MANAGING THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS: WORKPLACE HYGIENE

BRIEFING PAPER 2.0

Managing the coronavirus in the workplace

As the coronavirus spread continues, the Black Country Chamber of Commerce has produced the second in this series of briefing papers, Managing the Impact of Coronavirus, providing practical advice and support for business to mitigate potential impacts.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

What is Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)? A coronavirus is a type of virus. Coronaviruses are common across the world and COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus, first identified in Wuhan City, China in January 2020. The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2-14 days. This means that if a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone confirmed with coronavirus, they have not been infected. Symptoms that may develop in 14 days after exposure include:

- Cough
- Difficulty in breathing
- Fever

This infection can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

How does the Coronavirus spread? The virus is spread mainly from person-to-person. The virus spreads by droplets made when people with the coronavirus cough, sneeze or talk and is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres or less) with an infected person.

There are 2 main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:

- infection can be spread to people who are nearby (within 2 metres) or possibly could be inhaled into the lungs.
- it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching door knob or shaking hands then touching own face.

Habits to prevent the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Avoid close contact – avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, keep your distance from others.

Clean your hands – washing your hands often for 20 seconds will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% Ethyl Alcohol content.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth – germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated.

Practice other good health habits – use regular household cleaning spray or wipe to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces at home, work or school.

Cover your mouth and nose – cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.

How can I help prevent Coronavirus in my business?

As the Coronavirus continues to spread, businesses can take proactive steps to help curb the spread of the disease.

⚠️ Everyone should be washing their hands regularly and thoroughly with hot soap and water (make sure these are available throughout your business).

⚠️ Workplace hygiene is the responsibility of everyone, not just your cleaners.

Remember to clean first, disinfect later

Cleaning refers to the removal of germs from surfaces. Disinfecting refers to the use of chemicals to kill germs on surfaces.

Both can lower the risk of infection spread, but you should clean first, disinfect after.

⚠️ Always read the labels of your disinfectants. Some may need to remain wet for anywhere from two to ten minutes. Some workers may be allergic to chemicals used so follow manufacturers advice. Avoid contact with eyes and skin when handling cleaning products and use in a well-ventilated area.

Where do I start?

As humans we touch a number of things, including our face throughout the day. Look at tables, doorknobs, light switches and toilets as places to start. Before you disinfect dirty surfaces, clean them with detergent or soap and water first.

Employees should take responsibility for their workstations, desks and shared office spaces. You could provide disinfectant wipes and cleaning products for employees to take proactive steps with their areas.

What are 'High touch' surfaces?

Phones, tablets and computers are 'high touch' surfaces – avoid using alcohol-based products or disinfectants as this can cause damage to your equipment. Instead, turn off your device and use a lightly dampened microfibre cloth with soap and water.

High touch areas include:

- Desktops and all work surfaces
- Doorknobs and door handles
- Light switches
- Computer monitors, keyboards, mice
- Tablets and laptops
- Telephone equipment
- All chair rest and arms
- Staff congregation areas (canteens, kitchen tables)
- Sinks and taps
- Toilets, including all surfaces
- Lifts and their doors and buttons
- Vending machines and other dispensaries.

What do we need to do to protect staff, volunteers and visitors?

- Information: Provide clear information using communication channels, posters, emails, text messages.

- Handwashing facilities: Handwashing facilities should be available and well supplied. More regular handwashing may require more supplies. Provide hand sanitiser, tissues and cleaning products. GOV.UK has published clear and printable instructions on handwashing techniques here

- Cleaning regimes: Viruses can live on hard surfaces for up to eight hours. Frequently clean key areas including keyboards and door handles.

- Support staff working from home: Staffs and volunteers may be required to work from home, particularly if impacted by school closures.

- Manage your travel risks: Keep up to date on current travel advice. The Foreign Office has published information and advice on travel safety and the World Health Organisation is providing

- The NHS has a concise guide to Coronavirus setting out how it is spread, how to avoid catching it, symptoms, treatment and what to do if you think you or any of your employees might be infected. Details here.

- The World Health Organisation has more detailed information including videos on best practice and posters to download to inform your workforce. Click here.

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