Working safely during COVID-19 in shops and branches

COVID-19 secure guidance for employers, employees and the self-employed

14 June 2020

Document updates

14 June 2020 (Version 2.0)

Updated to reflect industry feedback, updated guidance on managing product handling and returns, guidance on test and trace service, guidance on safer travel and to provide guidance on managing security risks.

25 May 2020 (Version 1.1)

Updated to reflect industry feedback and to expand coverage of non-essential retail categories ahead of planned opening.

11 May 2020 (Version 1.0)

First published.

Introduction

What do we mean by 'shops and branches'?

Shops and branches include all retail stores. This includes food retailers, chemists, hardware/homeware stores, fashion shops, charity shops, betting shops and high street gambling arcades, tailors, dress fitters and fashion designers, car dealerships, auction houses, antique stores, retail art galleries, photography studios, gift shops and retail spaces in theatres, museums, libraries, heritage sites and tourism sites; mobile phone stores, indoor and outdoor markets, craft fairs, and similar types of retail.

The guidance applies to those currently open and will help those that are currently closed consider what their operations need to look like when they are allowed to open.

Branches include bank branches, post offices and other open money businesses.

This document is to help employers, employees and the self-employed in the UK understand how to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, keeping as many people as possible 2 metres apart from those they do not live with. We hope it gives you freedom within a practical framework to think about what you need to do to continue, or restart, operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand how important it is to work safely and support your workers' health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that many of these businesses are currently closed, by government regulation, for their usual service – this guidance will be useful for those businesses as they develop new ways of working or to help prepare for the time when they are able to reopen. The government is clear that workers should not be forced into an unsafe workplace.

This document has been prepared by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with input from firms, unions, industry bodies and the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and in consultation with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Public health is devolved in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; this guidance should be considered alongside local public health and safety requirements and legislation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. For advice to businesses in other parts of the UK please see guidance set by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Scottish Government, and the Welsh Government.

We expect that this document will be updated over time. This version is up to date as of 14 June 2020. You can check for updates at www.gov.uk/workingsafely. If you have any feedback for us, please email safer.workplaces@beis.gov.uk.

This document is one of a set of documents about how to work safely in different types of workplace. This one is designed to be relevant for people who work in or run shops, branches, stores or similar environments.

How to use this guidance

This document sets out guidance on how to work safely. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the workplace.

Each business will need to translate this into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of their business, including the size and type of business, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated.

This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that as a business or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics. It contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, take into account agency workers, contractors and other people, as well as your employees.

To help you decide which actions to take, you must carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, just as you would for other health and safety related hazards. This risk assessment must be done in consultation with unions or workers.

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1. Thinking about risk

Objective: That all employers carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment.

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks of COVID-19. As an employer, you also have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety. This means you need to think about the risks they face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising you cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.

You must make sure that the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of COVID-19, using this guidance to inform your decisions and control measures. You should also consider the security implications of any decisions and control measures you intend to put in place, as any revisions could present new or altered security risks that may require mitigation. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace. If you have fewer than five workers, or are self-employed, you don't have to write anything down as part of your risk assessment. Your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have done everything you need to. There are interactive tools available to support you from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) at
https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm.

Employers have a duty to consult their people on health and safety. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the work and how you will manage risks from COVID-19. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that you take their health and safety seriously. You must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn't one, a representative chosen by workers. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of your workers creates a culture where relationships between employers and workers are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, workers should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer.

Employers and workers should always come together to resolve issues. If concerns still cannot be resolved, see below for further steps you can take.

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 enforcing authority can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements. Employers are expected to respond to such actions rapidly and are required to do so within any timescales imposed by the enforcing authority.

How to raise a concern:

☐ Contact your employee representative.

☐ Contact your trade union if you have one.

☐ Use the HSE form available at https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm.

☐ Contact HSE by phone on 0300 790 6787.

1.1 Managing risk

Objective: To reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures, in order of priority.

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:

  - Further 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.

The recommendations in the rest of this document are ones you should consider as you go through this process. You could also consider any advice that has been produced specifically for your sector, for example by trade associations or trades unions.

If you have not already done so, you should carry out an assessment of the risks posed by COVID-19 in your workplace as soon as possible. If you are currently operating, you are likely to have gone through a lot of this thinking already. We recommend that you use this document to identify any further improvements you should make. You must review the measures you have put in place to make sure they are working. You should also review them if they may no longer be effective or if there are changes in the workplace that could lead to new risks.

![HM Government]

1.2 Sharing the results of your risk assessment

You should share the results of your risk assessment with your workforce. If possible, you should consider publishing the results on your website (and we would expect all employers with over 50 workers to do so). We would expect all businesses to demonstrate to their workers and customers that they have properly assessed their risk and taken appropriate measures to mitigate this. You should do this by displaying a notification in a prominent place in your business and on your website, if you have one. Below you will find a notice you should display in your workplace to show you have followed this guidance.

Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020

We confirm we have complied with the government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19

FIVE STEPS TO SAFER WORKING TOGETHER

✓ We have carried out a **COVID-19 risk assessment** and shared the results with the people who work here

✓ We have **cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures** in line with guidance

✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **help people work from home**

✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **maintain a 2m distance** in the workplace

✓ Where people cannot be 2m apart, we have done everything practical to **manage transmission risk**

Employer _____ Date _____

Who to contact: _____Your Health and Safety Representative_____
(or the Health and Safety Executive at www.hse.gov.uk or 0300 003 1647)

2. Who should go to work

Objective:

That everyone should work from home, unless they cannot work from home.

Nobody should go to work if your business is closed under current government regulations.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Considering who is essential to be on site; for example, in certain businesses, those not in customer-facing roles such as administrative staff should work from home if at all possible.

- Planning for the minimum number of people needed on site to operate safely and effectively.

- Monitoring the wellbeing of people who are working from home and helping them stay connected to the rest of the workforce, especially if the majority of their colleagues are on-site.

- Keeping in touch with off-site workers on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security.

- Providing equipment for people to work from home safely and effectively, for example, remote access to work systems.

2.1 Protecting people who are at higher risk

Objective: To protect clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable individuals.

- Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals (see definition in Appendix) have been strongly advised not to work outside the home.

- Clinically vulnerable individuals, who are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions, see definition in Appendix), have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing and should be helped to work from home, either in their current role or in an alternative role.

- If clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) individuals cannot work from home, they should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to stay 2m away from others. If they have to spend time within 2m of others, you should carefully assess whether this involves an acceptable level of risk. As for any workplace risk you must take into account specific duties to those with protected characteristics, including, for example, expectant mothers who are, as always, entitled to suspension on full pay if suitable roles cannot be found. Particular attention should also be paid to people who live with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.

Steps that will usually be needed:

Providing support for workers around mental health and wellbeing. This could include advice or telephone support.

See current guidance for advice on who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable groups.

2.2 People who need to self-isolate

Objective: To make sure individuals who are advised to stay at home under existing government guidance do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19, those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms and those who are advised to self-isolate as part of the government's test and trace service.

Steps that will usually be needed:

Enabling workers to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate.

See current guidance for employees and employers relating to statutory sick pay due to COVID-19.

See current guidance for people who have symptoms and those who live with others who have symptoms.

2.3 Equality in the workplace

Objective: To treat everyone in your workplace equally.

- In applying this guidance, employers should be mindful of the particular needs of different groups of workers or individuals.

- It is breaking the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic such as age, sex, disability, race or ethnicity.

- Employers also have particular responsibilities towards disabled workers and those who are new or expectant mothers.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Understanding and taking into account the particular circumstances of those with different protected characteristics.

- [ ] Involving and communicating appropriately with workers whose protected characteristics might either expose them to a different degree of risk, or might make any steps you are thinking about inappropriate or challenging for them.

- [ ] Considering whether you need to put in place any particular measures or adjustments to take account of your duties under the equalities legislation.

- [ ] Making reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage, and assessing the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.

- [ ] Making sure that the steps you take do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others, for example those with caring responsibilities or those with religious commitments.

3. Social distancing at work

Objective:

To maintain 2m social distancing wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when travelling between sites.

- You must maintain social distancing in the workplace 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. Mitigating actions include:

  - Further 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).

- Social distancing applies to all parts of a business, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing.

3.1 Coming to work and leaving work

Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible, on arrival and departure and to enable handwashing upon arrival.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Staggering 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.

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

- Limiting passengers in corporate vehicles, for example, work minibuses. This could include leaving seats empty.

- Reducing congestion, for example, by having more entry points to the workplace in larger stores.

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

- Providing handwashing facilities, or hand sanitiser where not possible, at entry and exit points.

- Maintaining use of security access devices, such as keypads or passes, and adjusting processes at entry/exit points to reduce risk of transmission. For example, cleaning pass readers regularly and asking staff to hold their passes above pass readers rather than touching them.

- See [government guidance](#) on travelling to and from work.

3.2 Moving around buildings and stores

Objective: To maintain social distancing as far as possible while people travel through the workplace.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Reducing movement by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios, telephones or other electronic devices where permitted, and cleaning them between use.

- Introducing more one-way flow through buildings. Providing floor markings and signage should remind both workers and customers to follow to social distancing wherever possible.

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

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

- Managing use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts, turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing.
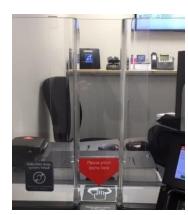
3.3 Workplaces and workstations

Objective: To maintain social distancing between individuals when they are at their workstations.

- For people who work in one place, workstations should allow them to maintain social distancing wherever possible.

- Workstations should be assigned to an individual as much as possible. If they need to be shared, they should be shared by the smallest possible number of people.

- If it is not possible to keep workstations 2m apart then businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so take all mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission.

Steps that will usually be needed:

Transparent screens at point of transaction

Plastic panel at point of transaction

☐ Reviewing layouts and processes to allow staff to work further apart from each other.

☐ Using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people keep to a 2m distance.

☐ Avoiding people working face-to-face. For example, by working side-by-side or facing away from each other.

☐ Using screens to create a physical barrier between people.

☐ Using a consistent pairing system if workers have to be in close proximity. For example, maintenance activities that cannot be redesigned.

☐ Minimising contacts around transactions, for example, considering using contactless payments, where possible.

☐ Rethinking demonstrations and promotions to minimise direct contact and to maintain social distancing.

3.4 Meetings

Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.

- [ ] Only absolutely necessary participants should physically attend meetings and should maintain 2m separation throughout.

- [ ] Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens, documents and other objects.

- [ ] Providing hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.

- [ ] Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.

- [ ] For areas where regular meetings take place, use floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

3.5 Common areas

Objective: To maintain social distancing while using common areas.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Staggering break times to reduce pressure on the staff break rooms or places to eat and ensuring social distancing is maintained in staff break rooms.

- [ ] Using safe outside areas for breaks.

- [ ] Creating additional space by using other parts of the working area or building that have been freed up by remote working.

- [ ] Installing screens to protect workers serving customers at till points.

- [ ] Providing packaged meals or similar to avoid fully opening staff canteens.

- [ ] Reconfiguring seating and tables to optimise spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.

- [ ] Encouraging workers to remain on-site and, when not possible, maintaining social distancing while off-site.

- [ ] Considering use of social distance marking for other common areas such as toilets, showers, lockers and changing rooms and in any other areas where queues typically form.

Revised staff kitchen layout

3.6 Accidents, security and other incidents

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Objective: To prioritise safety during incidents.

- In an emergency, for example, an accident, provision of first aid, fire or break-in, 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.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Reviewing your incident and emergency procedures to ensure they reflect the social distancing principles as far as possible.

- [ ] Considering whether you have enough appropriately trained staff to keep people safe. For example, having dedicated staff to encourage social distancing or to manage security.

- [ ] Considering the security implications of any changes you intend to make to your operations and practices in response to COVID-19, as any revisions may present new or altered security risks which may need mitigations.

- [ ] For organisations who conduct physical searches of people, considering how to ensure safety of those conducting searches while maintaining security standards.

- [ ] Following government guidance on managing security risks.

4. Managing your customers, visitors and contractors

4.1 Manage contacts

Objective: To minimise the contact resulting from visits to stores or outlets.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Calculating the maximum number of customers that can reasonably follow 2m social distancing within the store and any outdoor selling areas. Take into account total floorspace as well as likely pinch points and busy areas.

- [ ] Limiting the number of customers in the store, overall and in any particular congestion areas, for example doorways between outside and inside spaces.

- [ ] Encouraging customers to use hand sanitiser or handwashing facilities as they enter the premises to reduce the risk of transmission by touching products while browsing.

- [ ] Encouraging customers to avoid handling products whilst browsing, if at all possible.

- [ ] Suspending or reducing customer services that cannot be undertaken without contravening social distancing guidelines. This may include re-thinking how assistance is provided, for example, using fixed pairs of colleagues to lift heavy objects rather than a single colleague lifting with a customer.

- [ ] Encouraging customers to shop alone where possible, unless they need specific assistance.

- [ ] Reminding customers who are accompanied by children that they are responsible for supervising them at all times and should follow social distancing guidelines.

- [ ] Looking at how people walk through the shop and how you could adjust this to reduce congestion and contact between customers, for example, queue management or one-way flow, where possible.

- [ ] Ensuring any changes to entries, exit and queue management take into account reasonable adjustments for those who need them, including disabled shoppers.

- [ ] Working with neighbouring businesses and local authorities to provide additional parking or facilities such as bike-racks, where possible, to help customers avoid using public transport.

- [ ] Using outside premises for queuing where available and safe, for example some car parks.

- [ ] Managing outside queues to ensure they do not cause a risk to individuals, other businesses or additional security risks, for example by introducing queuing systems, having staff direct customers and protecting queues from traffic by routing them behind permanent physical structures such as street furniture, bike racks, bollards or putting up barriers.

- [ ] Working with your local authority or landlord to take into account the impact of your processes, including queues, on public spaces such as high streets and public car parks.

- [ ] Shopping centres should take responsibility for managing the number of customers in the centre and the queuing process in communal areas on behalf of their retail.

4.1 Manage contacts (continued)

Social distancing markers in store

Customers queuing outside maintaining social distance

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Having clearly designated positions from which colleagues can provide advice or assistance to customers whilst maintaining social distance.

- [ ] Working with neighbouring businesses and local authorities to consider how to spread the number of people arriving throughout the day for example by staggering opening hours; this will help reduce demand on public transport at key times and avoid overcrowding.

- [ ] Avoid sharing vehicles except within a family, for example on test drives. If it is not possible, keep the number of people in the vehicle to a minimum and as distanced within the vehicle space as possible, and use other safety measures such as ensuring good ventilation.

- [ ] Continuing to keep customer restaurants and cafes closed until further notice, apart from when offering hot or cold food to be consumed off the premises.

4.2 Providing and explaining available guidance

Objective: To make sure people understand what they need to do to maintain safety.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Providing clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival, for example, signage and visual aids.

- [ ] Informing customers that they should be prepared to remove face coverings safely if asked to do so by police officers and staff for the purposes of identification.

- [ ] Providing written or spoken communication of the latest guidelines to both workers and customers inside and outside the store. Consider the particular needs of those with protected characteristics, such as those who are visually impaired.

- [ ] Creating social distancing champions to demonstrate social distancing guidelines to customers, if helpful.

- [ ] Ensuring latest guidelines are visible in selling and non-selling areas.

- [ ] Reviewing external messaging to visitors and customers to make sure it does not provide information that may present a security risk, such as the location of queues or the number of people permitted in a queue.

5. Cleaning the workplace

5.1 Before reopening

Objective: To make sure that any site or location that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart, including:

- An assessment for all sites, or parts of sites, that have been closed, before restarting work.
- Cleaning procedures and providing hand sanitiser, before restarting work.

Steps that will usually be needed:

☐ Checking 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.

☐ Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings, or you are unsure, advice should be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.

5.2 Keeping the workplace clean

Objective: To keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces.

Steps that will usually be needed:

☐ Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses, using your usual cleaning products.

☐ Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, including self-checkouts, trolleys, coffee machines, betting machines or staff handheld devices, and making sure there are adequate disposal arrangements for cleaning products.

☐ Clearing workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift.

☐ If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then you refer to the specific guidance.

Cleaning high touch objects and surfaces such as door handles and trolleys

5.3 Hygiene – handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets

Objective: To help everyone keep good hygiene through the working day.

Steps that will usually be needed:

☐ Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.

☐ Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards.

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

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

☐ Enhancing cleaning for busy areas.

☐ Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.

☐ Providing hand drying facilities – either paper towels or electrical dryers.

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5.4 Customer fitting rooms

Objective: To minimise the risk of transmission through customer fitting rooms.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Fitting rooms should be closed wherever possible given the challenges in operating them safely.

- [ ] Where fitting rooms are essential, for example to support key workers buying critical protective clothing, they should be cleaned very frequently, typically between each use.

- [ ] Creating procedures to manage clothes that have been tried on, for example delaying their return to the shop floor (see section 5.5 below).

- [ ] Limiting contact between customers and colleagues during fitting, for example by suspending fitting assistance.

5.5 Handling goods, merchandise and other materials

Objective: To reduce transmission through contact with objects in the store.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Encouraging increased handwashing and introducing more handwashing facilities for workers and customers or providing hand sanitiser where this is not practical.

- Limiting customer handling of merchandise, for example, through different display methods, new signage or rotation, or cleaning of high-touch stock with your usual cleaning products.

- Putting in place picking-up and dropping-off collection points where possible, rather than passing goods hand-to-hand.

- Staggering collection times for customers collecting items, with a queuing system in place to ensure a safe distance of 2m.

- Setting up 'no contact' return procedures where customers take return goods to a designated area.

- Encouraging contactless refunds, where possible.

- Storing items that have been returned, donated or brought in for repair in a container or separate room for 48 hours, or cleaning such items with usual cleaning products, before displaying them on the shop floor. Materials used for cleaning can be disposed of normally.

- Providing guidance to how workers can safely assist customers with handling large item purchases.

- Considering placing protective coverings on large items that may require customer testing or use, for example, furniture, beds or seats. Ensuring frequent cleaning of these coverings between uses, using usual cleaning products.

- Cleaning touchpoints after each customer use or handover. For some examples, such as rental equipment, and test drive and rental vehicles, interior and exterior touchpoints should be considered.

6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face coverings

6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face coverings

PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment, such as face masks.

Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.

At the start of this document we described the steps you need to take to manage COVID-19 risk in the workplace. This includes working from home and staying 2m away from each other in the workplace if at all possible. When managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE.

The exception is clinical settings, like a hospital, or a small handful of other roles for which Public Health England advises use of PPE. For example, first responders and immigration enforcement officers. If you are in one of these groups you should refer to the advice at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-plan/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-plan

and

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings.

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.

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.

6.1 Face coverings

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.

A face covering can be very simple and may be worn in enclosed spaces where social distancing isn't possible. It just needs to cover your mouth and nose. It is not the same as a face mask, such as the surgical masks or respirators used by health and care workers. Similarly, face coverings are not the same as the PPE used to manage risks like dust and spray in an industrial context. Supplies of PPE, including face masks, must continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards.

It is important to know that the evidence of the benefit of using a face covering to protect others is weak and the effect is likely to be small, therefore face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk, including minimising time spent in contact, using fixed teams and partnering for close-up work, and increasing hand and surface washing. These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk in the workplace and government would therefore not expect to see employers relying on face coverings as risk management for the purpose of their health and safety assessments.

Wearing a face covering is optional and is not required by law, including in the workplace. If you choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and before and after taking them off.

Employers should support their workers in using face coverings safely if they choose to wear one. This means telling workers:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and before and after removing it.

- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.

- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it.

- Continue to wash your hands regularly.

- Change and wash your face covering daily.

- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste.

- Practise social distancing wherever possible.

You can make face-coverings at home and can find guidance on how to do this and use them safely on GOV.UK.

7. Workforce management

7.1 Shift patterns and working groups

Objective: To change the way work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each worker has.

Steps that will usually be needed:

☐ As far as possible, where workers 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.

☐ Identifying areas where people have to directly pass things to each other and finding ways to remove direct contact such as by using drop-off points or transfer zones.

7.2 Work-related travel

7.2.1 Cars, accommodation and visits

Objective: To avoid unnecessary work travel and keep people safe when they do need to travel between locations.

Steps that will usually be needed:

☐ Minimising non-essential travel – consider remote options first.

☐ Minimising the number of people outside of your household travelling together in any one vehicle, using fixed travel partners, increasing ventilation when possible and avoiding sitting face-to-face.

☐ Cleaning shared vehicles between shifts or on handover.

☐ Where workers are required to stay away from their home, centrally logging the stay and making sure any overnight accommodation meets social distancing guidelines.

7.2 Work-related travel

7.2.2 Deliveries to other sites

Objective: To help workers delivering to other sites such as factories, logistics sites or customers' premises to maintain social distancing and hygiene practices.

Steps that will usually be needed:

☐ Putting in place procedures to minimise person-to-person contact during deliveries to other sites.

☐ Maintaining consistent pairing where two-person deliveries are required.

☐ Minimising contact during payments and exchange of documentation, for example by using electronic payment methods and electronically signed and exchanged documents.

7.3 Communications and training

7.3.1 Returning to work

Objective: To make sure all workers understand COVID-19 related safety procedures.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Providing clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.

- [ ] Engaging with workers and worker representatives through existing communication routes to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.

- [ ] Developing communication and training materials for workers prior to returning to site, especially around new procedures for arrival at work.

7.3 Communications and training

7.3.2 Ongoing communications and signage

Objective: To make sure all workers are kept up to date with how safety measures are being implemented or updated.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Ongoing engagement with workers (including through trade unions or employee representative groups) to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments.

- [ ] Awareness and focus on the importance of mental health at times of uncertainty. The government has published guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19).

- [ ] Using simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language and those with protected characteristics such as visual impairments.

- [ ] Using visual communications, for example whiteboards or signage, to explain changes to rotas or stock shortages without the need for face-to-face communications.

- [ ] Communicating approaches and operational procedures to suppliers, customers or trade bodies to help their adoption and to share experience.

Signage to promote social distancing measures

8. Inbound and outbound goods

Objective:

To maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission when goods enter and leave the site, especially in high volume situations, for example, distribution centres or despatch areas.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- [ ] Revising pick-up and drop-off collection points, procedures, signage and markings.

- [ ] Minimising 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.

- [ ] Considering methods to reduce frequency of deliveries, for example by ordering larger quantities less often.

- [ ] Where possible and safe, having single workers load or unload vehicles.

- [ ] Where possible, using the same pairs of people for loads where more than one is needed.

- [ ] Enabling drivers to access welfare facilities when required, consistent with other guidance.

- [ ] Encouraging drivers to stay in their vehicles where this does not compromise their safety and existing safe working practice, such as preventing drive-aways.

Where to obtain further guidance

COVID-19: what you need to do

https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Support for businesses and employers during coronavirus (COVID-19)

https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support

General guidance for employees during coronavirus (COVID-19)

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-and-support-for-employees-during-coronavirus-covid-19

COVID-19: guidance for food businesses on coronavirus

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19

Appendix
Definitions

Common Areas	The term 'common area' refers to areas and amenities which are provided for the common use of more than one person including canteens, reception areas, meeting rooms, areas of worship, toilets, gardens, fire escapes, kitchens, fitness facilities, store rooms, laundry facilities.
Clinically extremely vulnerable	Clinically extremely vulnerable people will have received a letter telling them they are in this group, or will have been told by their GP. Guidance on who is in this group can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19
Clinically vulnerable people	Clinically vulnerable people include those aged 70 or over and those with some underlying health conditions, all members of this group are listed in the 'clinically vulnerable' section here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing