

# Guidance for Employers on a Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Policy



A novel (new) strain of Coronavirus is causing a disease called COVID-19 which affects the lungs and airways.

If you are an employer, person with control over a workplace or an employee: you need to know where there is a possibility of exposure to novel Coronavirus and take reasonable precautions to minimise the risk of COVID-19.

This document aims to provide guidance to assist you in the preparation of a policy to manage the risk in your workplace.

Employers need to consider how they will respond to cases of COVID-19 at the workplace and plan what actions they need to take in line with the advice and guidance provided by:

- The World Health Organisation ([https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/who-rights-roles-respon-hw-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=bcabd401\\_0](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/who-rights-roles-respon-hw-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=bcabd401_0));
- The Government (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>); and,
- The NHS (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>).

Your plan should be effectively communicated to employees so that they are aware of the controls which have been put in place and have reassurance that the risks to their health have been considered.

COVID-19 can be passed from person to person, similar to the way a common cold can spread. The risk of infection comes from:

- Close contact with an infected person;
- Touching objects or surfaces which have become contaminated (by the sneeze or cough of an infected person) and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

**Good hygiene practices, such as regularly cleaning and disinfecting hand contact surfaces and allowing staff to take frequent breaks to wash their hands, can help to control the spread of this disease.**

**It is also important to consider ways that your business can still operate while reducing contact between staff and customers.**

Wherever possible, contact with customers should be by telephone or email. In the retail sector, this will often not be possible. In shops and similar retail premises, think of ways to maintain a distance between customers such as limiting the number of customers in the shop at any particular time, marking the floor to indicate where customers should stand at a counter or while queuing (both inside and outside) or displaying a sign at points of contact asking customers to remain a distance from the counter staff.

These control measures can help to keep your employees healthy, keep your business running and allow you to help in controlling the spread of Coronavirus.

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### What you can do

You may not be able to completely eliminate the risk of employees contracting COVID-19 while working; however, you must do all that is reasonably practicable to minimise that risk. In general, this means that you should:

- ✓ Implement appropriate control measures – these can be established in consultation with employees or their representatives and must take account of the guidance from official sources (see links above)

The control measures will be most effective when employees are engaged in the process of identifying the hazards and participate in establishing practical controls as they will have useful knowledge about the risks of their normal duties. Employee engagement in setting the controls can enhance employee participation in implementing these measures.

- ✓ Communicate what is required to implement these measures to all employees and provide clear direction about what is expected of them;
- ✓ Make sure employees are instructed to, and given adequate breaks to frequently wash their hands.

Alcohol-based hand sanitising gel may be unavailable at times; however, effective hand washing with soap and water is preferable to the use of sanitisers.

If gloves are provided, employees must have a sufficient supply of gloves to allow gloves to be changed frequently due to risks presented by contaminated gloves;

- ✓ All staff should limit contact with others – where welfare facilities are provided, consider whether additional or larger facilities are needed to allow employees to take their breaks while maintaining social distancing;
- ✓ Provide an adequate number of bins to allow the hygienic disposal of tissues used for covering mouths/noses while coughing/sneezing;
- ✓ Display information from Government/NHS sources showing which symptoms should be reported and monitored;
- ✓ Inform employees of when they should stay away from the workplace;
- ✓ Inform employees of what action to take if they become unwell at work;
- ✓ Immediately seek advice if you become aware of a confirmed case of Covid-19 amongst your workforce;
- ✓ Keep yourself up-to-date with Government/NHS directions and revise your control measures if the information suggests that it is necessary to so do;
- ✓ Keep employees and, where appropriate, customers up-to-date with any changes to control measures;
- ✓ Limit access to the workplace to essential personnel only – only hold face-to-face meetings if it is absolutely necessary to do so, encourage working from home where possible and contact customers by telephone or email;
- ✓ If employees are provided with personal protective equipment, you must make sure they have adequate information, instruction and training on how and when this is to be used, how it should be stored when not in use and how it should be disposed of when no longer of use.

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### Working from home

The employer's responsibilities extend to taking reasonable care of employees health and safety when they are working from home both in terms of physical and psychosocial risks.

Provide support by:

- Giving guidance on what a good workstation set-up looks like and providing self-assessment checklists (such as that found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf>);
- Maintain regular communication with employees by telephone or video-calls;
- Providing a point of contact for any employee who feels the need to talk about their concerns.

Guidance on this topic can be found by visiting Health and Safety Executive's website at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm>.

After considering the information above and the guidance available via the links provided, you should be able to prepare a policy for your workplace.

If you wish, the table overleaf provides a template for a basic policy and will allow you to establish the necessary rules for the continued operation of your business while playing your part to control the spread of Coronavirus.

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Coronavirus Policy for \_\_\_\_\_

The arrangements in place to limit contact between customers and employees are:

The arrangements in place to promote social distancing in welfare areas are:

The arrangements in place to promote social distancing amongst customers are:

The arrangements that are in place to allow employees to regularly wash or sanitise their hands are:

The arrangements in place for the regular cleaning of contact surfaces are:

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The arrangements in place to isolate an employee who shows symptoms are:

The arrangements in place to disinfect hard surfaces in the workplace if an employee becomes symptomatic are:

The arrangements in place for employees who show symptoms to avoid coming to the workplace are:

The arrangements in place for employees who can work from home are:

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