RISK ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL MEASURES

Title:	CORONAVIRUS SARS-COVID-19 PANDEMIC – OFFICE WORK

HAZARDS	HARM
Catching SARS COVID-19 virus from, or passing virus to: ▪ other people in office ▪ others during rest period ▪ others during commuting to work / business travel	Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea. Can lead to severe respiratory problems, pneumonia, lung scarring which can be fatal, particularly for clinically vulnerable people or people with unknown existing medical conditions.

Severity	Normal Population	M	Clinically Vulnerable	VH
Likelihood with Controls	Home Working	L	Office Working	M
Persons at Risk:	Staff	Other Site Staff	General Public including Clinically Vulnerable Individuals and Essential Workers	

Alternatives to Office Work

1. Inter-personal contact between people in the community must be restricted to an absolute minimum. If workers can work at home, they must work at home.

2. Alternatives to working in the office are:

   - Use cloud servers, VPN dial in.
   - Use video-or tele-conferencing.
   - Set up onscreen chat to assist supervision and direction of staff members.
   - Have virtual supervision of inexperienced staff.
   - Only receive electronic versions of paperwork – have site workers / clients photograph / scan paperwork and send the documents electronically to the homeworker.
   - Use paperwork drop off / collection points.
   - Mail re-direction and other means.

   Any non-essential work that can be delayed to after the Covid-19 lockdown should be postponed.

3. If the office is experiencing a severe business interruption event eg server dial-in issues, poor performance of staff, then work in an office must be a last resort only and is the least desirable option. The risk control measures must be implemented by law to make the premises Covid-Secure.

4. Workplaces can never be "Covid-Safe". Workers cannot be forced to attend the office if their work can be done from home. The risk of Covid-19 to individuals, their relatives and to vulnerable people in the general public is causing anxiety and is increasing mental health impacts and Directors must be aware of and recognise these issues. Forcing staff back into the office may increase these mental health issues leading to increased sick time and potential of a claim.

   An employee or worker is protected by law against unfair treatment and dismissal, if it's because of pregnancy, age, a health condition that's considered a disability under the Equality Act (this can include anxiety and other mental health issues). It could be unlawful discrimination on those grounds if an employer either unreasonably tries to pressure someone to go to work or unreasonably disciplines someone for not going to work. It does not matter how long they've worked for the employer.
   See ACAS Guidance https://www.acas.org.uk/working-safely-coronavirus .

5. 'Clinically vulnerable people' who are at high risk of getting a severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19) must take particularly strict social distancing measures. 'Clinically vulnerable people' are:

   - those who have a long-term health condition, for example asthma, diabetes, heart disease, hepatitis, Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis (MS)
   - have a weakened immune system as the result of medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
   - are pregnant
   - are aged 70 or over
   - are seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)

Whilst no longer required to be shielded, clinically vulnerable people should work from home wherever possible. Employees living with Essential Workers ie hospital or care staff, emergency services, military forces, utility services etc are strongly advised to continue to work from home.

6. Homeworkers must be cared for under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 etc, as far as is reasonably practicable:

   - Managers must ensure that workers working from home are regularly contacted to ensure that they don't become socially isolated and to identify if any work-related mental health issues are developing including anxiety or stress. Some homeworkers may work excessive hours leading to fatigue. If mental health issues are identified then refer the employee to the company's Employee Assistance Programme or if none, a mental health charity like Mind (www.mind.org.uk).

   - Whilst the HSE have stated that Display Screen Equipment Risk Assessments do not need to be repeated for homeworking during the lockdown, as it is defined as temporary use, Managers must ensure that worker's work stations and work environments comply, as far as reasonably practicable, with the health and safety regulations for display screen equipment and workplace, health, safety and welfare. This might include loaning, or contributing towards the reasonable cost of, office chairs, desks, display screens, external keyboards and mouses etc as required. A pragmatic approach is expected to compliance.

7. If everything has been done to work from home but business interruption is still unacceptable, Directors can re-open offices as long as they ensure they are Covid Secure. See guidance below.

Training / Awareness

1. All staff are to read and understand the symptoms of, and control measures to mitigate the spread of Covid-19, using https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/ and below as a reference.

2. All staff are to be aware that the main symptoms of Covid-19 (see header) however note upto 80% of people who have the virus may be asymptomatic – they have the virus but show no or only some minor symptoms, thus self-declarations and temperature monitoring are not valid indicators.

3. Main infection route is hand to face. Individuals must always avoid touching their face, particularly mouth, nose, or eyes with their hands. This includes if gloves are worn. If an individual needs to cough or sneeze, a tissue or the crook of arm or sleeve to be used. Do not cough or sneeze into hands and if done so, wash them thoroughly, immediately for 20 seconds with soap and water or use apply hand sanitizer.

Health Standards / Surveillance

1. Anyone whom has symptoms of coronavirus can and should be tested as soon as possible. Tests can be booked at https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/.

2. If anyone has the above symptoms they should self-isolate, with the rest of their household, until they have been tested and received the result, the following then applies:

   ▪ if your coronavirus test result is negative and you were not or have not been in contact with someone who has tested positive and you have not had a fever for 48hrs you may return to work.

   ▪ If your test is positive, you must self-isolate. If you had a test because you had symptoms, keep self-isolating for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started. If you had a positive test but have not had symptoms, self-isolate for 10 days from when you had the test. Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must self-isolate for 14 days from when you start self-isolating.

   ▪ If you get an unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive result this means it's not possible to say if you had coronavirus when the test was done. Get another coronavirus test as soon as possible if this happens. If you had a test because you had symptoms, you must keep self-isolating and have another test within 5 days of your symptoms starting. If you're not able to have another test in time, you must self-isolate for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started. Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must self-isolate for 14 days. Read more about how long to self-isolate. If you had a test but have not had any symptoms, you do not need to self-isolate while you wait to get another test. People you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, do not need to self-isolate.

   ▪ If you feel well but someone you live with tests positive or you've been traced as a contact of someone who tested positive you must self-isolate. Get a test but even if the result is negative self-isolate. Follow the guidance on 14 days self-isolation.

   ▪ If you get symptoms of coronavirus, after being in contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, get tested and self-isolate for 10 days from when they start.

   For advice you should call 119 which is the Covid 19 helpline (not 111), if in doubt seek professional medical advice.

3. Most healthy people should be able to cope with Coronavirus using standard over-the-counter medication, though the effects can be severe. At this stage NHS 111 should not be contacted. Should symptoms worsen and cannot be managed at home, at that point contact NHS 111 or https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19.

4. Some individuals, regardless of quality of health, who have had Covid-19 may have significant post-infection health issues which may have a long recovery time (6-8 weeks reported) but did not require medical treatment. For others, the disease can cause pneumonia and severe scarring of the lungs and can be fatal, and this can affect those with known or unknown medical conditions.

5. If a Coronavirus positive test is made, see emergency response procedures below.

Planning & Preparation for Return to Office Working – Advice to Office Managers

Where offices are to re-open office workers must be consulted on the arrangements and must voluntarily agree to return to office working.

Office Managers must ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the office premises are "Covid Secure", and implement the following advice:

1. All premises by law to display at the entry point the Government Staying COVID-19 Secure 5 Steps Declaration Poster, which shall be signed by a member of top management.

2. Display NHS Covid-19 instructional signage at entry points and strategically in offices.

3. Plan for the absolute minimum number of people needed to be in the office at any one time. Risk control measures include:
   - Staff rotation,
   - staggered working times,
   - No visitors including clients, suppliers, site workers, auditors, postal delivery staff to be permitted in the building. Access can only be granted to essential facility maintenance staff. Office managers may need to arrange installation of a doorbell / remote call device to prevent open access to reception areas,

4. Ensure that as far as is reasonably practicable that the two metre is complied with. The "1 metre plus" rule may only be used as a last option. Risk control measures include:
   - Move desks,
   - Restrict the use of certain desks or office areas,
   - Installing screens,
   - Back to back working (rather than face to face),
   - Creating one-way systems for pedestrian circulation, or for "traffic control" and the principles of giving way to other,
   - regulate use of passenger lifts.

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   - In small rooms like washrooms, storerooms etc that don't have door vision panels display "Occupied" sign which is to be displayed when in use.
   - Prohibit face-to-face meetings and other gatherings. Use video or tele-conferencing. If a face-to-face meeting is required, if possible, hold it outside (air flow reduces risk), maintain two metre rule, limit to less than 15 minutes.
   - Wearing a face covering (see below)

5. Contact with surfaces must be restricted, consider:
   - Use of hardcopy paperwork to be restricted. The requirement for "wet signatures" on records is suspended by law during lockdown. Only receive electronic versions of paperwork – have site workers / clients photograph / scan paperwork and send the documents electronically to the office (Cloud file sharing can assist in this).
   - Provide disposable drinking cups for hot and cold drinks.
   - Require staff to bring their own reusable cups, crockery and cutlery, and bring cold food to eat from home to reduce use of kitchen facilities.
   - Ban hot desking – one desk for one defined person.
   - For regularly u-sed cupboards, take doors of hinges to reduce contact points, but do not chock open fire doors.
   - In washrooms and kitchens, ensure that no reusable towels are in use - air dryer or only single use disposal hand-towels to be used.

6. Hygiene practices must be maximized. Risk control measures include:
   - Anti-bacterial gels (over 60%) to be available at all building entry points, near all doors and at strategic points around the office.
   - Display hand-washing guidance posters in toilets.

- Provide anti-bacterial surface cleaning sprays, disposable wipes and disposable gloves cloths in offices, washrooms, kitchen areas and strategic points around the building and use then frequently.

- Provide additional bins and empty bins regularly.

- Office workers to have a clear desk policy and thoroughly clean their desks, phones and computer equipment at least daily.

- Note: Do not leave anti-bacterial hand gel in areas where it may get hot eg in direct sunlight, in unventilated stores, in cars in hot weather. The gel is highly flammable and there has been a recent case in the UK where the container got hot, caught fire and exploded.

7. Good ventilation is encouraged to help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus. Risk control measures include:

- Keep windows, doors and fire exits open (whilst giving regard to security arrangements), but do not chock open internal fire doors as these are for fire protection. Office managers may consider having fire doors installed with active closing devices that are linked to the fire alarm so automatically close in the event of a fire.

- For air conditioning, if the building has a centralised ventilation system that removes and circulates air to different rooms, it is recommended that you turn off recirculation and use a fresh air supply.

8. Face Coverings / Face Masks:

- Face coverings including surgical masks stop an infected individual infecting other people, they do not protect the wearer.

- Face Coverings are a final option however the use of face coverings has now been shown to significantly reduce the risk of catching Covid-19 (other measures must continue to be used). They are particularly useful in open plan or shared offices. The use of face coverings is recommended by health professionals.

- At time of writing, whilst face coverings are mandatory on public transport and in shops from 24/07/20, they are not currently mandatory in the workplace (this may be subject to change).

- Face covering are not currently defined as personal protective equipment and thus employers are not currently required by law to provide them (this may be subject to change).

- If you require that they are worn, you must provide them free of charge, and they must be EN standard EN14683:2019 'standard' surgical type I or II mask (3 layers) or FPP2. The FPP3 masks do not require to be used, these are for high risk essential workers only like medical and care staff, and for use in industry.

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- Face shields may be provided where individuals do not like face coverings, or that they have protected status under medical health or religious reasons so cannot wear face coverings. Face shields provide adequate protection. Face shields need to be EN standard EN166.

- Face coverings or masks must be purchased from a reputable retailer. Be careful when purchasing from local independent shops or generic online retailers as there are a lot of non-compliant masks and fake masks on the market.

- It is noted that if social distancing practices are adhered to that the main transfer pathway is from surfaces to face, and face coverings and gloves do not protect from this risk.

9. Temperature Monitoring:

- Temperature monitoring is not mandatory or recommended. Upto 80% of those carrying the virus may be asymptomatic and showing no, some or only minor symptoms of the virus. Temperature monitoring can create false positives.

10. Emergency Preparedness during the Pandemic:

- In the case of first aid, fire, evacuation or another emergency incident, the 2 metre rule is suspended. First aiders to wear appropriate face coverings, FPP3 mask if available but any face covering will be appropriate. If the injured party isn't suffering breathing problems, put a face mask / covering on them too. If the injured party is suspected of having Covid-19, see emergency response procedures below.

Emergency Preparedness – Action to be taken in case of a Covid-19 report in the workplace

1. If during work a worker displays the symptoms of Covid19, or for parts below (3) onwards reports from home that they are showing symptoms:

    (1)   Work must be stopped immediately stopped,

    (2)   the worker must distance themselves by 2 metres and they shall wear a suitable facecovering and must return home immediately not using public transport.

    (3)   The worker is strongly recommended to get a Covid-19 test.

    (4)   They must self-isolate for 7 days, unless a test shows that they are negative.

    (5)   If other workers have been in close proximity of the worker, they must return home and self-isolate for 14 days or have a test to show they are negative.

    (6)   The work area must be immediately deep cleaned.

    (7)   See below regards mental health support.

2. Should employees be suffering from mental health issues including anxiety, stress or bereavement, then refer them to the company's Employee Assistance Programme or if none, a mental health charity like Mind (www.mind.org.uk).

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Darren Male, HSQE Advisor	Will Adams – Managing Director	1-0	17 August 2020	31 October 2020 or as Government Guidance Changes

ADVICE TO INDIVIDUAL WORKERS ON COVID-19 MEASURES AT WORK

Your employer has a legal duty to ensue that the risk of catching or spreading Coronavirus in the office is as low as is reasonably practicable. You have your own part to play in ensuring that risks are reduced.

You are reminded that the symptoms of Coronavirus is fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea.

Coronavirus is different to other viruses we have encountered, it is transmitted far more easily than flu and other viruses, has a much higher health impact and fatality rate, and is lasting longer than other viruses. Coronavirus is real and can have major health impacts.

Remember, upto 80% of people who have the virus may show no or only some symptoms of the virus, so everyone must ensure the rules are followed.

You are recommended to:

1. Face Masks:

   - Face Masks are not mandatory in offices so your employer doesn't have to provide them, but their use is strongly recommended as in enclosed area with poor ventilation the virus can hang in air for a period of time. They are particularly useful in open plan offices or individual offices if people need to come in and see you (however the 2 meter / 1meter Plus rule must be adhered to).

   - Face coverings are mandatory in public transport, taxis and in shops.

   - Face coverings need to be three layers, these can be a home-made face covering, the surgical type masks or what is known as a FPP2 mask (you don't need FPP3).

   - If you don't want to wear a face covering you can wear a face visor, this can help those who have breathing issues, are claustrophobic or wear glasses.

   - Beware that the use of face masks leads to complacency – the main risk from Coronavirus is hand-to-face transfer so still avoid touching your face.

2. You must stay 2 metres away from other people unless the 1 metre plus rules of a face covering, physical barrier or back to back working is in place.

3. Minimise contact with other surfaces. Avoid commonly touched surfaces like printers, photocopiers, etc. Avoid printing. The need for "wet signatures" has been stopped during the pandemic.

4. Don't share anything eg pens, cups, paper records, landline phones etc. Don't make drinks for others.

5. Provide own reusable drinking cups and bring food, cutlery and crockery from home. Do not leave items in sinks.

6. Stagger rest times so that any rest area maintains 2 metre social distancing.

7. All visitors other than essential maintenance people have been banned from the office.

8. Always observe good hand hygiene. Hand sanitiser has been placed around the building, use it regularly along with regular hand washing with soap and water for twenty seconds.

   Note: Do not leave anti-bacterial hand gel in areas where it may get hot eg in direct sunlight, in unventilated stores, in cars in hot weather. The gel is highly flammable and there has been a recent case in the UK where the container got hot, caught fire and exploded.

9. Clean your own desk, computer, phone and surrounding surfaces at least daily, and immediately if you or another sneeze, cough or spit onto a surface.

10. Where possible travel in separate vehicles to co-workers. Only share a vehicle if 2m rule can be adhered to eg passenger on car passenger side rear seat, wear a face covering and have windows open when possible or have vehicle air conditioning on fresh air intake and low output.

11. Avoid the use of public transport.

12. If social distancing guidelines are not being followed stop work and challenge.

You must not attend work if you, a member of your household or anyone you have had close proximity with in the last 7 days has any of the symptoms of Covid-19.