

Covid- 19 Workplace FAQ

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**This FAQ is not intended to replace national guidance and if you are reading a paper version it may be out of date if time has passed since printing.
Always check the online guidance**

General	
<p>Multiple members of staff have been confirmed positive, what do we do?</p>	<p>Send the staff home, clean the area (following government guidelines). This would class as an outbreak and another member of the PHE team will contact you for further information and advice</p> <p>[Action - escalate to T1 for outbreak investigation]</p>
<p>What do I do if one of my employees is confirmed with covid</p>	<p>They should return home quickly and directly. If they must use public transport, they should try to keep away from other people and catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#social-distancing-in-the-workplace---principles</p>
<p>One of my employees has got confirmed covid – what do I need to do regarding cleaning</p>	<p>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</p> <p>The minimum PPE (disposable gloves and an apron) should be worn for cleaning an area where a person with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) has been.. Hands should be washed with soap and water for 20 seconds after all PPE has been removed.</p> <p>If a risk assessment of the setting indicates that a higher level of virus may be present (for example, where unwell individuals have slept, such as a hotel room or boarding school dormitory) or there is visible contamination with body fluids, then the need for additional PPE to protect the cleaner’s eyes, mouth and nose might be necessary. The local Public Health England (PHE) Health Protection Team (HPT) can advise on this. Non-healthcare workers should be trained in the correct use of a surgical mask, to protect them against other people’s potentially infectious respiratory droplets when within 2 metres, and the mask use and supply of masks would need to be equivalent to that in healthcare environments.</p> <p>Cleaning and disinfection</p> <p>Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time, such as corridors, but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids can be cleaned thoroughly as normal.</p> <p>All surfaces that the symptomatic person has come into contact with must be cleaned and disinfected, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids • all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as bathrooms, door handles, telephones, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells

	<p>Use disposable cloths or paper roll and disposable mop heads, to clean all hard surfaces, floors, chairs, door handles and sanitary fittings, following one of the options below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use either a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a household detergent followed by disinfection (1000 ppm av.cl.). Follow manufacturer’s instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if an alternative disinfectant is used within the organisation, this should be checked and ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses • <p>Avoid creating splashes and spray when cleaning.</p> <p>Any cloths and mop heads used must be disposed of and should be put into waste bags as outlined below. When items cannot be cleaned using detergents or laundered, for example, upholstered furniture and mattresses, steam cleaning should be used.</p> <p>Any items that are heavily contaminated with body fluids and cannot be cleaned by washing should be disposed of.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings#principles-of-cleaning-after-the-case-has-left-the-setting-or-area</p>
<p>What is a ‘close’ contact in the workplace?</p>	<p>Contact definitions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Direct close contacts: Direct face to face to face contact with a case for any length of time, including being coughed on or talked to. This will also include exposure within 1 metre for 1 minute or longer ii. Proximity contacts: Extended close contact (within 1-2m for more than 15 minutes) with a case iii. Travelled in a small vehicle with a case
<p>I must use public transport however I don’t feel safe. Do I have to go back in to work?</p>	<p>Please discuss with your employer or line manager</p>
<p>Could you please clarify the PHE guidance on general cleaning for soft furnishings (office chairs for example)?</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings</p> <p>For general cleaning of soft furnishings after usage by a COVID case, steam cleaning is recommended where possible.</p>

<p>Can we use desk fans?</p>	<p>The use of fans is not recommended within health care because of the increased dispersal of micro-organisms including viruses.</p> <p>Given we are becoming more aware of asymptomatic cases I would have thought that their use should be discouraged in office environments too.</p> <p>However, in an office where the heating system is not very good, if someone was sat near the window and had the fan pointing towards the window rather than pushing air back across the office that would be least risk option (though there is not an official lines on this).</p>
<p>Social Distancing/PPE</p>	
<p>Do we need to wear PPE to work? Do I have to wear a mask at work?</p>	<p>Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.</p> <p>Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.</p> <p>Unless you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, your risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited. However, if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then you must provide this PPE free of charge to workers who need it. Any PPE provided must fit properly.</p> <p>There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19 - see PPE guidance for specific workplace</p>
<p>It is not possible to follow social distancing at work</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#social-distancing-in-the-workplace---principles</p>
<p>Where do we buy PPE from for my employees?</p>	<p>Please refer to HSE guidance</p>

<p>My employee must care for someone with covid – do I need to pay them</p>	<p>Employees are entitled to time off work to help someone who depends on them (a ‘dependent’) in an unexpected event or emergency. This would apply to situations related to coronavirus (COVID-19). For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if they have children they need to look after or arrange childcare for because their school has closed • to help their child or another dependent if they’re sick or need to go into isolation or hospital <p>There’s no statutory right to pay for this time off, but some employers might offer pay depending on the contract or workplace policy.</p> <p><i>[ACAS have more information online and can help with specific queries by phone]</i></p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#what-to-do-if-an-employee-needs-time-off-work-to-look-after-someone</p>
<p>I have completed a RA and my employees will need to wear masks. What masks are suitable? Can they wear homemade masks? Are these safe to use continuously?</p>	<p>HSE will be the source of guidance and a lead into PPE providers</p> <p>There is guidance on temporarily reusing masks if there are severe shortages of supply. However, check through your local escalation routes and support for PPE before considering this. The guidance will be available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/managing-shortages-in-personal-protective-equipment-ppe</p> <p>Alternatives to standard PPE: There is insufficient evidence to consider homemade masks or cloth masks in health and care settings.</p>
<p>Could PHE please clarify what hand gel or disinfectant would be appropriate to use - whether alcohol based 60 - 70 % is best or whether a non-alcohol based viricidal product as mentioned above would be appropriate?</p>	<p>It is the PHE view that alcohol-based hand sanitizer (minimum 60% content) is required for efficacy against COVID-19. This is in line with WHO rules.</p>
<p>Shielding/Isolation</p>	
<p>A member of my family is shielding – do I have to go back to work or what do I do to protect my family</p>	<p>Employees are entitled to time off work to help someone who depends on them (a ‘dependent’) in an unexpected event or emergency. This would apply to situations related to coronavirus (COVID-19). For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if they have children they need to look after or arrange childcare for because their school has closed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to help their child or another dependent if they're sick, or need to go into isolation or hospital <p>There's no statutory right to pay for this time off, but some employers might offer pay depending on the contract or workplace policy.</p> <p><i>[ACAS have more information online and can help with specific queries by phone]</i></p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#what-to-do-if-an-employee-needs-time-off-work-to-look-after-someone</p>
<p>Am I eligible to receive sick pay when isolating?</p>	<p>Those who are self-isolating because they or someone in their household is displaying symptoms of coronavirus will be eligible for Statutory Sick pay (SSP).</p> <p>SSP is also available to those who are staying at home because they're at high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (shielding).</p> <p>Employers should use their discretion and respect the medical need to self-isolate in making decisions about sick pay.</p> <p>Anyone not eligible to receive sick pay, including those earning less than an average of £118 per week, some of those working in the gig economy, or self-employed people, are able to claim Universal Credit and/or contributory Employment and Support Allowance.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#sick-pay</p> <p><i>[Also refer the person to ACAS for further employment questions]</i></p>
<p>My employee says they are in the vulnerable group and should be shielding, please could you explain what this means?</p>	<p>Vulnerable people have been identified by NHS England, their GP or Hospital clinicians and would have received or are in the process to receive a letter with instructions by the 30th of March.</p> <p>These letters will advise the recipients to self-isolate for the next 12 weeks and on how to deal with their specific conditions.</p>

	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-new-measures-to-protect-people-at-highest-risk-from-coronavirus</p> <p>Here is a useful link in case any vulnerable workers need support: - Get coronavirus support as a clinically extremely vulnerable person. https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable</p>
Testing	
How do I organise testing for myself?	<p>If you develop symptoms, you will be able arrange testing via the portal</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested</p>
One of my colleagues is symptomatic/confirmed can I get tested?	As above
One of my colleagues has been sent home with symptoms. Can I test my employees?	No mass swabbing at this point – risk assessment will be carried out on a case by case basis
My staff work in other people’s homes. The house they were working have phoned us to say they are covid positive. What do we do? Can my employee get tested?	<p>If you develop symptoms, you will be able arrange testing via the portal</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested</p>
Workplace Specific Questions	
Other people’s homes (Tradesman, delivery)	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes
For my work I must go into people’s houses. What PPE do I have to wear?	<p>> 6. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and face coverings</p> <p>Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.</p> <p>Based on current evidence, there is very little scientific evidence of widespread benefit from PPE. Instead, practicing good hand hygiene and social distancing are key to minimising the risk of infection.</p> <p>However, it is still important to practice social distancing measures and good hand hygiene. If you feel there is a real risk of exposure and you are unable to follow social distancing guidelines</p>

<p>I am in construction and one of my clients says they are been confirmed with covid. I did some work in their house. Do I need to be tested?</p>	<p>Workers should not enter the property of a person who is self-isolating because they are symptomatic of COVID-19. If you have a situation where this seems necessary, please get in touch and we can discuss on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<p>Restaurants offering Delivery and Takeaway</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery</p>
<p>Construction and Other Outdoor Work</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work</p>
<p>Factories, Plants and Warehouses</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses</p>
<p>We can't social distance, what do we do?</p>	<p>> 1.1 Managing Risk</p> <p>Where possible there should workers should keep 2m distance. Increase frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning. 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – increasing the frequency of handwashing 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) <p>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.</p> <p>In this assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.</p>

<p>I have a concern that my workplace is not implementing social distancing measures. Who can I contact?</p>	<p>Employers and workers should always come together to resolve issues. If concerns still cannot be resolved, see below for further steps you can take.</p> <p>Where the enforcing authority, such as the HSE or your local authority, identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. For example, this would cover employers not taking appropriate action to socially distance, where possible. The actions the HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.</p> <p>How to raise a concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact your employee representative • contact your trade union if you have one • contact HSE at: <p>HSE COVID-19 enquiries Telephone: 0300 790 6787 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 10pm) Online: working safely enquiry form</p>
<p>Lab and Research Facilities</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/labs-and-research-facilities</p>
<p>Offices and Contacts Centres</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres</p>
<p>Vehicles</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles</p>
<p>Shops and Branches</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches</p>
<p>Other Peoples Homes</p>	<p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes#homes-3-2</p>
<p>My employees have to work in pairs, do they need to wear PPE?</p>	<p>Employees working in pairs need not wear PPE, even if they are unable to observe 2 metre distancing, but it may be worth reiterating hand and respiratory hygiene advice.</p>
<p>If essential repairs are being conducted in hospitals or COVID – 19 treating facilities, will PPE be provided by the NHS/PHE in this scenario?</p>	<p>Where employees are contracted to carry out work for hospitals, I advise contacting the infection control team for the individual site/organisation to discuss whether PPE is required in that setting and who should provide it.</p>
<p>Courts, Magistrate, Police</p>	

<p>We have to search people, what PPE do we wear?</p>	<p>Refer to the link below</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-interim-guidance-for-first-responders/interim-guidance-for-first-responders-and-others-in-close-contact-with-symptomatic-people-with-potential-2019-ncov</p>
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