

Guidance on returning to work in the office during Covid-19 pandemic Updated 22 July 2021 with plans to implement in September 2021 as a phased and safe return to the office after consultation with staff

These guidelines have been drawn up to ensure staff well-being and safety, and to follow current Government guidance. They should be read in conjunction with our Covid Risk Assessment, the latest version of which can be found [here](#).

The guidelines and risk assessment were originally produced on 29th June 2020, and have subsequently been reviewed and amended on 08/09/20, 08/10/20, 05/11/20, 12/05/21 and 15/07/21.

General Principles

1. This guidance is subject to national progress in reducing the virus threat and changes in Government legislation and / or advice. We will work on the principle that the working environment should have covid-safe practices for the foreseeable future
2. We recognise the value of working from home and the advantages it has brought to many but are also mindful of the need to return to the office for the valuable face to face interactions between staff. Therefore we will be operating a “hybrid” system. There will be a minor change to the relevant paragraph (place of work) in your Contract of Employment and this amendment will be confirmed to you in writing.
3. Employees should work in the office at least once a week (depending on hours worked) and also take into account individual team requirements for meetings and needs of the team in consultation with your line manager). Please also see guidance on **general office numbers** and **procedure** below.
4. There will be an exception to this where there is a clinical need for the staff member not to be present in inside spaces with people outside of their bubble, for example, if you are vulnerable or caring for someone who is vulnerable. Please speak to your line manager if you feel this applies to you. If you are concerned or anxious about this change, please take advantage of the support offered through [Health Assured](#) and [Mind](#).
5. Healthwatch Cornwall will not be conducting its own testing programme, however we strongly encourage all staff to test themselves using a free lateral flow test kit available from local pharmacies and other sites. If you have a positive test you should inform your Line Manager and self-isolate at home in accordance with Government guidance. If you subsequently receive a negative result following a PCR test you may return to the office.
6. You will have your own designated desk, and we are making some changes so that each team will have a “set” of desks within the same room to make communication easier.

7. Ideally there should always be a minimum of 2 people working in the office however if you do wish to work and find no-one else is in the office let your manager know when you arrive and again when you leave.
8. Best practice remains adhering to the 2m rule. When not possible remember the 1m+ mitigation which includes wearing masks as an option, avoid being face to face and keep contact as brief as possible.
9. Be respectful of colleagues and ensure social distancing avoiding passing each other on stairs, when you need to pass someone's desk to leave the office and if someone asks you to wear a mask.
10. Wash your hands on arrival in the office and regularly throughout the day.
11. Hand sanitiser, disinfectant spray, bacterial wipes and disposable masks are provided.

Procedure

1. Plan any visit to the office - think ahead about proximity of other people who may be working that day.
Book your time in your own Calendar and in the relevant room Calendar¹ so everyone can see who is booked into the office on any particular day.
2. Think about any meetings you may have (internal and external) or other reasons why you may need a quiet space and book the downstairs meeting room or CEO Office as necessary.
3. Let people know via the chat in Teams, preferably on the day before you are planning to visit the office.
4. Once in the office, complete the Track & Trace form on Teams (In General, click on Files - to the right of Posts at the top of the screen). The form doesn't need saving, just click close.
It is a requirement for all organisations to be able to keep a record like this. Public Health, through Track and Trace, have the right to request such records if someone was to become infected and could identify the office as being somewhere they had been while infectious. We do not have a QR system, therefore this is the simplest way of keeping such a record.

General Office numbers

- Maximum of 8 in the building at any one time subject to following thresholds:
- Upstairs main office maximum of 4
- Downstairs main office maximum of 4
- Meeting room maximum of 4
- MD office maximum of 3 (when office is vacant)
- Only 1 person at a time in the kitchen

¹ See [instructions](#) for downloading individual Room calendars to your shared calendars

Cleaning

The office is cleaned weekly.

- We are each responsible for cleaning our own workspace at the beginning and end of each day - desk surface, keyboards, screens and phones.
- On completion of use in communal areas please also clean down surfaces, door handles, kettle etc.
- Crockery and utensils should be left to drip dry - drying cloths are not to be used.
- Use paper towels for drying hands.

In addition ...

1. To avoid unnecessary transporting of computer screens please choose the main site for your screen
2. To avoid congestion please leave the door ajar when you vacate the loo so people can see it is vacant
3. To improve air circulation please have a window open
4. Continue to attend external meetings digitally as far as possible. If appropriate, and with agreement from your Line Manager, you can meet at a neutral venue that has been identified as Covid safe. Meet preferably outdoors, and in any event complete the [Face to Face meeting risk assessment](#). Seek guidance from your Line Manager if necessary.
5. If you develop symptoms please self-isolate - as a reminder symptoms include
 - a new, continuous cough
 - a high temperature (37.8 degrees Celsius or above)
 - a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell

If you have any queries please contact anne.oliver@healthwatchcornwall.co.uk

Anne Oliver
15th July 2021

Subject of Assessment	Coronavirus (COVID-19)	RA No.	
Task/Activity	Managing the risk of Coronavirus (COVID-19) exposure whilst undertaking all work activities		
Assessor	Anne Oliver	Location of Assessment	Head Office

Risk Rating Matrix (RR)	Likelihood (L)		
Severity (S)	Certain or near certain to occur (High)	Reasonably likely to occur (Medium)	Unlikely to occur (Low)
Fatality; major injury or illness causing long term disability (High)	HIGH (H)	HIGH (H)	MEDIUM (M)
Injury or illness causing short term disability (Medium)	HIGH (H)	MEDIUM (M)	LOW (L)
Other injury or illness (Low)	MEDIUM (M)	LOW (L)	LOW (L)

Hazard Ref	Hazards <i>(Unsafe Condition)</i>	Who is at risk? <i>(and how)</i>	Controls in place	L	S	RR	Adequately controlled?
1	COVID-19 <i>(Someone infected entering the workplace)</i>	Employees <i>(An employee or visitor enters the workplace and passes the virus onto employees)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the public and general visitors are not permitted without an appointment, attendance will be restricted to employees and contractors for essential business. No hand-shaking. An information poster highlighting the symptoms and the risk of COVID-19 is placed on entry. Symptomatic employees and those required to self isolate under track and trace are instructed to work from home. COVID-19 information posters are placed in designated locations within the workplace (toilets, notice boards etc.) for all employees. Best practice Hygiene requirements (handwashing etc.) are being enforced. Employees have been instructed to wash their hands frequently for at least 20 seconds duration. All employees are familiar with the principles contained in the Coronavirus and Pandemic e-Learning on Mentor Live. 	M	M	M	Yes
2	COVID-19 <i>(Someone becomes ill in the workplace)</i>	Employees & Visitors <i>(Contract COVID-19 in workplace)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Government guidance to be followed Persons showing signs of COVID-19 infection will be sent home with support if required. The person will be advised to follow NHS Guidance online. If the person is a visitor their organisation will be informed. The workplace will be decontaminated following governmental guidance. Best practice Hygiene requirements (handwashing etc.) are being enforced. Employees have been instructed to wash their hands frequently for at least 20 seconds duration. No handshaking. Procedure for Track and Trace will be followed for all employees and visitors who have had face to face contact within the last 48 hours. Employees visiting the office will be required to sign in and out digitally each day they visit This information has been passed onto all employees. 	L	M	M	Yes

Hazard Ref	Hazards <i>(Unsafe Condition)</i>	Who is at risk? <i>(and how)</i>	Controls in place	L	S	RR	Adequately controlled?
3	COVID-19 <i>(Contaminated Workplace)</i>	Employees & visitors <i>(Contract COVID-19 in workplace)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Government guidance is being followed. Office is being cleaned on a weekly basis Hand sanitisers and sanitary wipes have been placed in the workplace. Extra hygiene requirement (handwashing etc.) in place. Disposable paper towels are used to dry hands. Washing up to be left to dry – do not use drying cloths Employees are instructed use their designated desks and to implement increased cleaning regime. Equipment such as keyboards, monitors, phones and work surfaces etc. to be regularly cleaned, and at the start and end of use by an employee. This information has been passed onto all employees. 	M	M	M	Yes
4	COVID-19 <i>(proximity, workplace gatherings)</i>	Employees & visitors <i>(A person catches COVID-19 due to working closely with an infected person)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Government guidance to be followed. A social distancing policy has been implemented with employees in the building limited to 4 in the main offices and meeting room and 3 in CEO office, with a maximum of 8 in total at any time A booking system has been implemented for each room to enable staff to plan their visits to the office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All employees are encouraged to work from home for the majority of the working week. Face to face and external meetings only to be undertaken on completion of a Face to Face meeting risk assessment Times where 2m social distancing is not possible are kept to a minimum (eg passing in corridors, “hot spots” like kitchen and areas outside toilets). Only one in kitchen / area outside the toilet at any time Clean down surfaces, taps, etc after visiting toilet, leave door ajar and light off after vacating This information has been passed onto all employees. 	M	M	M	Yes

Hazard Ref	Hazards <i>(Unsafe Condition)</i>	Who is at risk? <i>(and how)</i>	Controls in place	L	S	RR	Adequately controlled?
5	<p>COVID-19 <i>(Vulnerable employees)</i></p>	<p>Employees with underlying health conditions. Reduced immunity, pregnancy, over 70, older males, high BMI, BAME backgrounds, etc. <i>(Contract COVID-19 in workplace)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Government guidance to be followed Employees have been instructed to self-isolate if they have had either a high temperature (37.8 centigrade or greater) or a continuous dry cough in the last 14 days – there have been no instances of either of these to date. Any vulnerable employees are encouraged to work from home Pregnant workers may be asked to commence maternity leave early if practicable. The company will arrange for meetings with internal colleagues and external contacts to be completed by video or audio conferencing where possible. 	L	M	M	Yes
6	<p>COVID-19 <i>(Employees who have contracted COVID-19)</i></p>	<p>Employees, visitors, Family members <i>(Contract COVID-19 in workplace)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an employee or a member of their family tests positive either by lateral flow or PRC test and they are unable to continue working from home they will be treated as off sick as per normal company sickness policy. Colleagues who have had contact with a symptomatic employee will be made aware of the symptoms and advised to follow NHS Online Guidance; Contact consists of face contact at less than 1m, or for more than 15 minutes contact at less than 2m, within the last 48 hours. The workplace will be decontaminated following governmental guidance. This information has been passed onto all employees. 	M	M	M	Yes

Hazard Ref	Hazards (Unsafe Condition)	Who is at risk? (and how)	Controls in place	L	S	RR	Adequately controlled?
7	COVID-19 (Presenteeism. Symptomatic or exposed employees remaining in workplace.)	Employees, Family members (Employees who are symptomatic or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 but continue to work despite being unwell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Government guidance to be followed Employees are advised to follow NHS Guidance online. Symptomatic employees will be instructed to go home. Colleagues who have had contact with a symptomatic employee will be made aware of the symptoms and advised to contact NHS Guidance online, and will be contacted by Track and Trace if they have been in close contact (face to face contact at less than 1m, or for more than 15 minutes contact at less than 2m, within the last 48 hours). As a last resort, if we decide to suspend an employee this will be on full pay unless the employee's specific contract provides a right to suspend without full pay for this reason. Such as suspension will not be considered a medical suspension 	M	M	M	Yes
8	COVID-19 (Self-Isolation and wellbeing)	Employees (Employees not aware of the need to or how to self-isolate. Wellbeing/Loneliness issues from self-isolation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NHS 111 online provides advice on when to self-isolate and access to an online interactive and personal checklist (Stay at Home Advice) All employee have been instructed to complete Mentor e-learning for Desk Top Assessments for home working by end July 2020. Review to be carried out by Managers. Managers are to ensure that all employees now required to work from home have the necessary equipment to do their jobs safely. Managers & Colleagues are advised to keep in regular contact with home workers with regular individual and team calls by phone, Zoom or Teams. This information has been passed onto all employees. 	M	M	M	Yes
9	COVID-19 (Travelling abroad)	Employees & visitors (A person catches COVID-19 due to travelling abroad)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees to follow current quarantine regulations in existence at the time of return UK Government guidance to be followed FCO provides Foreign Travel advice for travellers Employees are granted permission to cancel at short notice any pre-booked annual leave to an affected area i.e. no pressure to travel to affected destinations. 	L	M	M	Yes

Hazard Ref	Hazards <i>(Unsafe Condition)</i>	Who is at risk? <i>(and how)</i>	Controls in place	L	S	RR	Adequately controlled?
10	COVID-19 <i>(Information failure)</i>	Employees & visitors <i>(Escalation/de-escalation of Pandemic)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The company has a designated COVID-19 Appointed Person (Anne Oliver) whose responsibilities include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signing up to relevant websites to receive timely updates - Monitoring relevant websites & news outlets 	L	M	M	Yes
Additional Site Specific Arrangements							

Hazard Ref	Additional control	Assigned to	Date Completed	L	S	RR
11	Digital signing in and out system to be implemented to enable Track & Trace if required	AO	16/09/20	N./A	N/A	N/A
12	Meeting room re-designated as safe meeting space for up to 3 people; responsibility for cleaning down afterwards is with attendees	ALL	16/09/20	L	M	M
13	Guidance amended following changes to government guidance regarding returning to work	AS	07/10/20	L	M	M
14	Guidance amended following changes to law on 05/11/20	AS	05/11/20	L	M	M

Hazard Ref	Additional control	Assigned to	Date Completed	L	S	RR
15	Guidance amended following changes to government guidance on 17/05/21	AO	10/05/21	L	M	M
16	Guidance amended following changes to government guidance on 12/07/21	AO	15/07/21	L	M	M

Risk Assessment References – Notes
<p>HSE Workplace health, safety and welfare Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992</p> <p>The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999</p> <p>HSE Managing the Causes of Work Related Stress HSG218 2007</p> <p>HSE Books 1998 Lighting at Work HSG38</p> <p>HSE INDG244 Workplace health, safety and welfare: A short guide for Managers</p> <p>GOV.UK information on Coronavirus (COVID-19):</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance</p> <p>HSE information on Coronavirus:</p> <p>https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm</p>

Date of Assessment	15/07/21	Signature	Anne Oliver
---------------------------	----------	------------------	-------------

Reviewed Date	15/07/21	Reviewed By	Mario Dunn
----------------------	----------	--------------------	------------