

COVID-19 SECURE:

Guidance on Working Safely During COVID-19

Briefing Paper
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Black Country
Chamber of
Commerce

blackcountrychamber.co.uk

Summary

The UK Government has published guidance to help companies and employees adapt their workplaces to ensure safe operation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has produced eight guides for businesses covering the following types of work:

- Construction and outdoor work
- Factories, plants and warehouses
- Working in Homes (visiting or delivering to home environments)
- Laboratories and research facilities
- Offices and contact centres
- Restaurants offering takeaway/delivery services
- Shops and branches (including those currently closed)
- Working in vehicles (couriers, mobile workers, HGV drivers, transit and work vehicles)

Businesses can access each of the above guides [here](#).

Some businesses, depending on their nature and activity, may have to consult more than one guide.

These guides are intended to be a framework for businesses to consult when deciding what action, they need to take in order to re-open their workplaces. The Government has made it clear that workers should not be forced to work in unsafe workplaces.

It is important to note that these guidance documents do not supersede any legal obligations and existing legislation relating to health and safety, employment and equalities and therefore, employers must continue to comply with these existing obligations.

The following information is a summary of the guidance related to the eight guides above.



What is a COVID-19 Risk Assessment?

The Government has stated that all employers must undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment as soon as possible to identify the measures required to minimise risks posed to employees in the workplace.

This Risk assessment should be undertaken in consultation with employees and a health and safety representative from a recognised trade union. If health and safety representative is available, employees should nominate a representative of their choice.

Please visit the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) website [here](#) for additional guidance and best practice.

On completion of the risk assessment, employers will need to share the results of the risk assessment with their workforces and publish the results on their website.

They should also display a five-point government notice stating that they have complied with the Government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19.



How will this be enforced?

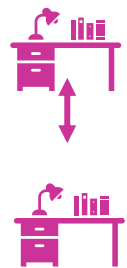
The HSE and other enforcement authorities can take a number of measures against employers who are deemed to not be taking necessary action to comply with public health risks and improve control of workplace risks. This includes provision of specific advice and issuing enforcement notices to deliver improvements.

Who should be at work?



- Employees who are able to work from home should continue to do so.
- Employees unable to work from home should now return to work where possible but businesses are encouraged to plan for the minimum number of people on site to be able to operate safely and effectively.
- Employees who are at a higher risk of severe illness such as those with pre-existing health conditions need to be protected. These individuals should be helped to work from home in their current role or found an alternative role (if necessary) which could enable them to do so.
- Employers should also ensure that workers who need to self-isolate under existing government guidelines do not return to work.

How do I maintain social distancing in the workplace?



- Employers should look to reduce the risk in the workplace by maintaining social distancing guidelines and keeping workers and customers 2 metres apart at all times where possible. This could be done by floor markings (tape, paint) and other physical changes to the layout of the premises.
- Where social distancing guidelines are not applicable for particular activities, employers should consider whether the activity is essential for the business to operate and if so, take any further mitigating actions to reduce the risks of transmission.
- Employees should avoid face-to-face working wherever possible and should be encouraged to increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning. Where possible employees could use screens or barriers to separate themselves from colleagues and customers and limiting any face-to-face activity to a minimal as possible.
- Businesses will need to apply social distancing measures across the premises and account for all areas including entrances, exits, break rooms, canteens and workstations.
- Employers should stagger arrival, departure and break times to ease congestion and provide additional parking or bike-racks where possible.
- Employers should avoid using in-person face to face staff meetings and work to reduce non-essential trips within buildings and across sites.
- In emergency situations (e.g. fire) social distancing measures will not need to be maintained if it would be unsafe to do so.

How do I manage my customers, visitors and contractors?



- Businesses will need to review visitor arrangements and provide clear guidance on arrival to visitors and customers on what is expected of them to maintain social distancing measures and hygiene.
- Businesses should limit the number of customers allowed in their premises at any one time and assess potential pinch points and busy areas.
- Businesses should suspend or reduce any customer services that cannot be undertaken by following social distancing measures.

Workplace hygiene



- Before reopening, businesses need to undertake an assessment of any site or location that has been closed or partially operated to ensure it is clean and safe to return to.
- Businesses will need to ensure that work areas and surfaces (high frequency touch points e.g. door handles, keypads) are cleaned on a regular basis.
- Businesses should ensure appropriate signage is used throughout the workplace to build awareness of good hygiene practices.
- Hand sanitiser should also be placed in multiple locations (in addition to washrooms) and at entry and exit points.
- Enhanced cleaning on shared equipment and busy areas such as changing rooms and shower facilities should be utilised.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face coverings



- Employees already required to use PPE in their work activity should continue to do so.
- It is not necessary for employees to use additional PPE beyond what they usually wear and employers should adhere to risks mitigation identified by their risk assessments (unnecessary use of PPE in the workplace could limit availability elsewhere for Health and Care workers).
- Employees may wish to wear a face covering as a precaution (this is optional) and employers should support staff in using them safely (please note a face-covering is not the same as designated PPE face masks).

Workforce management



- Businesses should identify ways to remove direct contact between workers. If direct contact is unavoidable, they should look to keep teams, groups or shift workers together (as far as possible) when undertaking work, therefore minimising contact groups in case of infection.
- Employees should avoid unnecessary travel for work and employers should mitigate any risk by minimising the number of people that have to travel together in one vehicle. Ensuring social distancing guidance is applied.
- Businesses should issue clear guidance to workers (before they return to work) to ensure they understand all safety procedures in place to mitigate risk of COVID-19.
- Changes to working arrangements should be discussed and agreed to by workers (or representatives) and monitored on a continuous basis in line with government guidance.

Inbound and outbound goods



- Social distancing measures should be followed when handling inbound and outbound deliveries. Avoiding unnecessary contact where applicable.
- Employers should consider reducing the number of deliveries, ordering larger stock levels and revising pick-up and drop off collection points.
- Where possible employers should use single workers to load and unload vehicles without interacting with the driver
- Businesses that make deliveries to homes and other sites should put in place procedures such as contactless delivery to minimise direct contact between people.

What is the Black Country Chamber's position on the UK Government's Guidance for Working Safely During Coronavirus?

The Chamber welcomes this additional guidance for businesses on steps to re-open and operate safely and the publication of the roadmap to recovery. To stimulate economic recovery and ensure the UK continues to drive down the number of cases to avoid a secondary peak of infection it is essential that employers read and consult this guidance to protect their employees.

We understand that it will take time for many businesses to undertake the appropriate risk assessments and ensure that their workplaces are safe for employees to return to work and this is something that should not be rushed.

The Chamber will continue to work hard for our members in the Black Country and wider West Midlands region to help them to prepare to return to work.

Get in touch:

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