



Post-coronavirus start-up guidance: Covid-19 risk assessments - what you need to consider for returning to work

Nobody knows your business better than the people who work and manage the activities in the workplace, however it is vitally important that you consult regularly with your employees when preparing risk assessments and guidance for return to work.

This guidance is for businesses irrespective of their size or number of employees. Many businesses should be able to undertake this themselves, however, you may wish to consult externally where advice of a specialist nature is required, particularly for higher hazard activities and operations.

Please note - these steps are not a risk assessment itself, but as an aide to consider when preparing an update to address the implications in the workplace of Covid-19.

These guidelines do not override any existing policy conditions.

The fact that a business is deemed essential, or is permitted to operate, does not mean its legal obligations are in any way relaxed or reduced. Indeed, in the present climate the duties owed to employees and others are enhanced. All activities must only be undertaken in line with the current guidance issued by HM Government.

All applicable health & safety legislation and regulations remain fully in force, including but not limited to:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992.
- Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order 2005.

First and foremost employee safety is paramount.





Coronavirus Response

Risk management measures

Activities: It is important that a review of your working activities is undertaken before restarting any work, as this will form part of your Covid-19 Compliance risk assessment. You must carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment; this means looking at working areas and activities to enable your employees to successfully distance themselves from customers and colleagues and work safely.

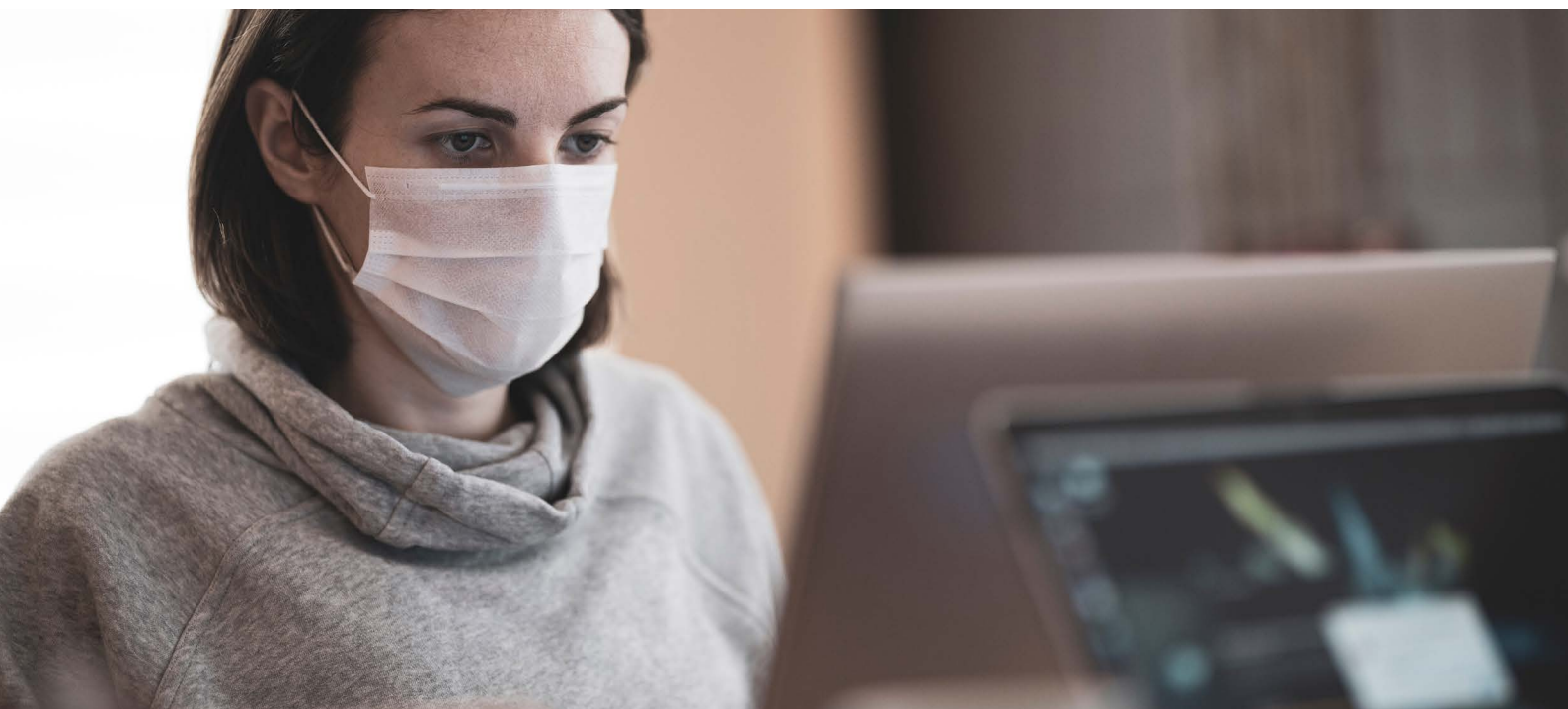
It may not be appropriate to carry out certain activities as you normally would, and / or you may need to consider supplying PPE equipment to certain employees. Please see the latest Government and HSE advice for updates on appropriate precautions.

Please remember that if some activities cannot be carried out safely, they should not be undertaken at all.

Risk Assessments

There are 6 points to consider step-by-step when carrying this out. Nobody knows your business better than you and your employees, and it is vitally important that you consult with all employees to ensure that you can plan and prepare effectively for a safe return to work.

1. Plan
2. Consult
3. Assess
4. Train
5. Monitor
6. Review





Coronavirus Response

1. Plan

Think about your business activities from start to finish - what operations can you effectively restart where physical distancing can be managed?

People

- Are there employees who are classed as vulnerable and / or high risk?
- Are any of their roles critical to restarting your business?
- If so, can the function they perform be done from home?
- If not, is there an eligible employee who could assist, albeit with support remotely?

Activities

- Think about your working activities - are there areas where physical distancing can be managed?
- Are there areas where you can, or need to, stagger starting and finishing times and / or alter working shifts and activities to effectively social distance?
- Be careful with lone working situations, you may need to deploy increased frequency of checks, and other control mechanisms, to ensure employees are not at increased risk.

2. Consult

Employers should consult with employees and trade unions about the return to the workplace. In the meantime, non-essential and clerical staff should, where possible, continue to work from home. Employers should keep up-to-date with the latest government guidance to help them plan.

When planning to return to the workplace, employers must:

1. Consult with staff and employee representatives, including any trade union representatives and health & safety officials.
2. Consider the risks of anyone being harmed in the workplace and carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.
3. Make the workplace as safe as possible for staff, customers and other visitors.

Some employees may be anxious about their safety when returning to the workplace. Employers and employees should talk about any concerns and try to resolve them together. It can also help to signpost staff to any health and wellbeing support that is available, for example occupational health or mental health service.

More advice is available vis this link: [Mental Health Support Covid-19](#)





Coronavirus Response

3. Assess

Carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for your activities, to ensure that you can meet the current Covid-19 guidelines. Further information and illustrative examples are available via the sector-specific HM Government links below.

If you have less than 5 employees it is not legally required to document your risk assessments, however we recommend that you do so to prove that you have completed a Covid-19 review.

Construction and other outdoor work: guidance for people who work in, or run, outdoor working environments.

Factories, plants and warehouses: guidance for people who work in, or run, factories, plants and warehouses.

Laboratories and research facilities: guidance for people who work in, or run, indoor laboratories, research facilities and similar environments.

Offices and contact centres: guidance for people who work in, or run, offices, contact centres and similar indoor environments.

Other people's homes: guidance for people working in, visiting or delivering to other people's homes.

Restaurants offering takeaway or delivery: guidance for people who work in, or run, restaurants offering takeaway or delivery services.

Shops and branches: guidance for people who work in, or run, shops, branches, stores or similar environments.

Vehicles: guidance for people who work in, or from, vehicles, including couriers, mobile workers, lorry drivers, on-site transit and work vehicles, field forces and similar.





Coronavirus Response

4. Train

Employees need to know about new working arrangements, controls and new practices - think carefully about who and what you need to cover.

Here are some areas to consider, but the list is by no means comprehensive:

- Ensure all personnel records and contact details are up to date, and accessible by HR or those who need to know.
- Know what to do if someone reports they are displaying symptoms or is self-isolating. You will need to trace and inform working colleagues and sanitise areas of the premises that they have visited.
- Reinduction of employees, to ensure they understand new restrictions, staggered start / finish times and short-term shift working.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of the need for regular hand washing and sanitising of surfaces, particularly in washrooms and WC's.
- New and updated risk assessments and working procedures/practices.
- Limiting public and third-party contact.
- Managing subcontractors and essential third parties.
- Welfare, washing and messing facilities and new distancing arrangements.
- New arrangements for employee car parking, cycle storage and travel arrangements where avoidance of public transport is required.
- Altered vehicle and pedestrian traffic routes and management.
- Changed building access and egress routes.
- First Aid and First Responder training - how do you manage close contact? Full PPE may be required, and it is suggested that you investigate [further advice from St John Ambulance](#)





Coronavirus Response

- Emergency fire evacuations - if an emergency arises you need to be aware that the priority is life safety and should act accordingly. More information is available via the following link: [Fire Safety Advice to Business](#)
- Issue and use of PPE - many items of PPE are in very short supply. You must make sure that employees know how to use the PPE, remove it and dispose of it properly.
- Training of cleaning staff, ensuring that a standardised cleaning regime is implemented and undertaken and that all cleaning is carried out at an increased frequency in all areas. Make sure that cleaners are using the correct grade of sanitiser - more information is available via the link below.
- Further advice is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>.
- Consider employees who are hearing impaired and may require additional help. Further advice is available here: <https://signhealth.org.uk/resources/coronavirus/>
- Document all training and revised practices and arrangements, and ensure these are circulated to employees and third parties.
- Make sure all employees have access to the new guidelines and procedures and can access these. Publish all new material on your website (if over 50 employees) or business information bulletin board.

5. Monitor

Like any good management process, whether you have 5 or 500 employees, it's important that you monitor new and revised processes and activities to ensure that:

- Revised arrangements, working policies, risk assessments and practices are functioning as intended - it's essential to capture any comments and feedback from employees and third parties.
- Ensure employees are adhering to these and, more importantly, that they understand the importance of these.
- Take note of areas that may not be working so well.
- Engage with employees to assist with working out what needs to change and what can be done better - in some cases certain practices may not be possible.
- Employees and managers should be trained in the steps that may need to be taken if the revised rules to maintain distancing are not being followed.





Coronavirus Response

6. Review

It suggested that you audit and review the entire operation, to ensure that all areas are undertaking operations as required and that no departures from procedures are apparent.

- Check / inspect workplaces weekly.
- Meet employees and invite comments and experiences.
- Review training needs.
- Refresh policies and practices as required.
- Publish changes and amendments on company website or bulletin board.
- Sample working practices and observe that activities are being carried out as intended.
- Record all changes as part of the process and ensure action is taken to address these, particularly when a concern is raised.
- Feed changes back into employee training to update employees and third parties.
- Revise, amend and publish revised procedures and practices as required.

