



Covid 19

**- looking at workplace risk
in Small and Medium
Enterprises**



May 2020

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Introduction

What is COVID-19?

This is the most recent form of corona virus. Most people contracting the virus will suffer mild to moderate symptoms although older workers and those with underlying health conditions are at particular risk of contracting more severe forms of the disease that may be life threatening.

The most common symptoms in individuals are fever, tiredness and a new dry cough. Other symptoms include breathlessness, aches and pains, sore throats and very occasionally, stomach upsets, nausea and runny noses.

Understanding of how the virus presents continues to develop, and reference should be made to the [WHO website](#) for up-to-date information on any additional potential symptoms.

Employees developing any symptoms should be advised to self-isolate, anyone reporting for work with such symptoms should be sent or taken home immediately, more information on steps to be taken can be found on the [NHS Inform website](#)

There are believed to be two routes by which COVID-19 can be spread:

- Directly; from close contact with an infected person (within 2 metres) where respiratory secretions can enter the eyes, mouth, nose or airways. This risk exists even if the infected person has no symptoms. It increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.
- Indirectly; by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching own mouth, nose, or eyes.

At the time of writing the United Kingdom had been in lockdown for 3 weeks and the government has now announced that it will continue for a further 3 weeks. This further period of lockdown means that employers can play a part in reducing COVID-19 infection by carrying out and acting on risk assessments where they have not done so already.

There will also be a necessity for those who run non-essential businesses to ensure they have adequate risk assessments in place as part their

arrangements for reopening once restrictions are lifted. Further guidance on this will be forthcoming.

Further information on COVID-19 and infection prevention and control healthcare and non-healthcare settings can be found on the [Health Protection Scotland COVID-19 webpage](#).

Assessment of COVID-19 risks

COVID-19 is arguably the biggest workplace health risk in living memory.

Employers have a duty of care to their workers, contractors and others using their premises. Every employer also has a duty to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments for any workplace hazards. COVID – 19 is no different. All employers have a legal responsibility to assess the risk of the COVID-19 and to put in place effective control procedures to prevent the infection being spread in their workplace. Two key sources of information are the HSE's [Risk assessment - A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace](#) and [Management of risk when planning work: the right priorities](#)

Organisations employing five or more must record risk assessments in writing including any control measures put in place to mitigate the risk to those working at their sites/premises from workplace hazards.

Employees and self-employed workers also have a duty of care to themselves and others in the workplace, guidance should be provided to remind individuals what this means in relation to COVID 19 (E.g. self-isolating if the worker or one of their family members is symptomatic and following effective infection control measures

The law does require some groups to have specific risk assessments: such as young persons and pregnant women are specifically protected – whilst there is no specific protection for those with a disability...sensible risk management suggests that individual risk assessments should be undertaken for those who have a self-declared health condition which could increase their risk profile. Home working could be a consideration for such staff if it were possible.

The most effective control measures to reduce risk from Covid-19 are considered to be good hand hygiene, social distancing, managing coughs and sneezes to prevent transmission and taking extra precautions in the workplace

to ensure all surfaces likely to come into human contact (door handles, point of sale machines etc) are cleaned frequently.

Obviously, each workplace is different and Scottish Hazards has prepared a generic risk assessment to help employers start the process of identifying workplace COVID-19 risks. This is attached as an appendix to this briefing and available to download free on our website

While it is the employer's responsibility to carry out and ensure their risk assessment is suitable and sufficient, it is considered good practice to involve the relevant workers in any risk assessment. Scottish Hazards would encourage all employers to seek and listen to their worker's health and safety concerns, consider them objectively and respond with feedback explaining the course of action decided upon. Employees can request to see the outcome of the risk assessment and this must be shown to the individual.

Due to the fast pace of the spread of the virus and the development of public health policy in relation to COVID-19 it is important that organisations put in place arrangements under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 - continually review their assessments to reflect changes in guidance published by the Scottish and UK Governments as well Health Protection Scotland.

Scottish Hazards can provide further assistance to help small businesses and their workers identify COVID-19 risk in their workplace as well as the provision of a safe working environment.

For more information phone 0800 0015 022 or info@scottishhazards.org .



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This model risk assessment is for guidance purposes only and will be unlikely to meet the requirements of the legislation *unless it is amended to meet your organisation's own needs*, taking into account factors such as nature of your business, size of the business premises and the number of people employed.

What are the Hazards	Who might be harmed	Current controls	Additional controls required	Action by whom	Action by when	Done
Spread of COVID-19 Virus	Staff, visitors, contractors, drivers, cleaning and maintenance staff, vulnerable groups, service users, workers with underlying health conditions, anyone who physically comes into contact with your business premises/equipment.	Workplace Hygiene - Normal hand washing, welfare and sanitary facilities provided	<p>Regular reminders issued as to the importance of good hand hygiene and following public health advice on controlling coughs and sneezes and to avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly briefings to staff members on proper hand hygiene measures using both alcohol-based rub and soap and water. Public health posters on COVID-19 infection control displayed in all areas of business premises. Workers are regularly updated on COVID-19 guidance from NHS Inform <p>Hand sanitiser (alcohol-based) to be issued to staff who may have difficulty accessing hand washing facilities.</p>			

		<p>Cleaning - Normal workplace cleaning in place</p>	<p>Increased cleaning of all work surfaces, equipment and surfaces that are touched regularly (e.g. light switches, door handles, telephones)</p> <p>Suitable cleaning products and gloves will be provided at relevant workstations.</p> <p>Used tissues, cleaning and other materials that may contain contamination should be disposed of safely in line with any guidance in place at the time</p> <p>Regular checks will be made and recorded to monitor compliance.</p>			
		<p>Social Distancing - No controls in place</p>	<p>Workplace to be mapped to develop effective workplace social distancing adhering to NHS Inform guidelines</p> <p>Staff will be encouraged to work from home, and working hours will be amended to reduce numbers of staff working on site at any one time.</p> <p>Job design and processes to be reviewed to ensure social distancing is adhered to (E.g. reception areas, checkouts or any area where queues are likely to form), face to face contact will be reduced by use of video conferencing where possible.</p> <p>Staff to be briefed periodically with the guidelines from NHS Inform on social distancing and its importance https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-</p>			

			<p>covid-19-social-distancing - such briefing should be recorded.</p> <p>Social distancing should be adhered to in all areas where workers congregate (E.g. staff canteens, smoking area and toilets) Staff should be informed that no one should come to work if they are feeling unwell or someone in their house is self-isolating.</p> <p>Regular checks to be made and recorded to monitor compliance</p>			
Symptoms of COVID-19		Normal sickness absence procedures in place	<p>Workers becoming unwell whilst at work and displaying COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home ensuring adherence to social distancing and advised to follow NHS stay at home guidelines If advised that an employee or someone who has used the premises/equipment has developed COVID-19 then management will contact NHS and notify the employee of any further advice on precautions to be taken.</p> <p>As a precaution colleagues working near the individual should be isolated until advice is received.</p>			

In addition to managing risk of spreading infection of COVID-19, employers should also look at specific issues relating to their own place of work or business, the following are a few examples to encourage thinking around workplace hazards that could create risks of spreading COVID-19 or placing your staff at risk. Employers should also consider the impact of COVID 19 working arrangements on and increased workloads on workers mental health and consider carrying out a stress risk assessment or reviewing an existing one.

Personal Protective Equipment	Employers will need to consider what additional PPE may be needed and whether the PPE they are supplying is adequate and fit for purpose, staff should be trained in the use of PPE and advised of the limitations of some forms of PPE such as gloves and masks. For example, gloves should not be a substitute for hand washing with soap and water. PPE including the use of masks is probably the most fluid of the control measures and it will be necessary to be fully informed of any changes that are likely to impact on your workforce. Where face fitting respirators are required this should be used in line with the manufacturers instructions and HSE guidance on putting on RPE
Home and Lone Working	Employers have the same responsibility for home workers even when that home working arrangement is being carried out in a temporary basis, this includes making arrangements for keeping in touch, providing information on workstation assessments, managing workloads and stress, Further information on home working and lone working can be accessed on the HSE website, for lone working guidance
Health and Social Care	Guidelines from Health Protection Scotland should be followed at all times, A4 posters of minimum standards of PPE in different types of care setting can be found on the their website. Health Protection Scotland has produced a useful video on putting on and removal of PPE in Primary Care settings and for PPE in secondary care similar videos covering PPE for non-aerosol generating procedures and for aerosol generating procedure can be found on the Public Health England website. Adequate PPE should be provided for homecare workers and employers should ensure all staff are trained in its use, to include putting on, taking off and disposal. Guidance should also be provided on social distancing. If social distancing is not possible and personal care is being given within 2 metres of the service user, then the worker should use recommended PPE whether or not the user is suspected or confirmed as having COVID-19. Guidance should also be given on steps that should be taken if a care worker visits service users to find third parties present. Employers should consider suggested prompts for employees to use to ascertain if social distancing had been followed by the service user and third parties. If a home care worker witnesses or suspects social distancing is not being followed this should be communicated to line management and the risk assessment amended accordingly. If a worker suspects or is told a service user is displaying COVID-19 symptoms than line management should be informed, and advice taken from Public Health Scotland
Retail Environment	Procedures should be out in place to manage numbers of customers entering the premises. Notices should be placed advising of the arrangements before the customers enter your premises, and should advise customers with COVID-19 symptoms not to enter the premises. Consider installing plexiglass barriers at checkouts or payment stations, and mark out 2m spaces on the floor at checkouts (and for any external queuing system). Provide hand sanitiser for those dealing with customers or cash handling (allow all staff to have breaks every 20 minutes to wash their hands properly) and encourage customers to pay by contactless if possible., Note: Many small retailers, coffee shops etc will have to carry out or review risk assessment on an ongoing basis as and when restrictions start to be lifted. Further guidance on this will be forthcoming.
Logistics	During the current period of lockdown, the first question is whether the work is essential to fighting COVID-19? If the answer to this is no, work should be stopped. The second question is, if the work is essential can health and safety control measures, in particular social distancing, be maintained? If it can then briefings should take place, be recorded and notice should be posted reminding

	<p>workers and others to adhere to the 2m rule. Welfare facilities should be reviewed and installations of pop up hand hygiene stations allowing regular handwashing close to workstations should be considered as a means of helping to maintain social distancing. If the work being carried out is essential and social distancing cannot be maintained then adequate PPE must be provided and workers trained in its use, including putting on, taking off and disposal.</p>
<p>Construction</p>	<p>Only large projects that are critical to the national infrastructure should be open, all others should be closed. Scottish Government guidance should be followed when deciding if construction projects are essential or otherwise (this is due for review on 27 April 2020). Where projects are essential then social distancing should be followed. Workers should have hand washing facilities and instructed to wash hands before and after using tools and equipment others may have used. Windows of construction machinery cabs should be kept open for ventilation and the cabs cleaned regularly using suitable disinfecting cleaning materials. Employers should consider installing pop-up hand hygiene stations to provide soap, water, paper towels and alcohol-based hand rub. Workers should be instructed to wash their hands thoroughly throughout the shift as per public health guidelines. The use of alcohol based rub is less affective on grimy hands and is not a substitute for the most effective control measure of soap and water. Workers should be asked to use stairs where possible, if lifts or hoists need be used the control panels and door handles should be disinfected regularly, social distancing should be applied in any passenger lift. Any self-employed construction workers working on essential (or non-essential sites) can contact Scottish Hazards for advice 0800 0015 022 or e-mail info@scottishhazards.org</p>
<p>Transport</p>	<p>Scottish Hazards does not believe UK Government guidance is adequate particularly in protecting bus drivers. Bus operators should encourage contactless payments, install plexiglass screens, reduce seating capacity on vehicles by only allowing access to every second seats staggering them on different side of the bus, the seat immediately behind the drive should be cordoned off. Staff in ticketing offices should follow public health guideline on social distancing and where plexiglass screens are not fitted this should be considered. All travel operators should ensure effective signage is in place in rail and bus station displaying COVID-19 guidance as well as reminding travellers that only essential travel is permitted. Drivers of trains/buses should clean the cab thoroughly when taking control of a vehicle, appropriate cleaning materials should be provided along with instructions on its use and disposal.</p>