

GUIDANCE ON PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS IN THE WORKPLACE

We understand that the Government restrictions relating to Coronavirus mean potential new ways of working and new employees to manage. To help during these challenging times, we've summarised the points you may wish to consider to continue working safely. As we have not been able to visit your premises we are unable to make explicit recommendations.

Coronavirus can be spread when people with the virus have close, sustained contact with people who are not infected. This typically means being within two metres of an infected person. Remember people may have no symptoms but be carrying the virus.

The exact measures you must take to stop the spread of Coronavirus in your workplace is dependent upon your work sector and activities. However, there are some key actions we can all take to minimise the spread of the infection when at work.

You should try to follow Government guidance and work from home. Government advice is that employers take every possible step to facilitate employees working from home rather than on-site. Remember if you are asking employees to work from home then you must continue to ensure their health and safety. Please refer to our Working from Home Guide on the resource hub for further information on this.

If you cannot facilitate working from home and your staff must continue to work on-site, you must introduce sensible health and safety control measures.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Review your cleaning and housekeeping regime – you should be able to continue using your existing cleaning materials. Consider all of the frequently touched surfaces, such as door and window handles, light switches, shared equipment, tablet screens etc and add them to the schedule or increase the frequency of cleaning these.

Don't forget about the safe disposal of waste materials, especially where these may be contaminated with the virus (e.g. disposable PPE, tissues, wipes, packaging).

Make sure you monitor the effectiveness of your measures. Consider implementing a cleaning check sheet to confirm cleaning has been undertaken.

MANAGING AND ENFORCING SOCIAL DISTANCING

You must be able to comply with Public Health social distancing measures which are, where possible, the maintenance of a two metre distance from others. Involve your staff by encouraging them to come up with ways to support this, as they'll often be best placed to recommend changes to ways of working in their areas.



Businesses should also look to the advice being published by trade associations and similar groups. Government guidance is available for the following business sectors:

- Construction and other outdoor work
- Factories, Plants & Warehouses
- Labs and Research facilities
- Office and contact centres
- Other people's homes
- Restaurants offering take-aways or delivery
- Shops and branches
- Vehicles

There is different guidance for:

- Educational and childcare settings
- Public transport operators

Social distancing is not only important for you and your staff, consideration should also be given to how to manage interactions with contractors and visitors.

ALLOWING FOR AND ENFORCING GOOD HANDWASHING TECHNIQUES

The simple act of hand-washing with soap and running water is the best way to prevent, control and reduce the risk of infection from Coronavirus.

So, provide staff with information on handwashing:

- Wash your hands more often than usual
- Wash hands for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, after being in public areas and after touching hard surfaces such as door handles
- Use 70% alcohol hand sanitiser if you don't have access to washing facilities.

You could also display Hand Hygiene Posters e.g. from World Health Organisation.

Finally, to protect everyone you should remind staff daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

SICKNESS AT WORK – SUSPECTED CORONAVIRUS

If someone becomes unwell in the workplace with Coronavirus symptoms, they should:

- tell their Supervisor immediately and go home
- avoid touching anything
- cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow
- use a separate bathroom from others, if possible.

If the unwell person lives alone, they must self-isolate for seven days. The business should consider a welfare check via text / telephone to see if the staff member requires supplies.

If they live with others and are the first to have symptoms, they must self-isolate for seven days. Everyone else in their household must self-isolate for 14 days.

Current Government guidance states that for a suspected case of Coronavirus it is not necessary to close the business or workplace or send any staff home. However, you may wish to send home those who have been in close contact with a suspected case of Coronavirus as a precautionary approach to stop any potential virus spreading in the workplace. It would also be advisable to try and trace which colleagues the infected individual has been in close contact with in the previous 14 days.

In certain scenarios you are also required by law to report a suspected case of Coronavirus absence to Health and Safety Executive (RIDDOR).

If employees are classed as essential workers, it is advisable for the employer to ask for a Coronavirus test for the member of staff with a suspected case of Coronavirus (and anyone in their household) along with those who have been in close contact with them.

EMPLOYEES RETURN TO WORK AFTER SUSPECTED CORONAVIRUS

When the employee is ready to get back to work (when they are symptom free and have completed the required period of self-isolation) consideration should first be given to whether the individual can work from home.

If this is not possible check with your staff member to identify if additional support is required to help them back into work, such as:

- more frequent rest breaks as they may still be suffering with fatigue or breathlessness
- can you change their job shift pattern to make it easier for them to phase a return back to normal work?

Make sure you communicate their return to work date to the individual's direct colleagues and alleviate any concerns they may have about this.

ONCE BACK IN THE WORKPLACE

- Go through any changes in the workplace and how it may affect them (e.g. social distancing rules, screens, cashless payments) and see if they need any further training
- Ensure staff members have access to drinking water to keep themselves hydrated
- You must ensure all employees are able to follow Public Health guidelines including, where possible, maintaining a two metre distance from others, and washing their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitiser gel). This applies to everyone, not just the returning employee
- Continue to make sure that extra cleaning and sanitisation is happening across the site or office.

If the member of staff carries out work in people's homes, they should only attend if they have no symptoms.

It is important to ensure that Public Health guidelines, including maintaining a two metre distance from any household occupants, are followed to ensure everyone's safety.

No work should be carried out in any household which is isolating or where an individual is being shielded, unless it is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household, such as emergency plumbing or repairs, and where the tradesperson is willing to do so.

MANAGING CONTRACTORS

The key consideration is to have no, or as little, contact as possible, with contractors during the pandemic, however there will be circumstances in which you will need them to come to your premises.

If a visit is necessary:

- Check that no one has any symptoms before allowing them on to site
- Agree location and nature of activity on-site and keep in contact via the phone
- Ensure they have all relevant information they need about the location, including any hazards such as overhead power lines and public footpaths
- Where possible avoid all face to face contact by using phones and radios
- Maintain a social distance of two metres if you have to meet
- Transfer information electronically or by text if possible
- If paper is unavoidable, exchange it at arm's length and wash hands afterwards
- If you have to travel, use separate vehicles where possible
- Ensure buildings and equipment are sanitised before and after use by contractors
- Remember contractors have the right to use hand washing and toilet facilities, but you should clean and sanitise them more regularly.

You must still follow normal contractor vetting procedures. You'll also need to discuss safety measures with any contractor coming on to site and supervise the work to ensure that it is done safely.

If any hot works are necessary (i.e. welding/soldering) you need to ensure that the contractor holds a hot work permit which outlines the safety measures he/she will be taking to prevent the risk of fire. Someone should be designated to check the area a minimum of one hour after the works to ensure nothing has been left smouldering.

Always check that your contractor has public liability insurance with an adequate indemnity limit.

USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For further information please see:

[Gov.uk Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

And additional guidance for:

[Scotland](#)

[Northern Ireland](#)

[Wales](#)

[General Government advice](#)

[Cleaning and disinfecting](#)

[Social distancing](#)

[Handwashing](#)

Staff sickness and return to work:

[gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

111.nhs.uk

[acas.org.uk/coronavirus](https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus)

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This guidance is provided on the strict understanding that you accept, without limitation, that you retain sole responsibility for compliance with health and safety legislation and regulations, all other legislation and any warranties/conditions attached to your insurance policies. We have not conducted any site visits as part of producing this guidance and we have not, and are not, providing any guidance in relation to your specific set up.

Publication date 18/05/2020



NFU Mutual

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RMS-COVID1-0520