

COVID-19

Guidance for Businesses who are Permitted to Remain Open

Background

As a country, we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of coronavirus. That is why the government has given clear guidance on self-isolation, staying at home and away from others, and asked that schools only remain open for those children who absolutely need to attend.

An **overview** of the advice to businesses can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus under **Businesses and Other Organisations**. This includes advice on how to keep your employees safe and how to clean workplaces safely.

General information for the public

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public

Stay at home guidance and guidance for those at extremely high risk

www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19

Context for Businesses

Employers who have people in their offices or onsite should ensure that employees are able to follow Public Health England [Guidelines](#), including, where possible, maintaining a **2-metre distance** from others, and washing their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water is not available).

Please click [here](#) to see the Summary Sheet for key information

Key National Guidance for Businesses

- Businesses and workplaces should encourage their employees to work at home, wherever possible
- If someone becomes unwell in the workplace with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they should be sent home and advised to follow the advice to stay at home which can be found [here](#)
- Additional cleaning is also recommended as advised [here](#)
- Employees should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues. **Handwashing on arrival to work, after using the toilet, before preparing food and drinks and when leaving the workplace is highly important.** Continue to promote regular handwashing with soap and water among both staff and any business visitors – this is one of the best ways to protect yourselves and the people you work with. If soap and water aren't available, then antibacterial hand gel (with at least 70% alcohol content) is an alternative if hands are visibly clean. Otherwise hand wipes should be used, followed by antibacterial hand gel.
- Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using a detergent followed by disinfectant with chlorine (1000ppm) – example of disinfectants includes Milton, Chlorclean or Tritan. A combined detergent/disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine can also be used. For more information please follow the link [here](#)
- Employees will need your support to adhere to the recommendation to stay at home to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) to others
- Those who follow advice to stay at home will be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP) from the first day of their absence from work
- Employers should use their discretion concerning the need for medical evidence for certification for employees who are unwell. This will allow GPs to focus on their patients. If evidence is required by an employer, those with symptoms of coronavirus can get an isolation note from [NHS 111 online](#), and those who live with someone that has symptoms can get a note from the [NHS website](#).
- Employees are entitled to time off work to help someone who depends on them (a 'dependant') in an unexpected event or emergency. This would apply to situations related to coronavirus (COVID-19). For example, if they have children they need to look after or arrange childcare for because their school has closed or to help their child or another dependant if they are sick, or need to go into isolation or hospital. There's no statutory right to pay for this time off, but some employers might offer pay depending on the contract or workplace policy.
- Employees from defined [vulnerable groups](#) should be strongly advised and supported to stay at home and work from there, if possible. The majority of people who become unwell with COVID-19 (~85%) have a mild illness, but we know that older people and those with long term conditions are more at risk of serious illness and should be **prioritised** for home working. It is important that those who are at risk stay at home and away from the workplace.
- Guidance regarding [staying at home](#)
- Guidance for those at [extremely high risk](#)

Social Distancing in the Workplace

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). They include things like keeping 2 metres away from people outside of your household in addition to washing your hands as mentioned in previous sections of the guidance. Full social distancing guidance can be found [here](#).

If you cannot work from home then you can still travel to work, provided you are well and neither you nor any of your household are self-isolating. This is consistent with advice from the Chief Medical Officer.

Employers who have people in their offices or onsite should ensure that employees are able to follow Public Health England guidelines including, where possible, maintaining a 2-metre distance from others, and washing their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water is not available).

Examples of this

Some examples of how to ensure social distance in the workplace include:

- Having 'Social Distancing' Zones i.e. having maximum numbers of people within designated areas to make distancing possible. For example, 'only one person in the kitchen at any one time' or spacing out desks to reduce people clustering together in workspaces. You can put signs/markers up to help with this.
- Display posters to remind employees the importance of social distancing at all times (please see links to posters below)
- Place 2 metre distance markers to ensure people stand at least 2 metres apart in areas where groups may be working. Limit the number of people who are entering the business to enable people to stay 2 metres apart
- Enforce a limit of no more than 2 people gathering outside for lunch/coffee/cigarette breaks

Increasing Awareness within the Workplace

Businesses have a key role to play in displaying advice and guidance during this time. Please follow the [link](#) for access to a suite of posters and leaflets which can be downloaded and printed.

We hope that the above is helpful, and we will endeavour to keep you updated, as the situation evolves.

The information in this document is correct as at **2nd April 2020**. **Government guidelines may change**, and the links should be used to ensure that you are following up to date requirements

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