

- **Section Title**

Working Safely during Covid-19 in offices and contact centres - Document Review

- **Introduction to the Review Process**

This guidance document is one of a number of documents covering different work environments. Many businesses operate in multiple work environments. For example a factory might also have office staff and people operating vehicles. To guide employers and employees through the documents, they will be accompanied by an introduction explaining how the guidance can be used to keep everyone safe in their workplace. This will explain how to follow the guidance if your business operates in multiple work environments.

Please review this document in its entirety. Having reviewed all the sections please return to the top of this page and start answering the questions in the right hand pane of the site.

We are looking for as much feedback as possible at this stage. If there is a * next to the field this is mandatory - you will need to answer the question before you can submit your review.

Having completed all the mandatory and the optional questions you want to answer please click the "Submit Review" button. After that feel free to close the browser.

If you do not click the "Submit Review" button any answers you have added will NOT be saved.

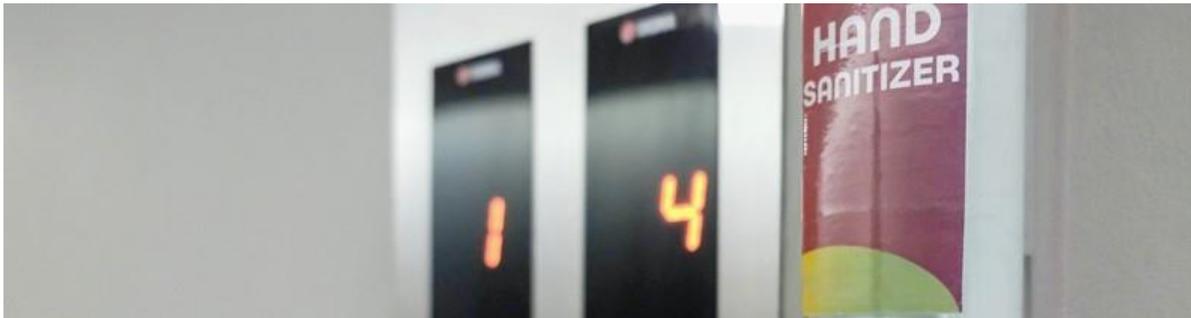
If you need to make amendments to your review, after having clicked 'Submit Review', you may make these changes directly to the same form and then clicking 'Update Review' to save those changes.

If you are providing feedback for multiple documents: when you are ready to move on to your next review, go to the top of the page and click on the white 'x' symbol in a white circle (if you hover your mouse over the symbol will say 'go back to the task overview'). In this window you will find your remaining 'Incomplete tasks'. If you need to make amendments to any previously completed tasks, change the filter at the top left to 'All tasks' and select the document you would like to make changes to and follow the same process to 'Update Review' and save changes.

We would like to thank you for your input to this important process.

- **Image**

[zoom_in](#)



- **Please review the following content**

Guidance Document Begins Here

Introduction

This document is to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the Covid-19 pandemic, keeping as many people as possible 2 metres apart from those they do not live with. We hope it gives you a practical framework to think about what you need to do to continue, or restart, operations during the Covid-19 pandemic. We understand how important it is that you can work safely and support your employees' health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic. We know that most office workers are not currently in the workplace, we hope this document will help those who are already working because they cannot work from home, as

well as help other people think about how to prepare for when office working returns. The Government is clear that workers will not be forced into an unsafe workplace.

This document has been prepared by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with input from firms, unions and industry bodies and in consultation with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

We expect that this document will be updated over time. This version is up to date as of [date of publication]. You can check for updates at www.gov.uk/covid19/workingsafely. If you have any feedback for us that we should include in the next version, please email workingsafely@beis.gov.uk.

This document is one of a set of documents about how to work safely in different types of workplace. This one is designed to be relevant for people who work in or run offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

How to use this guidance

This document sets out guidance across the main areas you need to follow to work safely.

It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied within the **blue boxes**.

Each business will need to translate this into the specific actions it needs to take depending on the nature of their business (i.e. the size and type of business, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated) using this document as a guide.

To help you decide which actions to take, you should carry out an appropriate Covid-19 risk assessment, just as you would for other Health and Safety related obligations. This risk assessment should be done in consultation with unions or employees.

What do we mean by “offices and contact centres”?

Indoor environments such as offices, contact centres, operations rooms and similar workplaces.

1. Risk Assessment

Objective: That all employers and self-employed people carry out a risk assessment.

You should make sure that the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of Covid-19, using this guidance to inform your decisions and control measures. If you have fewer than five employees, you don't have to write anything down. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace. Your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have done everything you need.

Employers have a duty to consult employees on health and safety. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the work and how you will manage risks from Covid-19. Your employees are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work well. Involving them in making decisions shows that you take their health and safety seriously. In a small business, you might choose to consult your workers directly. Larger businesses may consult through a health and safety representative, chosen by your employees or selected by a trade union. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of your workers creates a culture where relationships between employers and employees are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, employees should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer.

Where the Enforcing Authority, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or your Local Authority, identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. For example, this would cover employers not taking appropriate action to socially distance or to ensure workers in the shielded category can follow the NHS advice to self-isolate for the period specified. The actions HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

Employers and employees should always work together to resolve issues. If concerns still cannot be resolved, employees can raise them with HSE using an online form at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Constructively engaging with employees when carrying out a risk assessment.
- Ensuring the results of any assessment are visible and communicated to employees.
- Ensuring that the actions taken as the result of the assessment do not disproportionately impact those with disabilities and consider how to support those with disabilities to comply with social distancing.

2. Who should go to work

Objective: That everyone should work from home, unless they cannot work from home.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Who is needed to be on site: for example, office staff should work from home if at all possible.
 - Employees in roles critical for business and operational continuity, safe facility management, or regulatory requirements and which cannot be performed remotely.
 - Employees in critical roles which might be performed remotely, but who are unable to work remotely due to home circumstances or the unavailability of safe enabling equipment.
- Planning for the minimum number of people needed on site to operate safely and effectively.
- Monitoring the well-being of employees who are working from home and helping them stay connected to the rest of the workforce., especially if the majority of their colleagues are on-site.
- Keeping in touch with off-site employees on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security.
- Providing equipment for employees to work from home safely and effectively (for example, laptops, mobile phones, video conferencing services).

2.1 Protecting people who are at higher risk

Objective: To protect vulnerable individuals.

- Shielded extremely vulnerable individuals (see definition in [Appendix](#)) must not work outside the home.
- Non-shielded, but still vulnerable individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions, see definition in [Appendix](#)) have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing and should be helped to work from home whenever possible, either in their current role or in an alternative role.
- If vulnerable individuals cannot work from home, they should be offered the safest available roles.
- Employers should offer support to their workers, particularly around wellbeing and mental health.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Whenever possible, vulnerable workers should be considered for roles where they can work from home.
- If this poses a risk to operations, moving vulnerable workers into lower risk activities where they have the highest chance of remaining 2m away from others.
- Providing support for workers around mental health and wellbeing. This could include guidance or telephone support.

2.2 People who need to self-isolate

Objective: To make sure individuals who are advised to stay at home under [existing Government guidance](#) do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of Covid-19 as well as those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Enabling workers to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate.
- See current guidance on [employees](#) and [employers](#) relating to statutory sick pay due to Covid-19.
- See [current guidance](#) on people who have symptoms and those who live with others who have symptoms.

3. Social distancing at work

Objective: To help people to maintain 2m social distancing where possible, including while arriving at, and departing from, work, while in work and when travelling between sites.

- It will not always be possible to keep a distance of 2m. In these circumstances both employers and employees must do everything they reasonably can to reduce risk. Examples of how to do this are set up below.
- Social distancing applies to all parts of a business, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms and canteens and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing.

3.1 Coming to work and leaving work

Objective: To maintain social distancing on arrival and departure and to ensure handwashing upon arrival.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Staggering arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace.
- Providing additional parking or facilities such as bike-racks.
- Limiting passengers in corporate vehicles (for example, work minibuses). This could include leaving seats empty.
- Reducing congestion, for example by having more entry points to the workplace.
- Providing more storage for employees for clothes and bags.
- Using markings and introducing one-way flow at entry and exit points.

- Providing handwashing facilities (or hand sanitation where not possible) at entry/exit points and not using touch-based security devices (such as keypads).
- Defining process alternatives for entry/exit points where appropriate, for example deactivating turnstiles requiring pass checks in favour of showing a pass to security personnel at a distance.
- Designating exclusive entry/exits points for personnel working in high-risk areas, such as plant rooms

3.2 Moving around buildings and worksites

Objective: To maintain social distancing as far as possible while people travel through the workplace.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Reducing movement by discouraging non-essential movements within buildings and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios or telephones.
- Restricting access between different areas of a building or site.
- Reducing job and location rotation.
- Introducing more one-way flow through buildings.
- Reducing maximum occupancy for lifts, providing hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts, and encouraging use of stairs whenever possible (including lift reprogramming in large buildings).
- Regulating use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing.

Examples of lift practices

3.3 Workplaces and workstations

Objective: To maintain social distancing between individuals when they are at their workstations.

- For people who work in one place, workstations should allow them to maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- Workstations should be assigned to an individual and not shared. If they need to be shared they should be shared by the smallest possible number of people.
- If it is not possible to keep workstations 2m apart then extra attention needs to be paid to equipment, cleaning and hygiene to reduce risk.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Review layouts, line set-ups or processes to let employees work further apart from each other.
- Arranging for employees to work side-by-side. For example, by working side-by-side or facing away from each other.
- Using screens to create a physical barrier between people.
- Using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help employees keep to a 2m distance.
- Managing occupancy levels to enable social distancing.
- Avoiding use of hot desks and spaces and, where not possible (for example call centres, training facilities), cleaning and sanitising workstations between different occupants including shared equipment.
- Limiting use of high-touch items and shared office equipment (for example, printers, whiteboards).
- Ensuring appropriate air-handling and filtering systems are installed and maintained in high-risk areas where there is a risk for airborne particles, such as plant rooms or service areas.

Example of workstation plan of a four-person office to ensure social distancing and air ventilation

Example of floor plan and signage to enable social distancing and safe working in office

3.4 Meetings

Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Using remote working tools, to avoid in-person meetings.
- Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens and other objects.
- Only absolutely necessary participants should attend meetings.
- Providing hand sanitisation in meeting rooms.
- Holding meeting in well ventilated rooms, where possible.
- Limiting or restricting occupancy in group interaction spaces and areas (for example auditoriums, audio / video conference rooms).
- For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

3.5 Common areas

Objective: To maintain social distancing while using of common areas.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Working collaboratively with other tenants in multi-tenant sites / buildings to ensure consistency across common areas (for example receptions, staircases).
- Staggering break times to reduce pressure on break rooms or canteens.
- Using outdoor areas for common areas where possible.
- Creating additional space by using other parts of the workplace or building that have been freed up by remote working.
- Using protective screening for staff in receptions or similar areas.
- Providing packaged meals or similar to avoid opening staff canteens where possible.
- Encouraging employees to bring their own food.
- Reconfiguring seating and tables to maintain spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.
- Encouraging staff to remain on-site and, when not possible, maintaining social distancing.
- Regulating use of locker rooms, changing areas and other facility areas to reduce concurrent usage.
- Encouraging storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage spaces (for example lockers) during shifts.

Example of common areas and appropriate signage to restrict access when social distancing is not possible / practical

3.6 Accidents, security and other incidents

Objective: To prioritise safety during incidents.

- In an emergency (for example, an accident, fire or break-in), people do not have to stay 2m apart if it would be unsafe.
- People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.

4. Managing your customers, visitors and contractors

4.1 Manage contacts

Objective: To minimise the number of unnecessary visits to offices.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Encouraging visits via remote connection/working for visitors where this is an option.
- Explaining site guidance that the visitor is expected to follow upon visitor's arrival.
- Limiting the number of visitors at any one time.
- Limiting visitor times to a specific time window and restricting access to required visitors only.
- Determining if schedules for essential services and contractor visits can be revised to reduce interaction and overlap between people (for example, carrying out services at night).
- Maintaining a record of all visitors, if this is practical.
- Revising visitor arrangements to ensure social distancing and hygiene (for example, where someone physically signs in with the same pen in receptions).

4.2 Providing and explaining available guidance

Objective: To make sure people understand what they need to do to maintain safety.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Where site visits are required, for example inbound supplier deliveries or safety critical visitors, site guidance should be explained on or before arrival.

- Establishing host responsibilities relating to Covid-19, providing any necessary training for people who act as hosts for visitors.
- Reviewing entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors to minimise contact with other people.
- Coordinating and working collaboratively with other tenants in multi-tenant sites (for examples, shared working spaces).

5. Cleaning and sanitising the workplace

5.1 Before reopening

Objective: To make sure that any site or location that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart, including:

- An assessment for all sites, or parts of sites, that have been closed, before restarting work.
- Carrying out cleaning procedures and providing hand sanitiser before restarting work.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Servicing and adjusting ventilation systems (for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels).
- Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings or you are unsure, advice can be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.
- Opening windows and doors frequently to encourage ventilation, where possible.

5.2 Keeping the workplace clean

Objective: To keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses.
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, such as door handles and keyboards, and making sure there are adequate safe disposal arrangements.
- Clearing workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of shift.
- Limiting or restricting use of high-touch items and equipment (for example, printers, whiteboards).

5.3 Hygiene – handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets

Objective: To help everyone keep good hygiene through the working day.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to avoid touching your face and the need to cough or sneeze into your arm.
- Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain personal hygiene standards.
- Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Enhancing cleaning for busy areas.
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.
- Replacing hand dryers with paper towels in handwashing facilities.

5.4 Changing rooms and showers

Objective: To minimise the risk of transmission in changing rooms and showers.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Where shower and changing facilities are required, setting clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean, clear of personal items and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Introducing enhanced cleaning of all facilities throughout the day and at the end of each day.

5.5 Handling goods, merchandise and other materials, and onsite vehicles

Objective: To reduce transmission through contact with objects that come into the workplace and vehicles at the worksite.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Cleaning procedures for goods and merchandise entering the site.
- Cleaning procedures for vehicles.
- Nearby supply of hand sanitiser for employees to use boarding vehicles or handling deliveries when handwashing is not practical.
- Regular cleaning of vehicles that employees may take home.
- Restricting non-business deliveries (for example, personal deliveries to employees).

6. Personal protective equipment (PPE)

PPE and facemasks - guidance to follow.

7. Workforce management

7.1 Shift patterns and working groups

Objective: To change the way work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each employee has.

What we expect employers to consider:

- As far as possible, where staff are split into teams or shift groups, fixing these teams or shift groups so that where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same people.
- Identifying areas where people directly pass things to each other (for example, office supplies) and find ways to remove direct contact, such as using drop-off points or transfer zones.

7.2 Work-related travel

7.2.1 Cars, accommodation and visits

Objective: To avoid unnecessary work travel and keep people safe when they do need to travel between locations.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Minimising non-essential travel – consider remote options first.
- Minimising the number of people travelling together in any one vehicle.
- Cleaning shared vehicles between shifts or on handover.
- Where employees are required to stay away from their home, centrally logging the stay and making sure any overnight accommodation meets social distancing guidelines.

7.2.2 Deliveries to Other Sites

Objective: To help workers delivering to other sites such as branches, or suppliers' or customers' premises to maintain social distancing and hygiene practices.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Putting in place procedures to minimise person-to-person contact during deliveries to other sites.
- Maintaining consistent pairing where two-person delivered are required.
- Minimising contact during payments and exchange of documentation, for example by using electronic payment methods and electronically signed and exchanged documents.

7.3 Communications and Training

7.3.1 Returning to work

Objective: To make sure all workers understand Covid-19 related safety procedures.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Providing clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.
- Engaging with workers through existing communication routes and employee representatives to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.
- Developing communication and training materials for worker prior to returning to site, especially around new procedures for arrival at work and anything workers are expected to bring with them to help maintain new safety or hygiene standards.

7.3.2 Ongoing communications and signage

Objective: To make sure all workers are kept up to date with how safety measures are being implemented or updated.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Ongoing engagement with workers (including through Unions, Councils or representative groups) to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments.
- Awareness and focus on the importance of mental health at times of uncertainty. The government has published [guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#).
- Using simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language.
- Using visual communications, for example whiteboards or signage, to explain changes to schedules, breakdowns or materials shortages to reduce the need for face-to-face communications.
- Communicating approaches and operational procedures to suppliers, customers or trade bodies to help their adoption and to share experience.

Example signage to promote hygiene and social distancing measures

8. Inbound and outbound goods

Objective: To maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission when goods enter and leave the site.

What we expect employers to consider:

- Revising pick-up and drop-off collection points, procedures, signage and markings.
- Minimising unnecessary contact at gatehouse security, yard and warehouse for example non-contact deliveries where the nature of the product allows for use of electronic pre-booking.
- Ordering larger quantities of inbound materials less often to reduce deliveries.
- Where possible and safe, having single employees load or unload vehicles.
- Where possible, using the same pairs of people for loads where more than one is needed.
- Enabling drivers to access welfare facilities when required, consistent with other guidance.
- Encouraging drivers to stay in their vehicles where this does not compromise their safety and existing safe working practice, such as preventing drive-aways.

Where to obtain further guidance

Coronavirus (Covid-19): guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

Covid-19: guidance for employees, employers and businesses

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

Appendix

Definitions

Common Areas	The term 'common area' refers to areas and amenities which are provided for the common use of more than one person including canteens, reception areas, meeting rooms, areas of worship, toilets, gardens, fire escapes, kitchens, fitness facilities, store rooms, laundry facilities.
People who are shielding	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/if-youre-at-very-high-risk-from-coronavirus/
Respiratory hygiene	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control "> https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control
Vulnerable people	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/