

# COVID-19

## THE ROAD TO RECOVERY:

### Guidance for The Retail Sector



Black Country  
Chamber of  
Commerce

[blackcountrychamber.co.uk](http://blackcountrychamber.co.uk)

## Summary

On 25 May 2020, the Government gave the green light for the nation's retailers to begin trading again from 15 June 2020.

Under these new measures all non-essential retailers – including shops selling clothes, shoes, toys, furniture, books, and electronics - will be able to open again, providing they maintain social distancing measures and that they are 'COVID-19 secure'. In his speech on the 25 May, the Prime Minister also announced that outdoor markets and car showrooms can open from 1 June 2020.

The Government has published additional guidance [here](#) which has been comprehensively examined, and the Chamber has highlighted key aspects of the new guidance below.

All information and guidance used was correct as of 26 May 2020.

## Who can open – what does the Government mean by 'shops and branches'?

The guidance states that 'shops and branches' include all retail stores including:

- Food retailers
- Chemists
- Hardware/homeware stores
- Fashion shops
- Charity shops
- Betting shops & arcades
- Tailors, dress fitters and fashion designers,
- Car dealerships
- Auction houses
- Antique stores
- Retail art galleries
- Photography studios
- Gift shops and retail spaces in theatres, museums, libraries, heritage sites and tourism sites
- Mobile phone stores
- Indoor and outdoor markets
- Craft fairs
- Similar types of retail
- Bank branches
- Post offices
- Open money businesses

## COVID-19 Risk assessments

The guidance states that each business needs to conduct an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment similarly to how they would undertake health and safety risk assessments. The COVID-19 risk assessment must be done in consultation with employees or an employee representative.

For retailers that employ five or more employees, this assessment needs to be documented. The guidance also notes that local authorities and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) can and may act if a company is failing to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance, including the use of enforcement notices.

Once retailers have completed their risk assessment, they should share the results with their employees and consider publishing it on their website note that all businesses with over 50 employees should publish their assessment online.

## Minimising Risk in your premises

To help minimise the risk of COVID-19, the government guidance has identified a range of steps that retailers and businesses can address in their risk assessment including:

- Increase handwashing frequency and surface cleaning.
- Encourage staff that can work from home to do so or, where this is not possible, to maintain two metre social distance guidelines at all times in the premises.
- Assess and consider which activities cannot be carried out from home or within social distancing guidelines which are needed for the company to operate and, if so, take all actions to reduce the risk including limiting the time of activity to be as short as possible, using protective screens or barriers and staffing solutions such as 'fixed teams' to prevent staff mixing.
- Determine if activities that require people to work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed colleagues can take place safely.

Retailers can download and print this [notice](#) to show they have followed the COVID-19 safety guidance.

## Employees Safety in Shop environments

The guidance details the steps that employers should consider regarding the employees' safety, including the following steps to protect them:

- Determine who is essential to be on the premises and who, such as back of house workers, can work from home.
- Plan for the minimum number of staff to operate safely and effectively.
- Monitor the wellbeing of those working from home and help ensure they remain connected to the rest of the workforce to avoid feelings of loneliness and exclusion.
- Keep in touch regularly with off-site employees on their working arrangements including welfare, mental and physical health, and personal security.
- Provide the equipment necessary for people to work safely and effectively from home, such as remote access to work systems.

Employees that have specific underlying health conditions that make them extremely vulnerable to severe illness if they contract COVID-19 are strongly advised not to work outside the home by the government.

For those that are deemed as "clinically vulnerable" but not "extremely vulnerable" – i.e. those that received a letter informing them to shield – the guidance highlights that these workers should take extra care in observing social distancing and be helped to work from home or offered the option to take the safest roles on site.

## Social distancing measures in shop environments

The guidance stresses the need to maintain social distancing at work in all areas of the business, including entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens, and similar settings where it is often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing. The guidance also outlines measures that retailers can introduce to increase the adoption of social distancing in shops by staff including the following:

- Staggering employee arrival and departure times to limit contact and crowding.
- Providing additional parking or facilities to help individuals run, walk and cycle to work.
- Reducing congestion by making more entry points available into and out of stores.
- Using a one-way system with floor marking for entrance and exit points, as well as throughout the building.
- Provide hand washing facilities or hand sanitiser at entrance and exit points.
- Limit access to certain areas to certain employees to reduce movement.
- Limit lift occupancy but ensure it is available when needed for those with disabilities, as well as providing hand sanitiser for lift operation.
- Regulating use of high traffic areas in a building to allow for social distancing to take place.
- Review layouts to allow workers to work further apart.
- Use floor tapes and mark areas to help people keep to a two-metre distance.
- Avoid face-to-face scenarios, including reviewing payments in stores and potentially look at screens to create physical barriers.
- Use a consistent pairing system if people do have to work together in proximity.
- Minimise contacts around transactions and encourage contactless payments.
- Rethink demonstrations and assessments of products to minimise direct contact.
- Encourage staff to stagger their breaks and potentially take breaks outside but on-site where they will limit exposure to others.
- Utilise screens to protect staff in reception areas and introducing controls in areas such as staff rooms, toilets, and employee lockers to avoid queues.
- Where possible workstations should be assigned to a single individual and if they are shared, they should be shared by the small possible number of people.
- Where it is not possible to keep workstations two metres apart, the business should consider how this can be mitigated, such as closing one till and operating at reduced capacity.

## Managing your customers

The guidance reinforces that contact between customers and staff should be limited wherever possible. Steps retailers can take to manage contact with customers:

- Define and limit the number of customers that can reasonably follow social distancing in store, considering floor space, “pinch points” and busy areas.
- Suspend or reduce customer services that cannot be undertaken without contravening social distancing guidelines.

- Encourage customers to shop alone where possible unless they need specific assistance.
- Look at how people walk through the shop and how this can be adjusted to reduce congestion and contact between customers, for example, queue management or one-way flow.
- Ensure any changes to entries, exits and queue management have reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of customers, including disabled shoppers.
- Use outside premises for queuing where available and safe, for example some car parks.
- Work with a local authority or landlord to consider the impact of your processes on public spaces such as high streets and public car parks.
- Have clearly designated positions from which colleagues can provide advice or assistance to customers whilst maintaining social distance.
- Use signage and visual aids to communicate the new social distancing measures to customers and employees prior to entering and during their shopping visit.
- Appoint a 'social distancing champion' to explain and demonstrate social distancing guidelines to customers.

## Handling products and payments

To reduce the chance of COVID-19 transmission, the government's guidance focuses on limiting the handling of merchandise by customers and cash.

Alongside the emphasis to increase handwashing and hand sanitisation, as well as introducing contactless payments and refunds, the guidance outlines further steps retailers can consider implementing including:

- Limiting customer handling of merchandise through different display methods, new signage, or rotation of high-touch stock.
- Put in place picking-up and dropping-off collection points where possible, rather than passing goods hand-to-hand.
- Enforce staggered collection times for customers collecting items, with a queuing system in place to ensure a safe distance of two metres.
- Set up 'no contact' return procedures where customers take return goods to a designated area and encourage contactless refunds.
- Keep returns separate from displayed merchandise to reduce the likelihood of transmission through touch.
- Provide guidance to how workers can safely assist customers with handling large-item purchases.
- Store items that have been returned, donated, brought in for repair or extensively handled, in a container or separate room for 72 hours, or cleaning such items with usual cleaning products, before displaying them on the shop floor. Materials used for cleaning can be disposed of normally.
- Consider placing protective coverings on large items that may require customer testing or use, for example, furniture, beds or seats. Ensure frequent cleaning of these coverings between uses, using usual cleaning products.
- Clean touchpoints after each customer use or handover, particularly in cases where equipment has been rented.



## Personal Protective Equipment and face coverings

According to government guidance, retailers that are already using PPE in “work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks” should continue to do so.

The guidance states that “when managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE.”

Face coverings are not required by law, they are also not a replacement for increasing hygiene levels and strict social distancing. Employers should support employees that wish to wear one whilst working by informing them of the following advice:

- wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on and after removing it
- when wearing a face covering, avoid touching the face or face covering, as it could contaminate them with germs from the hands
- change the face covering if it becomes damp or if the user has touched it
- continue to wash hands regularly
- change and wash the face covering daily
- if the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer’s instructions. If it’s not washable, dispose of it carefully in the usual waste
- practise social distancing wherever possible

## Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

The Reopening High Streets Safely Fund is a £50 million fund from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support councils across England to deliver the safe reopening of high streets and other commercial areas. Additional guidance on this fund can be found [here](#).

## Our Position

The Black Country Chamber welcomes this additional guidance for a phased reopening of the retail sector and many Black Country retailers will be looking to implement these safer working measures.

We would encourage all local authorities and the HSE to work with the Chambers and business communities to support retailers and businesses to comply to this new way of working.

## Contact the Policy Team:

By email at:  
Policy@blackcountrychamber.co.uk

By telephone at:  
01902 912 322 (COVID-19 Business Helpline)