

COVID-19 RISK MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST - OFFICES



INTRODUCTION

This checklist has been produced in order to assist our clients in managing COVID-19 risk in the workplace. The primary focus of this guidance is office environments, however, it could be reasonably applied to other similar environments such as call / contact centres.

The reader must recognise that, whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the guidance was correct at the time of publication, it may become out-dated as new research and guidance is issued by authoritative sources.

Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020

The UK Government published 'Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy' setting

out a three-phased plan to rebuild the UK for a world with COVID-19, stressing that it was not a quick return to normality¹.

While reconfirming that, wherever possible, workers should continue to work from home rather than their normal physical workplace, it goes on to suggest that workers who cannot work from home should travel to

work if their workplace is open. It also specified that workplaces should follow the new 'COVID Secure' guidelines as soon as practicable.

For office and contact centre environments, the guidance puts forward five steps for managing the risk of COVID-19².

- Carry out a COVID risk assessment
- Develop cleaning, handwashing, and hygiene procedures
- Help people work from home
- Maintain 2 meter social distancing where possible
- Where people cannot be 2 meters apart, manage transmission risk.

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Every employer must make sure that a risk assessment is undertaken that addresses the risks of COVID-19. Specific guidance 'Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres' was published by the UK Government to assist with these endeavours³.

The guidance clearly stipulates that "employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected. In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps in order:

- In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning
- Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible)
- Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff

Further mitigating actions include:

- Increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other

- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)
- Finally, if people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment
- In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19'.

Employers should consult with workers as part of the risk assessment process and share the results with them.

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COVID-19 risk assessment				
To ensure the risks of COVID-19 have been carefully considered and addressed, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
1.1	Carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment in line with the HSE guidance?			
1.2	Consulted with your workers and / or trade union representatives?			
1.3	Shared the results of the risk assessment with your workforce and on your website?			

Working from home				
To ensure that everyone should work from home, unless they cannot work from home, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
2.1	Ensured that all staff are working from home if at all possible, with the general exception of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Workers in roles critical for business and operational continuity, safe facility management, or regulatory requirements and which cannot be performed remotely. — Workers 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. 			
2.2	Planned for the minimum number of people needed on site to operate safely and effectively?			

2.3	Discussed home working arrangements with affected workers?			
2.4	Provided equipment for people to work at home safely and effectively, for example, remote access to work systems?			
2.5	Implemented procedures for the monitoring of the wellbeing of people who are working from home and to help them stay connected to the rest of the workforce?			
2.6	Routinely kept in touch with off-site workers on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security?			

Clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals				
To protect clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals., have you:		Yes	No	N/A
3.1	Ensured that clinically extremely vulnerable individuals have been identified and clearly instructed not to work outside the home?			
3.2	Ensured that clinically vulnerable individuals, who are at higher risk of severe illness, have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing and are helped to work from home, either in their current role or in an alternative role?			
3.3	Where clinically vulnerable individuals cannot work from home, they have been offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to stay 2m away from others?			
3.4	Where clinically vulnerable individuals cannot work from home, but they cannot avoid spending time within 2m of others, a careful assessment is conducted to establish whether this involves an acceptable level of risk?			
3.5	Ensured that particular consideration is given to people who live with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals?			

Social distancing – workplace arrival and departure				
To maintain social distancing wherever possible, on arrival and departure and to ensure handwashing upon arrival, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
4.1	Staggered arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics?			

4.2	Provided additional parking or facilities such as bike-racks to help people walk, run, or cycle to work where possible?			
4.3	Limited passengers in corporate vehicles, for example, work minibuses? This could include leaving seats empty.			
4.4	Reduced congestion, for example, by having more entry points to the workplace?			
4.5	Provided more storage for workers for clothes and bags?			
4.6	Used markings and introduced one-way flow at entry and exit points?			
4.7	Provided handwashing facilities, or hand sanitiser where not possible, at entry / exit points and not using touch-based security devices such as keypads?			
4.8	Defined 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?			

Social distancing – movement within the workplace				
To maintain social distancing wherever possible while people travel through the workplace, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
5.1	Put up signs to remind workers and visitors of social distancing guidance?			
5.2	Reduced movement by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios or telephones, where permitted, and cleaning them between use?			
5.3	Restricted access between different areas of a building or site?			
5.4	Reduced job and location rotation?			
5.5	Arranged one-way pedestrian traffic through the workplace?			
5.6	Reduced maximum occupancy for lifts, providing hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts and encouraging use of stairs wherever possible?			
5.7	Made sure that people with disabilities are able to access lifts?			
5.8	Regulated the use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing?			

Social distancing – workstations				
To maintain social distancing between individuals when they are at their workstations, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
6.1	Reviewed layouts and processes to allow people to work further apart from each other? (Minimum 2m)			
6.2	Used floor tape or paint to mark areas to help workers keep to a 2m distance?			
6.3	Where it is not possible to move workstations apart, considered whether the activity needs to continue for the business to operate?			
6.4	Only where it is not possible to move workstations further apart, arranged people to work side by side or facing a way from each other rather than face-to-face?			
6.5	Only where it is not possible to move workstations further apart, used screens to separate people from each other?			
6.6	Only where it is not possible to move workstations further apart, kept the activity (exposure) time involved as short as possible?			
6.7	Only where it is not possible to move workstations further apart, reduced the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering'?			
6.8	Set strict maximum workplace occupancy levels to enable social distancing?			
6.9	Avoided use of hot desks and spaces and, where not possible, for example, call centres or training facilities, cleaned workstations between different occupants including shared equipment?			

Social distancing - meetings				
To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
7.1	Deployed remote working tools / technology to avoid in-person meetings?			
7.2	Only allowed in-person meetings where it is absolutely necessary and no suitable alternative is available?			
7.3	Limited in-person meetings to absolutely necessary participants only, ensuring meeting time is minimised and 2m separation is maintained throughout?			
7.4	Reduced transmission risk during meetings, for example, by avoiding shared equipment and other objects?			

7.5	Provided hand sanitiser in meeting rooms?			
7.6	Reduced transmission risk by holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible?			
7.7	Deployed floor signage to help people maintain social distancing?			
7.8	Switched to seeing visitors by appointment only if possible?			

Social distancing – common workplace areas				
To maintain social distancing while using common areas, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
8.1	Worked collaboratively with landlords and other tenants in multi-tenant sites / buildings to ensure consistency across common areas, for example, receptions and staircases?			
8.2	Staggered break times to reduce pressure on break rooms or canteens?			
8.3	Identified safe outside areas for breaks?			
8.4	Created additional space by using other parts of the workplace or building that have been freed up by remote working?			
8.5	Installed screens to protect staff in receptions or similar areas?			
8.6	Provided packaged meals or similar to avoid fully opening staff canteens?			
8.7	Encouraged workers to bring their own food?			
8.8	Reconfigured seating and tables to maintain spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions?			
8.9	Encouraged staff to remain on-site and, when not possible, to maintain social distancing while off-site?			
8.10	Regulated the use of locker rooms, changing areas and other facility areas to reduce concurrent usage?			
8.11	Encouraged storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage spaces, for example, lockers and during shifts?			

Emergency procedures				
To prioritise safety during incidents, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
9.1	Implemented formal procedures to respond to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 infection within or in connection with the workplace?			
9.2	Implemented procedures to ensure that a RIDDOR report is submitted to the Health and Safety Executive if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — An unintended incident at work has led to someone's possible or actual exposure to coronavirus. This must be reported as a dangerous occurrence? — A worker has been diagnosed as having COVID 19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work. This must be reported as a case of disease? — A worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus? 			
9.3	Clearly communicated to all workers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — In an emergency 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? 			

Managing contacts				
To minimise the number of unnecessary visits to offices, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
10.1	Encouraged visits via remote connection / working where this is an option?			
10.2	Where site visits are required, site guidance on social distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival?			
10.3	Strictly limited the number of visitors at any one time.			
10.4	Strictly limited visitor times to a specific time window and restricting access to required visitors only?			
10.5	Determined 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?			

10.6	Introduced a record of all visitors?			
10.7	Revised visitor arrangements to ensure social distancing and hygiene?			

Provision of guidance and information				
To make sure people understand what they need to do to maintain safety, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
11.1	Provided clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival, for example, signage or visual aids and before arrival, for example, by phone, on the website or by email?			
11.2	Established host responsibilities relating to COVID-19 and provided any necessary training for people who act as hosts for visitors?			
11.3	Reviewed entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors to minimise contact with other people?			
11.4	Coordinated and worked collaboratively with landlords and other tenants in multi-tenant sites, for example, shared working spaces?			

Cleaning and Hygiene – before opening				
To make sure that any site or location that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
12.1	Conducted an assessment for all sites, or parts of sites that have been closed, before restarting work?			
12.2	Carried out effective cleaning and provided hand sanitiser before restarting work?			
12.3	Checked whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels?			
12.4	Sought advice from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers if necessary?			
12.5	Encouraged the opening of windows and doors improve ventilation, where possible?			

Cleaning and Hygiene – maintaining workplace cleanliness				
To keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
13.1	Implemented protocols for the provision of frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses?			
13.2	Implemented protocols for the frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, such as door handles and keyboards, and making sure there are adequate disposal arrangements?			
13.3	Implemented protocols for clearing workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of each shift?			
13.4	Limited or restricted use of high-touch items and equipment, for example, printers or whiteboards?			
13.5	Implemented protocols that adhere to specific and authoritative guidance for cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19?			

Cleaning and Hygiene – handwashing, sanitation, facilities and toilets				
To help everyone keep good hygiene through the working day, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
14.1	Provided signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching faces and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into the arm if a tissue is not available?			
14.2	Provided regular reminders and signage to maintain personal hygiene standards?			
14.3	Provided hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms?			
14.4	Set clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible?			
14.5	Implemented enhanced cleaning protocols for busy areas?			
14.6	Provided more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection?			
14.7	Provided paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in handwashing facilities, where possible?			

Cleaning and Hygiene – changing rooms and showers				
To minimise the risk of transmission in changing rooms and showers, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
15.1	Set clear use and cleaning protocols for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean and clear of personal items and that social distancing is achieved as much as possible?			
15.2	Introduced enhanced cleaning of all facilities regularly during the day and at the end of the day?			

Cleaning and Hygiene – handling goods and other items and onsite vehicles				
To reduce transmission through contact with objects that come into the workplace and vehicles at the worksite, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
16.1	Implemented cleaning protocols for goods and merchandise entering the site?			
16.2	Implemented cleaning protocols for vehicles?			
16.3	Introduced greater handwashing and handwashing facilities for workers handling goods and merchandise and providing hand sanitiser where this is not practical?			
16.4	Introduced regular cleaning of vehicles that workers may take home?			
16.5	Restricted non-business deliveries, for example, personal deliveries to workers?			

Shift patterns and working groups				
To change the way work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each employee has, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
17.1	Where staff are split into teams or shift groups, fixed these teams or shift groups so that where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same people?			
17.2	Identified areas where people directly pass things to each other, for example office supplies, and found ways to remove direct contact, such as using drop-off points or transfer zones?			

Work-related travel - cars, accommodation and visits				
To avoid unnecessary work travel and keep people safe when they do need to travel between locations, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
18.1	Minimising non-essential travel?			
18.2	Minimised the number of people travelling together in any one vehicle, used fixed travel partners, increased ventilation when possible and avoided people sitting face-to-face?			
18.3	Implemented protocols for cleaning shared vehicles between shifts or on handover?			
18.4	Where workers are required to stay away from their home, centrally logging the stay and making sure any overnight accommodation meets social distancing guidelines?			

Work-related travel - deliveries to other sites				
To help workers delivering to other sites such as branches, or suppliers' or customers' premises to maintain social distancing and hygiene practices, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
19.1	Put in place procedures to minimise person-to-person contact during deliveries to other sites?			
19.2	Implemented procedures to maintain consistent pairing where two-person deliveries are required?			
19.3	Minimised contact during payments and exchange of documentation, for example, by using electronic payment methods and electronically signed and exchanged documents?			

Communications and Training - returning to work				
To make sure all workers understand COVID-19 related safety procedures, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
20.1	Provided clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working?			
20.2	Engaged with workers and worker representatives through existing communication routes to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements?			
20.3	Developed communication and training materials for workers prior to returning to site, especially around new procedures for arrival at work?			

Communications and Training - ongoing communications and signage				
To make sure all workers are kept up to date with how safety measures are being implemented or updated, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
21.1	Established ongoing engagement with workers (including through trades unions or employee representative groups) to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments?			
21.2	Created awareness and focus on the importance of mental health at times of uncertainty?			
21.3	Used simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language?			
21.4	Used 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?			
21.5	Communicated approaches and operational procedures to suppliers, customers or trade bodies to help their adoption and to share experience?			

Inbound and outbound goods				
To maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission when goods enter and leave the site, have you:		Yes	No	N/A
22.1	Revised pick-up and drop-off collection points, procedures, signage and markings?			
22.2	Minimised 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.			
22.3	Considered methods to reduce frequency of deliveries, for example by ordering larger quantities less often?			
22.4	Implemented protocols for single workers loading or unloading vehicles where it is practicable and safe?			
22.5	Implemented protocols for using the same pairs of people for loads where more than one is needed?			
22.6	Enabled drivers to access welfare facilities when required, consistent with other guidance?			
22.7	Encouraged drivers to stay in their vehicles where this does not compromise their safety and existing safe working practice, such as preventing drive-aways?			

References

- 1 Cabinet Office (UK Government), 2020. Our plan to rebuild: *The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy*. [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>. Accessed on 18th May 2020.
- 2 HM Government, 2020. *Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)*. [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/5-steps-to-working-safely>. Accessed on 19th May 2020.
- 3 HM Government, 2020. *Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres*. [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb97e7686650c278d4496ea/working-safely-during-covid-19-offices-contact-centres-110520.pdf>. Accessed on 18th May 2020. Risk management is a formal process for identifying and controlling risks caused by hazards in the workplace.

In preparation for a return of the workforce to businesses, GB Risk Consulting is offering a comprehensive range of services to assist in mitigating the risk of infection to employees and visitors to your premises.

These services include:

- Risk analysis of buildings and workplaces
- COVID-19 decontamination

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