer. You should discuss a return to the workplace with workers, and trade unions to make working arrangements that meet both business and individual needs.

You should remain responsive to workers' needs, particularly during this period when not every adult will have been offered 2 vaccine doses. You should adopt practices that help to reduce the risks to individuals in the workplace.

We recognise that ways of working have shifted through the pandemic, and many employers are looking at future hybrid models which include an element of home working. Whatever model you choose to follow for the longer term, you should discuss it with those who might be affected and also with employee representatives.

You should discuss the timing and, where applicable, phasing of any return with workers. To help them to feel safe returning to work consult with them on any health and safety measures you have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

When you consider that workers should come into your place of work, you should:

- reflect this in your workplace risk assessment
- take action to manage the risk of COVID-19 spreading, in line with this guidance

2.1 Protecting people who are at higher risk

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

There are some groups who are at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. See guidance on who is at higher risk (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/) and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19).

You should give extra consideration to people at higher risk and to workers facing mental and physical health difficulties. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable are no longer advised to shield. You should continue to support these workers by discussing with them their individual needs and supporting them in taking any additional precautions advised by their clinicians.

Consider providing support for workers around mental health and wellbeing. This could include advice or telephone support.

2.2 People who need to self isolate

Objective: To stop people physically coming to work, when government guidance advises them to stay at home.

This includes people who:

- have COVID-19 symptoms
- live in a household with someone who has symptoms

- are required to self-isolate as part of NHS Test and Trace (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/)

You will usually need to:

1. Enable workers to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate. It's illegal to knowingly require or encourage someone who is being required to self-isolate to come to work.
2. See current guidance related to statutory sick pay due to COVID-19 for:

   – employees (https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay)
   – employers (https://www.gov.uk/employers-sick-pay)
3. Ensure any workers who have symptoms of COVID-19 self-isolate immediately and continue for the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, their symptoms started at any time on the 15th of the month their isolation period ends at 11:59pm on the 25th.These symptoms are:

   – a high temperature
   – a new, continuous cough
   – a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste

   Workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 must self-isolate immediately and continue for the next 10 full days.

   Workers that test positive but have no symptoms must also self-isolate in this way. Sometimes workers develop symptoms during their isolation period. In these cases, they must restart their 10-day self-isolation period from the day after they develop symptoms. See the guidance for people who live in households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infections (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection).

   Self-isolating workers who have tested negative for COVID-19 may be able to return to work. Some exceptions apply. See the guidance on when you need to keep self-isolating (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/test-results/negative-test-result/).
4. Ensure any workers who are contacts of individuals who test positive for COVID-19 self-isolate for a period of 10 days. Contacts must self-isolate immediately and continue for the next 10 full days.
5. Ensure any workers who have been informed by NHS Test and Trace that they're a close contact of a person who has had a positive test result for COVID-19 follow the requirement to self-isolate. See the guidance for those who have been in contact with, but do not live with, a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person).

2.3 Equality in the workplace

Objective: To make sure that nobody is discriminated against.

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

It's against the law to discriminate against anyone because of their age, sex, disability, race or other 'protected characteristic'.

Read the government guidance on discrimination (https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights)

As an employer, you have particular responsibilities towards:

- disabled workers
- workers who are new mothers or pregnant - see the COVID-19 advice for pregnant employees

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You will usually need to:

1. Understand and take into account the particular circumstances of those with different protected characteristics.
2. Involve and communicate appropriately with workers whose protected characteristics might either:

   – expose them to a different degree of risk
   – make any steps you're thinking about inappropriate or challenging for them
3. Consider if you need to put in place any particular measures or adjustments to take account of your duties under equalities legislation.
4. Make reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage.
5. Assess the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.
6. Make sure any steps you take do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others. For example, those with caring responsibilities or religious commitments.

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3. Ventilation, Show this section

In this section

- 3.1 Identifying poorly ventilated spaces
- 3.2 Using carbon dioxide (CO_2) monitors

Objective: To use ventilation to mitigate the risk of aerosol spread of COVID-19 in enclosed spaces.

Good ventilation brings fresh or cleaned air into indoor spaces. The more fresh air that is brought inside, the more diluted any airborne virus will become. In poorly ventilated spaces, residual virus can remain in the air after an infected person has left and increase the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

You should maximise the supply of fresh air in your premises. You can do this through:

- fully or partially opening windows, air vents and doors to improve natural ventilation
- if you use mechanical ventilation, ensuring that your systems are set to maximise fresh air and minimise air recirculation. Maximising the amount of fresh air your system draws in or ensuring additional fresh air will help avoid COVID-19 spreading
- identifying any poorly ventilated spaces as part of your risk assessment, and taking steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas (see below for further details)

You can also encourage the use of outside space where practical, in particular for higher risk activity such as exercise or when people are singing or raising their voices.

3.1 Identifying poorly ventilated spaces

The priority for your risk assessment is to identify areas of your workplace that are usually occupied, and poorly ventilated.

You should prioritise these areas for improvement to reduce the risk of aerosol transmission.

HSE provides guidance on how to identify a poorly ventilated space. It also explains steps you can take to improve ventilation in these spaces. Read the advice on air conditioning and ventilation. (https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm)

If you can't improve ventilation in poorly ventilated spaces, you should consider whether it's safer to restrict the time spent in these spaces and the number of people that access these spaces or stop using them.

3.2 Using carbon dioxide (CO_2) monitors

People exhale carbon dioxide (CO_2) when they breathe out. If there is a build-up of CO_2 in an area it can indicate that ventilation needs improving.

Although CO_2 levels are not a direct measure of possible exposure to COVID-19, checking levels using a monitor can help you identify poorly ventilated areas. Read HSE advice on how to use a CO_2 monitor (https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/identifying-poorly-ventilated-areas.htm).

How the measurements can help you take action

CO_2 measurements should be used as a broad guide to ventilation within a space rather than treating them as safe thresholds.

Outdoor levels are around 400 parts per million (ppm) and indoors a consistent CO_2 value less than 800ppm is likely to indicate that a space is well ventilated.

A CO_2 concentration of above 1500ppm in a space is an indicator of poor ventilation. You should take action to improve ventilation where CO_2 readings are consistently higher than 1500ppm.

Where there is continuous talking or singing, or high levels of physical activity (such as dancing, playing sport or exercising), providing ventilation sufficient to keep CO_2 levels below 800ppm is recommended.

Where CO_2 monitors can help

CO_2 monitors can be used to check ventilation in a wide range of settings.

In large areas, multiple sensors may be required to provide meaningful information.

There are some spaces where CO_2 monitors are less likely to provide useful readings. These are:

- areas occupied by people for short periods or for varying amounts of time
- areas where air cleaning units are in use. Filtration can remove contaminants like COVID-19 from the air but not remove CO_2

- small spaces like changing rooms, toilets or small meeting rooms
- spaces used by low numbers of people
- areas where CO_2 is produced as part of a work process

Read advice on the suitability of CO_2 monitoring in different types of space. (https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/identifying-poorly-ventilated-areas.htm) Where CO_2 monitors cannot be used, you should still provide adequate ventilation.

4. Reducing contact for workers, Show this section

In this section

- 4.1 Workplaces and workstations

Objective: Reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 by reducing the number of people workers come into contact with.

From Step 4, social distancing guidance no longer applies and there are no limits on social contact between people from different households. COVID-19 can still be spread through social contact. You can mitigate this risk by reducing the number of people your workers come into contact with.

Examples of ways to do this include:

- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' or 'cohorting' (so each person works with only a few others)
- reviewing layouts, using screens or barriers to separate people from each other, or using back-to-back or side-to-side working, instead of face-to-face (screens are only likely to be beneficial if placed between people who will come into close proximity with each)

You should take account of those with protected characteristics and discuss with disabled workers what reasonable adjustments can be made to the workplace so they can work safely.

4.1 Workplaces and workstations

Objective: To reduce contact between people when they're at their workplaces and workstations, if possible.

Workstations should be assigned to an individual if possible. Often this will not be possible, and if they need to be shared, there should be ways to clean them between each user.

5. Reducing risk for your customers, visitors and contractors, Show this section

In this section

- 5.1 Providing and explaining available guidance
- 5.2 Working in other people's homes

5.1 Providing and explaining available guidance

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

Consider:

1. Providing clear guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to people when they arrive. For example, by phone, on the website or by email or with on-site signage and visual aids. Consider the particular needs of those with protected characteristics, such as those who are hearing or visually impaired.
2. Establishing host responsibilities related to COVID-19. Provide any necessary training for people who act as hosts for visitors.
3. Reviewing entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors. Do this to minimise contact with other people.
4. Coordinating and cooperating with other occupiers, if you share facilities with other businesses. This includes landlords and other tenants.
5. Tell visitors they should be prepared to remove face coverings if asked to do so by police officers and staff for identification.
6. Ensuring the information you provide to visitors does not compromise their safety.

5.2 Working in other people's homes

Objective: To work safely in other people's homes

If you're going to someone else's home to work, for example to provide professional services, you should communicate with households before any visits to discuss how the work will be carried out to reduce risk for all parties.

You should not carry out work in households that are isolating because one or more family members has symptoms, unless you're remedying a direct risk to the safety of the household or the public.

When you're working in a household where somebody is clinically vulnerable, make prior arrangements to avoid any face-to-face contact. You should be particularly strict about handwashing, coughing and sneezing hygiene, such as covering your nose and mouth and disposing of single-use tissues.

Consider:

1. Asking households to leave all internal doors open, to minimise contact with door handles.
2. Identifying busy areas across the household where people travel to, from or through. For example, stairs and corridors. Minimise movement within these areas.
3. Taking breaks outside where possible.
4. Limiting the number of workers within a confined space.
5. Arranging methods of safely disposing of waste with the householder.
6. Allocating the same worker to the same household each time there is a visit where possible. For example, the same cleaner each time.

6. Cleaning the workplace, Show this section

In this section

- 6.1 Before reopening
- 6.2 Keeping the workplace clean
- 6.3 Hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets
- 6.4 Changing rooms and showers
- 6.5 Handling goods, merchandise and other materials, and onsite vehicles

6.1 Before reopening

Objective: To make sure any site or location that has been closed or partially operated is clean, and ready to restart.

Before you restart work, you should :

- assess all sites, or parts of sites, that have been closed
- review cleaning procedures and provide hand sanitiser

Consider:

1. Checking if you need to service or adjust ventilation systems.
2. Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment if they draw in a supply of fresh air. See the HSE guidance on ventilation and air conditioning for more information.
3. Positive pressure systems can operate as normal.
4. Restart and test specialist equipment which may have been unused for longer than usual.

6.2 Keeping the workplace clean

Objective: To keep the workplace clean and prevent the spread of COVID-19 from touching contaminated surfaces.

Consider:

1. Cleaning work areas and equipment between uses. Use your usual cleaning products.
2. Determining the required cleaning process for expensive equipment that cannot be washed down. Design protection around machines and equipment.
3. Frequently cleaning objects and surfaces that people touch regularly. This includes door handles and keyboards. Make sure there are adequate disposal arrangements for cleaning products.
4. Clearing workspaces and remove waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift.
5. If you're cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19, refer to the guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings).
6. Providing extra non recycling bins for workers and visitors to dispose of single use face coverings and PPE. You should refer to the guidance on how to dispose of personal or business waste, including face coverings and PPE (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-waste).

6.3 Hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets

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

Consider:

1. Using signs and posters to make people aware:

   – how to wash their hands well
   – that they should wash their hands frequently
   – that they should not touch their faces
   – they should cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into their arms if a tissue is not available
2. Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards.
3. Providing hand sanitiser in multiple accessible locations, as well as washrooms. Consider the needs of people with disabilities.
4. Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets. This is to ensure they're kept clean.
5. Enhancing cleaning for busy areas.
6. Taking special care when cleaning portable toilets.
7. Providing more waste facilities, and more frequent rubbish collection.
8. Providing hand drying facilities. Provide paper towels, continuous roller towels, or electrical dryers.
9. Keeping the facilities well ventilated. For example, by ensuring any mechanical ventilation work effectively and opening windows and vents where possible.

6.4 Changing rooms and showers

Objective: To reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in customer changing rooms.

The enclosed nature of changing rooms may result in increased risk of COVID-19 spreading.

You should manage them carefully to reduce that risk. Businesses should update their risk assessments for each premises where changing rooms are being used.

You should ensure adequate ventilation in changing rooms. For example, by ensuring mechanical ventilation works effectively and opening windows and vents where possible. Read the HSE advice on air conditioning and ventilation.

Consider:

1. Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms. This is to ensure they're kept clean and clear of personal items.
2. Enhancing cleaning of all facilities regularly during the day and at the end of the day. Use normal cleaning products. Pay attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider using disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces.

3. Keeping the facilities well ventilated. For example, by ensuring any mechanical ventilation works effectively and opening windows and vents where possible.
4. Making hand sanitiser available on entry and exit.

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

Objective: To reduce the spread of COVID-19 through contact with objects coming into the workplace, and vehicles at the worksite.

Consider:

1. Putting in place cleaning procedures for goods and merchandise entering the site.
2. Putting in place cleaning procedures for the parts of shared equipment people touch after each use. Consider all equipment, tools and vehicles. For example, pallet trucks and forklift trucks.
3. Encouraging people to wash their hands more often. Put in place more handwashing facilities for workers who handle goods and merchandise. Provide hand sanitiser where this is not practical.
4. Regularly cleaning vehicles workers may take home.

7. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and face coverings, Show this section

In this section

- 7.1 Personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff
- 7.2 Face coverings

7.1 Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Where you're already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should keep doing so. Any use of PPE should be determined by an assessment of risks in the workplace.

Do not encourage the precautionary use of PPE to protect against COVID-19 unless you're in a clinical setting or responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

Unless you're in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, your risk assessment should reflect the fact that PPE has an extremely limited role in providing extra protection.

If your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, you must provide this PPE free of charge to workers who need it. Any PPE provided must fit properly.

7.2 Face coverings

A face covering is something which safely covers your mouth and nose.

Face coverings are no longer required by law. However, the government expects and recommends that people continue to wear face coverings in crowded, enclosed spaces. Where worn correctly, this may reduce the risk of transmission to themselves and others. Be aware that workers may choose to wear a face covering in the workplace.

Consider encouraging the use of face coverings by workers (for example through signage), particularly in indoor areas where they may come into contact with people they do not normally meet. This is especially important in enclosed and crowded spaces.

When deciding whether you will ask workers or customers to wear a face covering, you would need to consider the reasonable adjustments needed for staff and clients with disabilities. You would also need to consider carefully how this fits with other obligations to workers and customers arising from the law on employment rights, health and safety and equality legislation.

Some people are not able to wear face coverings, and the reasons for this may not be visible to others. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances. Be aware that face coverings may make it harder to communicate with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

Advising your workers

If your workers choose to wear a face covering, you should support them in using face coverings safely. This means telling them:

- wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting on face coverings. They should also do this before and after removing them
- avoid touching their faces or face coverings. Otherwise they could contaminate them with germs from their hands
- change their face coverings if they become damp or they've touched them
- continue to wash their hands regularly
- change or wash their face coverings daily
- if the material is washable, to wash it in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, to dispose of it carefully in their usual waste

8. Workforce management, Show this section

In this section

- 8.1 Shift patterns and outbreaks
- 8.2 Work-related travel
- 8.3 Communications and training

8.1 Outbreaks in the workplace

Objective: To provide guidance if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in your workplace.

You will usually need to:

1. Make sure your risk assessment includes 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. The SPOC should lead on contacting local Public Health teams.
2. If you become aware of any positive cases of COVID-19 in your workplace, you should inform your Local Authority public health team (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council).
3. You should immediately identify any close workplace contacts and ask them to self-isolate. You should not wait for NHS Test and Trace. This prompt action will help reduce the risk of a workplace outbreak.
4. If your local PHE health protection team declares an outbreak, you will be asked to:

   – record details of symptomatic staff
   –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. This will help you to:

- implement control measures
- assist with communications to staff
- reinforce prevention messages

8.2 Work-related travel

Cars, accommodation and visits

Objective: To keep people safe when they travel between locations.

Consider:

1. Encouraging people travelling together in any one vehicle to, wherever possible:

   – use fixed travel partners
   – do not sit face-to-face
   – open windows
2. Providing adequate ventilation by switching on ventilation systems that draw in fresh air or opening windows. You could open windows only partially if it's cold. For more information on ventilation in vehicles read the guidance on ventilation and air conditioning (https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/ventilation-in-vehicles.htm).
3. Cleaning shared vehicles between shifts or on handover.

8.3 Communications and training

Returning to Work

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

Consider:

1. Communicating clearly, consistently and regularly. This will improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.
2. Engaging with workers through existing communication routes and worker representatives. Do this to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.
3. Developing communication and training materials for workers prior to returning to site. This is especially important for new procedures for arrival at work.

Ongoing communications and signage

Objective: To make sure all workers are updated on how you're implementing or updating safety measures.

You will usually need to:

1. Engage with workers on an ongoing basis. This includes dealing with trade unions, or employee representative groups. Do this to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments.
2. Be aware of and focus on mental health. Mental health is important, especially during times of uncertainty like today. The government has published guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19).
3. Use simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language. You should consider people:

    – who do not have English as their first language
    – who have protected characteristics, such as visual impairments
4. Use visual communications to explain changes to schedules or breakdowns. For example, whiteboards or signage. Do this to reduce the need for face-to-face communications.
5. Communicate approaches and operational procedures with suppliers, customers or trade bodies to help their adoption and to share experience.

9. Tests and vaccinations, Show this section

In this section

- 9.1 Accessing testing

It's important that you continue to put measures in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

This is important even if your workers have:

- received a recent negative test result
- had the vaccine (either 1 or 2 doses)
- natural immunity (based on proof of a positive PCR within the past 180 days)

Where you're providing testing on-site, you should ensure that workplace testing is carried out in a safe manner and in an appropriate setting where control measures are in place to manage the risk of COVID-19 transmission during the testing process.

These include:

- frequent cleaning
- good hygiene
- adequate ventilation

You should also ensure that an appropriate setting is available for individuals to wait in while their test is processed.

9.1 Accessing testing

Anyone with coronavirus symptoms can get a free NHS test (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test).

Employees who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 can access testing free of charge at home or at a test site. Read guidance on accessing tests if you do not have symptoms of COVID-19 (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/).

You can also pay an approved provider to provide tests or run a test site for your workplace. Read guidance on getting COVID-19 tests for your employees (https://www.gov.uk/get-workplace-coronavirus-tests).

Regular testing could help identify more positive cases of COVID-19 in the workplace. Read further guidance on your options for workplace testing (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-guidance-for-employers/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-guidance-for-employers-and-third-party-healthcare-providers), or call 119 for more information.

> Who has contributed to this guide, Show this section

This document has been prepared by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with input from firms, unions, industry bodies and the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. BEIS consulted with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Public health is devolved in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This guidance should be considered alongside local public health and safety requirements and legislation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. For advice to businesses in other parts of the UK please see guidance set by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Scottish government and the Welsh government.

If you have any feedback on this guidance, please email safer.workplaces@beis.gov.uk.

> Where to find more information, Show this section

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for employers and businesses
  (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support)
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for workers (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support)

Find advice and support from your business representative organisation or trade association (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-support-from-business-representative-organisations-and-trade-associations).

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