CORONAVIRUS

Policy on Safe Office Working

Direct Law & Personnel
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Based on HM Government Policy 11.5.2020

Coronavirus: Policy on Safe Office Working

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1. SCOPE

1.1. The policy is written for employees but applies to all workers, contractors and visitors during the current period until further notice.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1. This policy sets out the planning, strategy, measures and adaptations put in place by the organisation to assess and manage risk and make the working environment as safe as possible for all employees.

3. RISK

Our organisation risk objective is; that we work together with employees to consider, manage, assess and implement changes for safe working conditions and to reduce the potential for risk of transmission of COVID-19.

3.1. THINKING ABOUT RISK

As an Employee you must alert us, immediately, to any risk you believe hasn't been addressed but causes danger or risk to you or any other Employee. We are committed to listening to ANY concerns. We understand Employees undertaking roles are often the best person to be assessing risk.

3.2. MANAGING RISK

As an Employer we are committed to reducing workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level. Managing risk includes, but is not limited to;

- Promoting increased frequency of handwashing & surface cleaning

- Protecting those who are vulnerable
- Allow home working where possible and strict social distancing when its not
- Where social distancing isn't possible, to consider whether the activity is necessary and if so, what mitigation factors can reduce risk
- To use barriers and screens to separate people from each other
- Use back to back or side to side working rather than face to face
- Reduce the number of people in contact with others
- Risk assess roles which must be worked face-face for sustained periods to ascertain if the activity can proceed safely. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

3.3. SHARING FINDINGS

We are committed to sharing risks assessments with you to show how we have;

(a) Carried out risk assessments for COVID-19 and how risks are monitored

(b) Cleaning, handashing and hygiene procedures in line with guidance

(c) Helped people work from home where possible

(d) Taken all reasonable steps to maintain 2m distances in the workplace

(e) Where it is not possible to be 2m apart, that we have done everything practical to manage the transmission risk

4. WHO CAN WORK

Our Organisation work objective and the factors taken into consideration are; in deciding who and where staff should work we consider;

- Everyone should work from home where possible
- Protecting those who are clinically vulnerable or at higher risk
- Those who need to self isolate must not come to work
- To treat everyone equally

Staff should work from home where possible considering each role which is critical for business continuity, safe facility management or regulatory management which cannot be performed remotely

We ensure we will;

- Plan for the minimum number of people needed on site to be safe and operate efficiently
- Monitor the wellbeing of those working from home and help them stay connected especially if the majority of their colleagues are on site
- Keep in touch with off site workers on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security
- Provide equipment for people to work at home safely and effectively

4.1. People who are at higher risk are;

4.1.1. Clinically extremely vulnerable who have been strongly advised not to work outside the home

4.1.2. Clinically vulnerable individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness who are asked to take extra care

when social distancing and should be helped to and from work from home either in their current role or an alternative one

4.1.3. If clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) are unable to work from home, they will be offered an option of the safest available on site roles. This includes expectant mothers (who would be on paid suspension should such roles not be found).

4.2. People who need to self-isolate;

4.2.1. Must not physically come to work but can work from home if appropriate;

4.2.2. Include individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19

4.2.3. Include individuals who live in a household where someone who has symptoms

4.3. Equality in the workplace

4.3.1. We are mindful of the particular needs of different groups of workers or individuals

4.3.2. We are aware it is against the law to discriminate (directly or indirectly) against anyone because of a protected characteristic (such as age, sex or disability)

4.3.3. We accept we have particular responsibilities towards disabled workers and those who are new or expectant mothers

4.3.4. We are committed to understanding different protected characteristics, communicating appropriately to understand and assess potential risk and making reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being placed at a disadvantage

5. SOCIAL DISTANCING

Our Organisation work objective is to ensure we maintain 2m social distancing wherever possible, including arriving/departing work and travel and to manage workstations and meetings

Employees must maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible

Where social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full we will 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

Mitigating actions include;

- Further 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) where 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)

5.1. Steps taken to maintain social distancing are;

5.1.1. Staggering arrival and departure times to reduce crowding in and out of the workplace, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics

5.1.2. Providing additional parking or facilities such as bike racks to help people walk, run or cycle to work where possible

5.1.3. Limiting passengers in company vehicles eg minibuses with appropriate seats left empty

5.1.4. Reducing congestion for example by having more entry points into the workplace

5.1.5. Providing more storage for workers for clothes and bags

5.1.6. Using markings and introducing one-way flow at entry and exit points

5.1.7. Providing handwashing facilities, or hand sanitiser where not possible, at entry/exit points and not using touch based security devises such as keypads

5.1.8. Defining process alternatives for entry/exit points where appropriate

5.2. Steps taken to maintain social distancing whilst moving around the building are;

5.2.1. Reducing movement by discouraging non-essential trips within the building and sites, encouraging the use of telephone or radios to communicate

5.2.2. Restricting access between different areas of a building or site

5.2.3. Reducing job and location rotation

5.2.4. Introducing more one-way flow through buildings

5.2.5. Reducing maximum occupancy for lifts, providing hand sanitizer for the operation of lifts and encouraging use of stairs wherever possible

5.2.6. Making sure that people with disabilities are able to access lifts

5.2.7. Regulating use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts and walkways to maintain social distancing

5.3. Steps taken to maintain social distancing around

workstations include but are not limited to;

5.3.1. Having assigned workstations which are no longer shared. If not possible, to reduce to being shared by lowest number possible (with specific rules provided)

5.3.2. If workstations can not be 2m apart, we will consider whether the activity needs to continue for the organisation to operate and instigate all mitigating actions to reduce risk

5.3.3. Review layouts and processes to allow people to work further apart

5.3.4. Using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help workers keep a 2m distance

5.3.5. Arrange people to work side by side or back to back rather than face to face

5.3.6. Managing occupancy levels

5.3.7. Avoid use of hot desks and call centre spaces or if cant be avoided then manage cleaning in line with changing individuals

5.4. Steps taken to maintain social distancing for meetings include but are not limited to;

5.4.1. To reduce need for physical meetings

5.4.2. To use remote working tools as an alternative to physical meetings

5.4.3. If meetings are absolutely necessary then only absolutely necessary participants should attend with 2m separation

5.4.4. Avoid transmission during meetings to include avoiding sharing pens and other objects

5.4.5. Provide hand sanitiser in meeting rooms

5.4.6. Holding meetings outdoors or in well ventilated rooms wherever possible

5.4.7. For areas where regular meetings take place, using floor signage to help people social distancing

5.5. Steps taken to reduce risk in common areas include but are not limited to;

5.5.1. Staggering break times to reduce pressure on break rooms or kitchens

5.5.2. Using safe outside areas for breaks

5.5.3. Creating additional space by using others parts of the workplace that have been freed up by remote working

5.5.4. Installing screens to protect staff in reception areas of entrances

5.5.5. Providing package meals or similar to avoid opening staff canteens

5.5.6. Encourage workers to bring their own food which they cant share

5.5.7. Reconfigure break out rooms or canteens to maintain spacing and reduce face to face interactions

5.5.8. Encouraging staff to remain on site and when not possible maintain social distancing if and when they need to be off site

5.5.9. Encouraging storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage spaces, eg lockers

5.6. Steps taken during accidents, security & incidents to prioritise safety are;

5.6.1. In emergency situations, (eg a fire) then Employees do not have to stay 2m apart if this would be unsafe

5.6.2. Employees involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay attention to sanitation measures afterwards including washing hands

6. EXTERNAL VISITORS, CONTRACTORS & CUSTOMERS

Our Organisation work objective is to minimise the number of unnecessary visits to our premises

6.1. Steps to be taken to minimise external visits include

6.1.1. Encouraging remote connection/working where possible

6.1.2. Where site visits are required, guidance on social distancing and hygiene should be explained to visitors on or before arrival

6.1.3. Limiting the number of visitors at any one time

6.1.4. Limiting visitor times to specific time windows, restricting access for agreed visitors only

6.1.5. Determining if schedules for essential services and contactor visits can be revised to reduce interaction and overlap. For example if services can be carried out at night

6.1.6. Maintaining a record of all visitors

6.1.7. Revising visitor arrangements to ensure social distancing and hygiene, for example where someone physically signs in at reception

6.2. Steps taken to provide and explain guidance to visitors includes but is not limited to;

6.2.1. Provide clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival, for example signage or visual aids and before arrival by phone, website or email

6.2.2. Establishing host responsibilities relating to COVID-19 and providing any necessary training for people who act as a host for visitors

6.2.3. Reviewing entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors to minimise contact with other people

6.2.4. Co-ordinating and working collaboratively with landlords and tenants in other multi tenanted sites for example shared working spaces

7. CLEANING

Our Organisational work Objective is to make sure any site or location that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart including an assessment and cleaning procedures including hand sanitiser

7.1. Steps taken prior to reopening are;

7.1.1. Checking whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems

7.1.2. Opening windows and doors frequently to encourage ventilation where possible

7.2. Steps taken to keep the workplace clean are;

7.2.1. Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses using usual cleaning products

7.2.2. Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, such as door handles and keyboards, and making sure there are adequate disposal arrangements

7.2.3. Cleaning workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift

7.2.4. Limiting or restricting use of high touch items and equipment, for example, printers or whiteboards

7.2.5. If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 you should refer to specific guidance.

7.3. Steps taken for hygiene, handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets to support hygiene through the working day

 7.3.1. Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, frequency, avoid touching your face and cough or sneeze into a tissue which is disposed of safely

 7.3.2. Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain personal hygiene standards

 7.3.3. Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms

 7.3.4. Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible

 7.3.5. Enhancing cleaning for busy areas

 7.3.6. Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection

 7.3.7. Providing hand drying facilities – for example paper towels

7.4. Steps taken for handling goods, merchandise and other materials and onsite vehicles to reduce transmission through contact with objects that come into the workplace and vehicles.

 7.4.1. Cleaning procedures for goods and merchandise entering the site

 7.4.2. Cleaning procedures for vehicles

 7.4.3. Introducing greater handwashing and handwashing facilities for workers handling goods and merchandise and providing hand sanitiser where this is not practical

 7.4.4. Regular cleaning of vehicles that workers may take home

 7.4.5. Restricting non business deliveries, for example, personal deliveries to workers

8. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) & FACE COVERINGS

If using PPE for normal work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks you should continue to do so, however, PPE is not beneficial if not worn normally. COVID-19 is a different type of risk to those normally faced in the workplace. COVID-19 can be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams, not through PPE. Exceptions to this are work in a clinical settings, immigration and first responders.

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

If you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, this will be reflected in a risk assessment. If the assessment shows that PPE is required then this will be provided free of charge. Employees are responsible for ensuring the proper fit of such equipment.

8.1. Face coverings

There are some circumstances where wearing a mask may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. This isn't to protect you but to protect others if you were infected but have not developed symptoms.

A face covering may be worn in enclosed spaces where social distancing isn't possible. It is important to know that the evidence of the benefit of using a face covering to protect others is weak

and the effect quite small. Wearing a mask is not a replacement for other ways to minimise risk. Masks are not required by law and are therefore only optional if you chose to wear one. If you wear one it is important to wash your hands before putting them on and after taking them off.

9. SHIFT PATTERNS, WORKING GROUPS, WORK RELATED TRAVEL, COMMUNICATIONS & TRAINING

Our Organisational Work Objective is to change the way our work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each employee has.

9.1. Steps taken regarding working groups include;
  9.1.1. As far as possible, where staff are split into teams or shift groups, fixing these teams or shift groups so that where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same people.
  9.1.2. Identifying areas where people directly pass things to each other, for example office supplies, and finding ways to remove direct contact, such as drop off points or transfer zones.

9.2. Steps taken regarding work related travel include;
  9.2.1. Minimising non essential travel – consider remote options first
  9.2.2. Minimising the number of people travelling together in any one vehicle, using fixed travel partners increasing ventilation where possible and avoid sitting face to face
  9.2.3. Cleaning shared vehicles between shifts or on handover

  9.2.4. Where employees are required to stay away from their home, centrally logging the stay and making sure any overnight accommodation meets social distancing requirements
  9.2.5. Deliveries to other sites must be planned to minimise person to person contact during deliveries and minimal contact during payments or exchange of documentation, for example, using electronic payments and signing for goods.

9.3. Steps taken regarding Communication & Training include;
  9.3.1. Providing clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working
  9.3.2. Developing communications and training materials for workers prior to returning to site
  9.3.3. Ongoing engagement with workers (through TU's if appropriate) to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments
  9.3.4. Awareness and focus on the importance of mental health at times of uncertainty
  9.3.5. Using simple and clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language and materials to reduce the need for face-to-face communications
  9.3.6. Communicating approaches and operational procedures to suppliers, customers or trade bodies to help their adoption and share experience

10. INBOUND & OUTBOUND GOODS

Our Organisational Work objective is to maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission when goods enter and leave our site

10.1. Steps taken include revising the pick up and drop off collection points, procedures, signage and markings.

10.2. Consider methods of reducing frequency of deliveries ie one larger order instead of many smaller ones

10.3. Encourage drivers to stay in vehicles where this does not compromise safety

11. INFORMATION & GUIDANCE

Further information and guidance for employees and employers can be found from

11.1. Covid19 What you need to do
https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus

11.2. Support for businesses and employers during coronavirus
https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support

11.3. General guidance for employees during coronavirus
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-and-support-for-employees-during-coronavirus-covid