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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)

From:

Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
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4 May 2021, see all updates (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/updates>)

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

Offices and contact centres

Guidance for people who work in or run offices, contact centres 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>))

COVID-19 roadmap

Step 2 of the roadmap out of lockdown (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary>) has begun. Some of the rules changed on 12 April, but many restrictions remain in place.

Find out what you can and cannot do (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do#businesses-and-venues>).

This guide was updated on 30 March 2021.

Show all sections

What's changed, Show this section

Addition of information on ventilation, tests, and the roadmap setting out how COVID-19 restrictions will be eased.

National restrictions – Spring 2021, Show this section

On 22 February the government published the COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary>) setting out how COVID-19 restrictions will be eased over 4 steps.

The roadmap has set out indicative, 'no earlier than' dates for the steps which are 5 weeks apart. It takes around 4 weeks for the data to reflect the impact of the previous step and the government will provide a further week's notice to individuals and businesses before making changes.

Offices and contact centres can open under all steps, if they're COVID-secure. Office workers should continue to work from home where they can.

This guidance provides information on arranging regular asymptomatic testing for staff who cannot work from home. Registration for free test kits is closed from 11:59pm on 12 April; businesses can access tests through private providers and community testing sites.

Priority actions to take - what businesses need to do to protect staff and customers, Show this section

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

1. **Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment**, including consideration of the reasonable adjustments needed for staff and customers with disabilities. Share it with all your staff. Find out how to do a risk assessment (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm>).
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. **Remind 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 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-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. **Provide adequate ventilation**. This means supplying fresh air to enclosed space where people are present. It can be natural ventilation through windows, doors and vents, mechanical ventilation using fans and ducts, or a combination of both. Read advice on air conditioning and ventilation from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm>).
6. **Take part in NHS Test and Trace** by keeping a record of all staff and contractors for 21 days. Check 'Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace' (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/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. 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) (<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>).

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

- **Work from home if you can.** Office workers who can work from home should do so.
- **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.

[Introduction, Show this section](#)

This guide will help you understand how to make your workplace COVID-secure and help tackle COVID-19. We thank you for playing your part in this national effort.

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 offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments. This includes:

- offices
- contact centres
- operations rooms

We expect that this document will be updated over time. You can check for updates at www.gov.uk/workingsafely (<https://www.gov.uk/workingsafely>).

Who has contributed to this guide

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, and in consultation 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.

How to use this guidance, Show this section

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.

Each business will need to translate this into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of their business, including the size and type of business, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated. They will also need to monitor these measures to make sure they continue to protect customers and workers.

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.

1. Thinking about risk, Show this section

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.

Your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have done everything you need to. There are interactive tools available (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm>) 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.

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.

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.microsoftcrmpartals.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. 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. 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-secure guidelines are followed closely.

4. Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to ensure their employees can work safely. This includes consideration of reasonable adjustments for employees or customers with disabilities, including disabilities that are not immediately obvious. 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. Fresh air helps to dilute the virus in occupied spaces so provide adequate ventilation through doors, windows and vents, or a combination of both.
6. 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.

Further 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)
7. 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 their staff.
 8. 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.
 9. 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.

10. 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 workers 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.

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

2. Who should go to work, Show this section

In this section

- 2.1 People who need to self isolate
- 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. This guidance will remain in place until at least step 4 of the roadmap, when the work from home guidance will be considered as part of the wider review on social distancing. Employers should ensure workplaces are safe for anyone who cannot work from home.

Office workers who can work from home should do so. Anyone else who cannot work from home should go to their place of work. However, employers should consider whether home working is appropriate for workers facing mental or physical health difficulties, or those with a particularly challenging home working environment.

The risk of transmission can be substantially reduced if COVID-secure guidelines are followed closely. Employers should consult with their workers to determine who needs to come into the workplace. Businesses should also consider the impact of workers coming into the workplace on local transport and take appropriate mitigating actions (for example, staggered start and finish times for staff). 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. Employers should encourage a mix of home and office-based working where full home working is not possible.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Considering the maximum number of people who can be safely accommodated on site.

2. 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.
3. Keeping in touch with off-site workers on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security.
4. Providing equipment for people to work at home safely and effectively, (for example, remote access to work systems) accounting for different types of needs, including the needs of people with disabilities.

2.1 People who need to self isolate

Objective: 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 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household#what-a-support-bubble-is>) and those who are required to self-isolate as part of NHS Test and Trace (<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, 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 (<https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>) and employers (<https://www.gov.uk/employers-sick-pay>) 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 immediately and continue for 10 days. The day their symptoms started counts as day zero. Workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 must self-isolate immediately and continue for 10 days. The day of the test counts as day zero. Where a worker has tested positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develops symptoms during the isolation period, they should restart the 10-day isolation period from the day after the symptoms developed. 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>).
4. Ensuring any workers who are contacts of individuals who test positive for COVID-19 self-isolate for a period of 10 days. Contacts will need to self-isolate immediately and continue for 10 days. The day the contact with the individual who tested positive took place counts as day zero.
5. Ensuring any workers who have been informed by NHS Test and Trace that they are a close contact of a person who has had a positive test result for COVID-19 follows 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>).

2.2 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes>) 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 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quarterly-report-on-progress-to-address-covid-19-health-inequalities>).

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.

Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are advised to work from home where possible 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:

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

Read [HSE guidance on protecting vulnerable workers during the COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/protect-people.htm). (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/protect-people.htm>).

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. [Read [COVID-19 advice for pregnant employees](#)](

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 aerosol transmission risk of COVID-19 in enclosed spaces.

Ventilation should be used as a control measure to reduce the risk of aerosol transmission of COVID-19 in enclosed spaces.

Ventilation will not reduce the risk of droplet or surface transmission, so other control measures such as cleaning and social distancing are also required.

There are different ways of providing ventilation, including mechanical ventilation using fans and ducts, natural ventilation which relies on passive flow through openings (doors, windows, vents) or a combination of the two.

The risk of transmission is greater in spaces that are poorly ventilated. [HSE](#) guidance on ventilation and air conditioning explains how to identify those spaces and steps to take to improve ventilation.

Read advice on air conditioning and ventilation from [HSE](#) (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm>).

3. Social distancing for workers, Show this section

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 should maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible, taking account of those with protected characteristics as social distancing may not be possible or will be more challenging for workers with certain disabilities, such as individuals in wheelchairs or with visual impairments. Employers should discuss with disabled workers what reasonable adjustments can be made to the workplace so they can work safely.

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
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>)
and getting help with daily activities outside your home during coronavirus
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-people-outside-of-their-home/supporting-people-outside-of-their-home>).

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. Ensuring participants should physically attend meetings only where reasonably necessary. Participants 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 whenever possible or in rooms where there is good ventilation through open doors, windows and vents, mechanical ventilation (such as air conditioning) or a combination of both.
6. Airing rooms between meetings, opening all the doors and windows as fully as possible to maximise the ventilation in the room.
7. 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 (<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/staying-secure-during-covid-19-0>).

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.

5. Cleaning the workplace, Show this section

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 mechanical 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 if they draw in a supply of fresh air. HSE guidance on ventilation and air conditioning provides further information.

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 (<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 guidance for information on how to dispose of personal or business waste (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-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 accessible locations in addition to washrooms, considering the needs of people with disabilities.
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 ensuring extractor fans work effectively and opening windows and vents where possible.

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.
3. Keeping the facilities well ventilated, for example by ensuring extractor fans work effectively and opening windows and vents where possible.

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.

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

In this section

- 6.1 Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- 6.2 Face coverings

6.1 Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.

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.

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 you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, your risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited. However, if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then you must provide this PPE free of charge to workers who need it. Any PPE provided must fit properly.

6.2 Face coverings

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. A face visor or shield may be worn in addition to a face covering but not instead of one. This is because face visors or shields do not adequately cover the nose and mouth, and do not filter airborne particles.

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.

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.

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>)

Some people don't have to wear a face covering including for health, age or equality reasons

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#exemptions-face-coverings>).

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 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>).

7. Workforce management, Show this section

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 worker 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. Taking into account the particular circumstances of those with different protected characteristics, including disability, maternity and religion, and how they may be impacted by shift patterns and measures to reduce people flow.

7.1.2 Supporting NHS Test and Trace

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

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>).

7.1.3 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. Contact your local PHE health protection team if you've had an outbreak and need further guidance Find your local PHE health protection team (<https://www.gov.uk/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 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household#what-a-support-bubble-is>), travelling together in any one vehicle, using fixed travel partners.
3. Providing adequate ventilation by switching on ventilation systems that draw in fresh air or opening windows (partially if it's cold), and avoiding sitting face-to-face. For more information on ventilation in vehicles read HSE guidance on ventilation and air conditioning (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/ventilation-in-vehicles.htm>).
4. Cleaning shared vehicles between shifts or on handover.
5. 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) (<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. 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

Staff canteens and restaurants that are open to the public should follow the guidance for restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaway services (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery>). They must maintain records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace.

Staff canteens and restaurants that are open to staff only will usually need to take the steps below.

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. Provide adequate ventilation by opening doors, windows and vents or by mechanical ventilation through fans and ducts, or a combination of both. HSE guidance on ventilation and air conditioning provides further information (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/index.htm>).
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.

8. Inbound and outbound goods, Show this section

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.

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, including maintaining social distancing, frequent cleaning, good hygiene and adequate ventilation, even if your employees have:

- received a recent negative test result
- had the vaccine (either 1 or 2 doses)

Where you are 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 transmission during the testing process. These include maintaining social distancing where possible, frequent cleaning, good hygiene and 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>).

You can also order rapid lateral flow tests, to test employees with no coronavirus symptoms. Registration for free test kits is closed from 11.59pm on 12 April; businesses can access tests through private providers and community testing sites.

Regular testing, alongside control measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, will have a key role to play in future. 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.

Where to obtain further guidance, 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 employees (<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>).

Download the 'Staying COVID-secure' notice, Show this section

- **Staying COVID-secure** (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-covid-19-secure-in-2020-notice>)

Poster to display in your workplace to show you have followed the guidance.

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