Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer businesses and workplaces

Good practice

Principles of good practice

This sections sets out some key principles that all businesses should consider. Further detail on good practice and useful tools are provided in the good practice section of this guidance.

Principle	What this means in the workplace
Keep yourself and others safe	- Provide information to staff and visitors to the premises about measures which must be followed - Encourage employees to be considerate of others as some individuals may wish to take a more cautious approach
Maximise the use of outside space	Encourage the use of outdoor spaces for meetings and breaks
Keep distance where you can	Although the law has changed, it is important people keep thinking about how the virus can be transmitted. We would encourage people and businesses to think about how best to use the space available. Where practical and appropriate, this could include the retention of certain measures such as: - voluntary limits on maximum capacity where appropriate - manage the inflow/outflow of premises through ongoing use of one-way systems and/or traffic lights systems - protective screens - table service/apps for ordering - electronic ticketing
Take extra precautions when in crowds or large groups	When meeting in groups, everyone should try to keep distance from others that are not in their social group. Everyone should be encouraged to: avoid crowded spaces

	• try to stay a reasonable distance from others where possible • meet outdoors instead of indoors, where possible
Stay at home if you are unwell (beyond COVID-19 symptoms)	Employers should support employees to stay at home if they are unwell even if they don't have COVID-19 symptoms as the individual may still have an illness which could be passed onto other people.
Businesses should have a plan for managing infections and outbreaks in a workplace or public setting	Employers should include outbreak management plans in their COVID-19 risk assessments and make sure employees are aware of these plans. This should include plans for employees who become ill at work with COVID-19 symptoms and have to travel home.

Good practice

Many business organisations and workforces across the country have established excellent practices to mitigate the risk of COVID-19. We encourage businesses and employers to consider retaining good practice, some of which can be found below.

Topic	Good Practice
Physical distancing	Physical distancing has been one of the most effective methods to protect ourselves and others from getting COVID-19. Whilst physical distancing rules have been lifted, everyone should continue to keep a reasonable distance, especially in crowded places. Some of the measures that businesses should continue to consider implementing include: • staggering break times to reduce pressure on break/eating areas • using outside areas for breaks and meetings, where possible and appropriate • reconfiguring seating and tables to maximise space • using protective screening • regulating use of locker rooms, changing areas and other facility areas to reduce concurrent usage • minimise congested areas in your premises such as narrow corridors, staircases, doorways and storage areas by introducing one way systems

Home working and hybrid/flexible working requests	Currently, and prior to COVID-19, all employees with 26 weeks service have the legal right to request flexible working, which can include working from home and hybrid working. Employers must deal with requests in a reasonable manner, which includes assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the application, and discussing the request with their employee. Further information and support can be found at the following resources: • Flexibility works advice on home working for employees and employers • Timewise tool kit on negotiating flexible working for employees and guidance for line managers on how to create a flexible team • CIPD advice on how to get the most from remote working. • The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) website: • Workers can raise enquiries about working safely with the Health and Safety Executive and with Local Authority Environmental Health Officers who are responsible for office environments. • Employees may also wish to contact their union representative in the first instance. • In addition non-unionised workers can go to Scottish Hazards for advice via their COVID helpline (0800 0015 022)
Moving around the workplace	To minimise transmission, businesses may consider the following measures, where possible and appropriate: • follow the suggested steps on physical distancing set out above • implementing one-way systems on walkways that are suitable for all staff, visitors and customers taking into account disabilities • reducing maximum occupancy for lifts, providing hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts and encouraging use of stairs • making sure that people who are disabled are able to access lifts whilst encouraging physical distancing and other protective measures • regulating use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts, turnstiles and walkways

Meetings	Where possible and appropriate, organisations may consider: • use remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings • only absolutely necessary participants should attend meetings and physical distancing should be encouraged • avoid sharing pens or other objects • provide hand sanitiser in meeting rooms • hold meetings outdoors or in well ventilated rooms
Shift patterns	Organisations may develop plans to change shift patterns to protect the workforce and optimise productivity. This could include reducing the need for travel at peak times and opportunities for flexible working patterns. This will require negotiation with trade union or workforce representatives if it involves a change in terms and conditions.
Training	Provide training around processes to all staff to ensure everyone understands their new working environment. This includes reaffirming existing workplace practices and safety measures and also addressing changes that have been implemented to practices, layout, procedures as a result of COVID-19.
Mental health	Healthy Working Lives have developed a range of information and guidance to help employers to support their teams' mental health and wellbeing. Employers can support their staff by: • supporting a work/life balance by encouraging staff to only work their set hours, eat lunch away from their desk and try to get fresh air at some point during the day. • keeping in touch – maintain regular, scheduled contact. • reminding staff of the support available – links available below • if employees are working from home, encourage staff to create a productive working environment by working in a quiet space and in an uncluttered environment. The Health and Safety Executive have information on safely working from home and working safely with display screen equipment. CIPD produce top 10 tips for healthy remote working. There are a number of sources of support available for everyone: • The Clear Your Head campaign has advice on creating routine, looking after yourself and staying in touch with friends and family which can aid people who may be feeling the adverse effects of mental health. Those who

	need extra support are directed to NHS Inform, and to helplines operated by NHS 24, Breathing Space, the Scottish Association for Mental Health and Samaritans. • The NHS 24 Mental Health Hub is available to the public 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Homeworking health and safety	Employers are responsible by law for the health, safety and welfare at work of their workers and these responsibilities apply wherever their staff are working. If an employee is working from home, employers should consider the type of environment their employees are working in. Some individuals may have different needs and requirements, especially those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The Health and Safety Executive have produced a short guide on working safely during the Coronavirus outbreak as well as specific guidance for employers to protect home workers, including lone working, stress and mental health, and working with display screen equipment. Advice on the safe use of display screen equipment is provided by the Health and Safety Executive. Working from home can create unique cyber security challenges and risks that must be appropriately managed. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) have produced guidance on the steps employers should take when introducing (or scaling up the amount of) home working .
Work cohorts	As an employer you may wish for small groups of workers to form work cohorts. Work cohorts could be useful where a job role requires groups of the same workers to work in close proximity, such that they are likely to be deemed close contacts as set out in the Test and Protect guidance. It may help to maintain business operations in the event that a worker develops symptoms or is tested positive for the virus, as exposure would be limited to their particular cohort.
Vehicle sharing	Transport Scotland has provided guidance on car and vehicle sharing and it is important to ensure that people keep a reasonable distance, face coverings are worn and ventilation maximised. It is possible that selecting larger vehicles and implementing a reduced passenger count, may assist in enabling these mitigations.

Handling inbound and outbound goods	To reduce transmission from objects and vehicles at the workplace you can consider: • revise pick-up/drop-off points, procedures, signage and markings • introduce handwashing facilities/sanitiser for workers handling goods and merchandise • when handling and storing goods, ensure you are in a well ventilated area, discard any packaging as safely as possible, avoid touching your face, and perform hand hygiene as soon as possible • remove waste in bulk if possible
Distribution and site visitors	Organisations should consider limiting site access to those who need to be there for safe operation, ensuring safe working practices and production related activities. There may be a requirement for specific external agencies to have legal access to certain premises in a safe manner. They should consider implementing a permit to work system for contractors and external visitors who need to access the site. Where possible and appropriate, businesses should consider the following: • providing handwashing and hand sanitiser and encourage visitors to wash their hands regularly • maintaining a record of all visitors including encouraging the use of the Check In Scotland service
Queue management and table service	Queuing inside premises (excluding retail till points) should be avoided where possible. Whilst table service will no longer be mandatory in hospitality settings, businesses may want to consider retaining this measure as it reduces the amount of people coming into contact with each other. This helps reduce the spread of the virus.
Changing rooms and showers	To minimise the risk of transmission in changing rooms and showers: • set clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean and clear of personal items • restrict the number of people within the changing areas at any time • enhance cleaning and sanitising of facilities regularly throughout the day

Legionalla testing	Water systems may become stagnant when not in use, increasing the risk of legionella within water supplies. To mitigate this risk ahead of re-opening, premises that may have been closed for an extended period (such as offices and nightclubs) should: • consider the Health and Safety Executive advice on the risk of Legionella in buildings which are closed or running with reduced occupancy during the COVID-19 crisis. • undertake a health and safety check of buildings, and deep cleaning prior to reopening where necessary • review risk assessments and manage legionella risks when re-instating or beginning to use a water system again, or when restarting certain types of air conditioners More information and guidance on this can be found on the HSE website
Management of public and greenspaces	As an owner and/or operator of urban and/or green spaces it is important to consider all relevant legal obligations in relation to the retention or removal of interventions previously recommended by Safer Public Spaces guidance (e.g. traffic regulations, planning permission, permitted development orders or fire safety regulations) Consider the management of public and greenspaces that are more likely to be focal zones with high footfall and may still require specific interventions, such as: • guiding movement through spaces • the potential need for any additional measures such as at entrance areas, to supervise and assist • allocation of pedestrian space e.g. footway widening • managing varying pedestrian, wheeling, cycling and traffic movement flows • provision of space for regular, safe, formal and informal road crossing points. Consideration should be given to the need for appropriate signs or markings to indicate crossing points for visually impaired people • accommodating high levels of cycling in and around busy centres, including provision of cycle racks or cycle storage • accessibility requirements for certain groups to be kept under review
Equalities	In addition to the existing legal responsibilities under the Equality Act, there are other issues that employers need to

consider to ensure workplaces are inclusive and are taking account of the impact of COVID-19 on particular groups.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Scotland can provide advice on a range of issues. EHRC has also produced specific guidance for employers and guidance for public sector employers about equality impact assessments.