

## **Covid 19 – Safe Working Procedures**

### **1. Contents**

- Introduction
- Attending Work
  - General Arrangements
  - Protecting Persons at Higher Risk
  - People Who Need to Self-Isolate
  - Equality in the Workplace
- Social Distancing at Work
  - Coming to Work and Leaving Work
  - Accessing and Moving Around Building
  - Meetings
  - Common Areas
  - Accidents, Security and Other Incidents
- Managing Candidates, Visitors and Contractors
- Cleaning the Workplace
  - Before Re-opening
  - Keeping the Workplace Clean
  - Hygiene – Handwashing, Sanitation Facilities and Toilets
  - Handling Goods etc
- Personal Protective Equipment and Face Coverings
  - Face Coverings Statement
- Workforce Management
  - Returning to Work / Ongoing Communication

## 2. Introduction

- Work that is unable to be undertaken at home can continue / resume during the Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic. However, work must be undertaken in line with government guidelines wherever possible.
- This procedure is intended to set out the safety measures required to make our workplace “Covid-secure”. This means that all reasonably foreseeable risks in relation to Covid-19 have been identified and controlled, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Employees are asked to co-operate with the employer to ensure that safety standards are implemented and maintained.
- If an employee feels that standards are either inadequate or not being maintained to the point that it is potentially detrimental to their health, safety and welfare and the safety of others they are dutybound to raise any concerns with their employer so that suitable action can be agreed and implemented.
- This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Covid-19 risk assessment which contains additional control measures that should be followed.
- Both the procedure and risk assessment will be kept under continuous review.

## 3. Attending Work

### General Arrangements

- For the foreseeable future all employees that can work from home will continue to do so.
- Where this is not possible, for example where the employee’s role is essential for business and operational continuity or where home working is not viable, staff will be required to return to some or all their regular workplace roles.
- We will ensure that the minimum viable number of staff are working in our office at any one time to enable us to operate safely and effectively while at the same time managing Covid-19 risks.
- We will ensure that all persons remaining at home have all the equipment necessary to work safely and will take all steps necessary to keep them connected with the rest of the team, as required.
- Staff wellbeing while working from home is an important priority. If any employees are concerned for their welfare while working at home, they should contact their line manager in the first instance to discuss the issues.

### Protecting Persons at Higher Risk

- The objective is to protect clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.
- Any employee defined as “clinically extremely vulnerable” will not be required to work outside of their home. A full definition of clinically extremely vulnerable is provided at <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>

- Employees defined as “clinically vulnerable”, who are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions) are required to take extra care in observing social distancing. Where possible employees defined as clinically vulnerable should work from home. A full definition of clinically vulnerable is provided at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>
- If this is not possible employees defined as clinically vulnerable will be offered the option of the safest available roles within the workplace, enabling them to stay 2m away from others at all times.
- If a clinically vulnerable person is likely to spend time within 2m of others, we will undertake a specific assessment to analyse whether this involves an acceptable level of risk. We will also take into account specific duties to those with protected characteristics, including, for example, expectant mothers. Again, in these circumstances we will undertake a specific risk assessment and agree a suitable course of action that meets current regulations.
- Employees who live with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals can still come to work. In these circumstances we will implement additional safety arrangements as is reasonable to enable employees in this category to follow social distancing and hygiene guidance as closely as possible. We will assist in actively avoiding work situations where consistent standards of social distancing may not be possible.
- Any personnel that fall into any of the high-risk categories above should liaise with their line manager in the first instance so that further assessments can be carried out.

### **People Who Need to Self-Isolate**

- The objective is to make sure individuals who are advised to stay at home under existing government guidance do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 as well as those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms.
- If you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started.
- You may end your isolation after 7 days if you feel better and no longer have a temperature.
- If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature returns to normal. After 7 days you do not need to self-isolate if you just have a cough as a cough can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 7-day period starts from the day when you first became ill.
- If you live with others and you are the first in the household to have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), then you must stay at home for 7 days, but all other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.
- For anyone else in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14 day isolation period.
- Any employees unsure about when they might be safe to end self isolation and return to work should contact their line manager for further guidance.

### **Equality in the Workplace**

- The objective is to treat everyone in our workplace equally.

- We recognise our duties under current equality legislation in the workplace and will consult with employees, as required, to ensure that any measures being introduced in the workplace do not discriminate or disadvantage employees. This will involve communicating with affected employees and, where necessary, making reasonable adjustments to the workplace or working practices and undertaking risk assessments for new or expectant mothers, for example.

#### **4. Social Distancing at Work**

- The objective at all times is for all staff will be to maintain 2m social distancing wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when having meetings and attending viewing, etc. The procedures below must be followed at all times:

##### **Coming to Work and Leaving Work**

- The objective is to maintain social distancing wherever possible, on arrival and departure and to ensure handwashing upon arrival.
- Employees should travel to work on foot, by bike or in their own car. Avoid public transport where possible.
- When driving to work:
  - Carry hand sanitising solution in our vehicle.
  - Do not carry passengers unless they are from your own household.
  - Limit the time you spend at garages, petrol stations and motorway services. Try to keep your distance from other people and if possible, pay by contactless.
  - Wear disposable gloves provided when refueling your vehicle and dispose of when complete and sanitise your hands.
  - Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands when arriving and leaving.
- If employees are required to use public transport they should:
  - Avoid peak times.
  - Buy tickets in advance or through contactless payment.
  - Alight from buses that are becoming busy and walk the remaining distance to work, if possible.
  - Keep 2m apart from other passengers where possible. Where this is not possible you should keep the time you spend near others as short as possible and avoid physical contact. The risk of infection increases the closer you are to another person with the virus and the amount of time you spend in close contact: you are very unlikely to be infected from just walking past another person.
  - There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas. If you can, wear a face covering if you need to use public transport.
  - A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare and other workers as part of personal protective equipment. These

should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings, like those exposed to dust hazards.

- Wearing a face covering is optional and is not required by the law. If you choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and after taking them off.
- Be aware of the surfaces you touch. Be careful not to touch your face. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when coughing or sneezing.
- Follow instructions from your transport operator. This may include:
  - Notices about which seats to use or how to queue.
  - Additional screens, barriers or floor markings.
  - Requests to board through different doors or to move to less busy areas.
- Help keep yourself, other passengers and transport staff safe:
  - Wait for passengers to get off first before you board.
  - Ensure you maintain social distancing, where possible, including at busy entrances, exits, under canopies, bus stops, platforms or outside of stations.
  - Be prepared to queue or take a different entrance or exit at stations.
  - Wait for the next service if you cannot safely keep your distance on board a train, bus or coach.
  - Respect other people's space while travelling.
  - Avoid consuming food and drink on public transport.
  - Be aware of pregnant, older and disabled people who may require a seat or extra space
  - Be aware that some individuals may have hidden disabilities.
- Always wash your hand when you reach your final destination.

### **Accessing and Moving Around Buildings**

- The objective is to maintain social distancing wherever possible while people enter and move around the workplace.
- The main entrance to the office should be kept locked with a sign informing people that they can enter in small groups.
- A supply of hand sanitiser will be provided in close proximity to the main entrance.
- Staff should keep bags and coats at their workstation to avoid sharing communal areas.
- When moving around the workplace staff should remain 2m apart at all times. Avoid passing on stairs and in corridors.
- Clear signage and floor markings will be provided to limit how far into our office customers can access on arrival. For example, "please wait here for a member of staff" or "No access past this point". Barriers are an option but should be avoided where possible as they are imposing and will require regular cleaning.
- If a reception desk or customer facing desk is to be used for enquiries, we will consider whether or not a protective screen should be provided if there is a risk of people not

staying a safe distance away from staff. Ideally the use of signage and floor markings or chairs will negate the need for this level of action.

### **Workplaces and Workstations**

- The objective is to maintain social distancing between individuals when they are at their workstations.
- There is limited risk of transmission of the disease if employees work in one place throughout the day as it will usually allow them to maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- In the first instance we will manage occupancy level to enable social distancing.
- Employees are to use their own designated workstation at all times and not use any other workstation unless this has also been designated for their exclusive use. Hot desking is not permitted.
- We will review the workplace layout and ensure that employees are based at workstations at least 2m apart (even if this means that some workstations are moved / reconfigured, employees re-located to a new workstation or that some workstations are designated as “not to be used” which will be clearly marked).
- We will use markings or floor tape to identify boundaries around workstations to re-enforce the 2m distance.
- We will only allow employees to work in close proximity where there is no possibility for them to work further apart. In these instances, the following action will be taken:
  - Consideration whether the activity / working arrangement needs to continue for the business to operate.
  - Arrange employees so that they work side by side or facing away from each other. Face to face working will be avoided.
  - Consider the use of screens.

### **Meetings**

- The objective is to reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings.
- Visitors will be asked to wait outside during the meeting or if this is not possible to remain in a different room at all times during the meeting and that 2 metre distance must be observed at all times.
- Candidate meetings can be held in the office. Meetings should be by appointment only and as part of the process candidates should be reminded not to attend meetings if they develop symptoms. Chairs are to be set a safe distance away from staff and on completion of meetings any hard surface that could have been touched by candidates should be sanitised (chair arms, desk surfaces and pens) the employee should then wash their hands.

### **Common Areas**

- The objective is to maintain social distancing while using common areas.



- Where possible employees should remain at their desks and only move about the office where necessary.
- Employees are requested to only use the staff kitchen 1 person at a time and only to prepare a drink and return to their desk.
- Employees should bring their own food into work and avoid leaving the office except to attend viewings or similar.
- Please only access toilet facilities 1 person at a time.

### **Accidents, Security and Other Incidents**

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

## **5. Managing Candidates, Visitors and Contractors**

- Undertake initial meetings virtually, where possible.
- Where meetings are re required in the office, social distancing guidelines set out in Section 4 must be observed.
- Limit the number of visitors permitted into the office to a small, manageable numbers at any one time, ideally via staggered appointment throughout the day.
- Ensure visitor protocols and safe distancing arrangements are clearly displayed in the office.

## **6. Cleaning the Workplace**

### **Before Re-opening**

- The objective is to make sure that any location that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart.
- We will undertake a restart review of the workplace to ensure that all facilities and equipment are in full working order.
- We will ensure that the workplace is thoroughly cleaned and ventilated before it is re-occupied.

### **Keeping the Workplace Clean**

- To minimize the risk of transmission via contaminated surfaces we will:
  - Arrange for surfaces and objects that are touched regularly to be identified and cleaned regularly, such as door handles, hand rails, toilet flush and seats, work equipment and keyboards and make sure there are arrangements to suitably dispose of single use cleaning wipes etc.
  - Limit the use of shared equipment and unnecessary high touch equipment such as photo copiers and printers and wipe controls after use.
  - Implement a deep clean in the even that a known or suspected case of Covid-19 has been reported in our workplace.

### **Hygiene – Handwashing, Sanitation Facilities and Toilets**

- The objective is to help everyone keep good hygiene through the working day.
- Employees are reminded of the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned. We will provide signage in the workplace to reinforce this message.
- We will provide additional hand sanitisers in the workplace and for use in vehicles.
- We will regularly clean the hand washing facilities and check soap and sanitiser levels
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

### **Handling Goods etc**

- Employees must wash their hand after handing any deliveries to the office.
- Staff are requested not to arrange any non-business deliveries to the office until further notice.

## **7. Personal Protective Equipment and Face Coverings**

- The steps required to manage COVID-19 risk in the workplace include working from home and staying 2m away from each other in the workplace if at all possible.
- When managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE.
- The exception is clinical settings, like a hospital, or a small handful of other roles for which Public Health England advises use of PPE.
- Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Unless employees are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, risk assessments should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited.
- However, if our risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then we will provide this PPE free of charge to employee who need it and ensure it fits properly.

### **Face Coverings Statement**

- There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure.
- The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms.
- A face covering can be very simple and may be worn in enclosed spaces where social distancing isn't possible.
- It just needs to cover your mouth and nose. It is not the same as a face mask, such as the surgical masks or respirators used by health and care workers.
- Similarly, face coverings are not the same as the PPE used to manage risks like dust and spray in an industrial context.



- Supplies of PPE, including face masks, must continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.
- It is important to know that the evidence of the benefit of using a face covering to protect others is weak and the effect is likely to be small, therefore face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk, including minimising time spent in contact, using fixed teams and partnering for close-up work, and increasing hand and surface washing.
- These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk in the workplace and government would therefore not expect to see employers relying on face coverings as risk management for the purpose of their health and safety assessments.
- Wearing a face covering is optional and is not required by law, including in the workplace. If you choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off.
- As an employer we support employees using face coverings safely if they choose to wear one. In these instances, the following points should be considered:
  - Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
  - When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
  - Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you'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.
  - Practice social distancing wherever possible.

## **8. Workforce Management**

### **Returning to Work / Ongoing Communication**

- The objective is to make sure all workers understand COVID-19 related safety procedures and are kept up to date.
- We will ensure that all staff are fully briefed on these procedures.
- We commit to providing clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.
- We will engage with staff regularly to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments.
- We are aware of the potential importance of mental health at times of uncertainty and will look to actively support employees with any challenges that they may face.