Coronavirus (COVID-19): Checklist for Laboratories and Research Facilities

This checklist is designed to be used in conjunction with the [guidance for laboratories and research facilities](#). Please ensure you read this guidance. A summary of the key points from the guidance follows this checklist.

Actions to take

Full risk assessment

☐ Regularly complete, review and implement full risk assessments across all areas of the facilities on-site used by the workforce (including areas where no lab or research work is being carried out where communal gatherings more likely, such as canteens, staff rooms, corridors, exit/entry area, etc.), in consultation with employees, employee representatives or trade unions. This includes the completion of risk assessments for different laboratory and research facilities within the same building and for all types of activity carried out there.

☐ Consider individual occupational risk assessments for individual employees, particularly those on the shielding list who have been issued letters by the Chief Medical Officer, employees with underlying health issues and employees whose household includes vulnerable people or who care for vulnerable people.

Revise all workplace risk assessments and work processes

☐ Working with your workforce, trade unions and workplace representatives, revise all risk assessments to reassess, record and mitigate any new risks identified as a result of the new variant of the virus. As part of revising risk assessments:

   o Look at your operations and make sure that every single function that can be done by people working from home, is being done that way.

o   Consider health factors when making any decisions around who should be at work.

o   Identify how your employees will travel to work – in particular identify any employees who are required to car share, share company transport or use public transport.

o   Consider what further physical distancing, enhanced hygiene or other safety measures can be introduced to the workplace.

Shielding

☐   Identify all employees on the shielding list who have received letters from the Chief Medical Officer. These employees should not attend work in any areas which are in Lockdown.

☐   Consider whether these employees can work from home and look at what support you can put in place to support home working.

☐   Where home working cannot be done, consider any alternatives that are available to you, such as additional annual leave or special paid leave. If there are no alternatives, consider whether your employee is eligible for furlough.

Childcare, home schooling or other caring issues

☐   Undertake process to identify all staff affected by any closure of schools and childcare facilities.

☐   Undertake process to identify all staff who have vulnerable people in their household, or who are required to care for vulnerable people.

☐   Consider what flexible support you can put in place to support the employee to remain at work, such as, flexible working hours or additional annual or special paid leave.

☐ Where employees cannot work as a result of childcare or caring for a vulnerable person, consider working from home. If an employee is unable to work from home due to caring responsibilities, consider whether your employee is eligible for furlough.

Home working

☐ Undertake process to identify all job roles that can be undertaken from home and put plans in place to support homeworking (e.g. monitoring wellbeing of staff, correct equipment to work successfully, process for keeping in touch and ensuring access to work systems).

Staff support

☐ Plan and implement appropriate engagement structures to ensure employee engagement on testing and modification of site measures is developed collaboratively and regularly informed by shared experience.

☐ Provide written or verbal communication of the latest guidelines to staff students/apprentices and researchers, develop communication and training materials for workers prior to returning to site, especially around new procedures for arrival at work.

☐ Engage with workers and worker representatives through existing communication routes to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.

☐ Take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled people are informed about new procedures, and are able to access facilities, i.e. handwashing facilities at wheelchair height, verbal direction for those unable to see floor markings or signage, etc.

☐ Consider support mechanisms to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in the workforce, supporting employees who may be anxious for many reasons relating to the changes resulting from Covid-19.   This includes concerns or fears about:

- remaining at work or returning to work

- periods of self-isolation as a result of being a workplace or community contact of a positive COVID-19 person

- childcare or other caring responsibilities

- workplace closures

- loneliness as a result of social restrictions

Physical distancing measures

☐ Decide upon the number of staff that can reasonably follow 2 metre physical distancing within each facility and each room/space therein. Take into account total floor-space as well as likely pinch points and busy areas and then implement relevant measures.

☐ Physical distance marking:

- Use tape or paint to mark 2 metre distances on the floor to help people comply with physical distancing regulations.

- Use 2 metre floor markings for other common areas such as toilets, corridors, canteens, networked printers and in any other areas where queues may typically form.

- Ensure canteen or break room tables and chairs are set out in a manner that allows staff to sit 2 metre away from each other. Consider using markings to identify which tables and chairs should not be used.

☐ Signage should be used to communicate key health and safety points, such as hygiene, physical distancing and that there is no unintended impacts on disabled people, those with caring responsibilities or ethnic minority groups. Messages should be clear, easy to understand and provided in languages other than English if required.

☐ Lifts should only be used by disabled people, for essential purposes, or on a one person per lift basis where possible.

☐ If the premises has more than one access point, introduce a one-way system at entry and exit points if possible.

☐ Stagger arrival and departure times of staff, students/apprentices and researchers to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace, if this is an issue.

☐ Where possible, take measures to reduce the potential crowding of people particularly in areas where communal gathering may be more likely (canteens, corridors, exit/entry points, etc.) - for example by having more entry points for employees into the workplace or change opening hours.

☐ Review layouts to let employees work further apart from each other where possible.

☐ Identify high risk areas such as pinch-points like entrances or stairs where close physical contact is likely and/or obstructions force close physical contact. Take measures to reduce risk, including using drop-off points or transfer zones.

☐ Consider opportunities to reduce unnecessary movement within buildings, such as restricting access to certain areas and use of technology (e.g. telephones, radio transmitters).

☐ Corporate vehicles (e.g. work minibuses) – put a plan in place to ensure adequate physical distancing, such as empty seats, limiting numbers.

Mandatory use of face coverings in canteens and communal areas of workplace

Using the risk assessment process:

☐ Identify which areas of your workplace are:

- areas where employees undertake tasks in the course of their employment, research and testing labs, packing, delivery or storage areas, testing or quality control areas, waste disposal areas

- canteens

- workplace communal areas, such as, passageways, stairs, lifts, staff rooms, training rooms, changing rooms, entrances or any other areas where people might mingle or gather

☐ Consider where face coverings are required to be worn:

- identify in which of the above areas measures to comply with 2 metre physical distancing, or other measures to keep one individual separated from another, such as partitions, are not possible. Pay particular attention to any areas where employees are prone to gathering in groups, particularly at times where they may be more lax about physical distancing.

- Consider whether the two broader exemptions to the requirement to wear face coverings apply to any area where employees undertake tasks in the course of their employment:

  - would the wearing of a face covering cause a material risk of harm when undertaking tasks in the course of employment?

  - if undertaking food handling tasks, consider the specific face covering exemption for this area as per guidance issued by Food Standards Scotland

- where employees are required to undertake work (where that work **cannot** be done from home) in an office environment, consider whether there will be any requirement for employees to wear a face covering in any area of the office. For more general information for safe office working see Safer Working Guidance.

- identify the ability of individual staff members to wear a face covering in any area of the workplace, taking into account any individual health or other issues - this should be done via an [individual risk assessment](#).

☐ Consider:

- whether it is practical or appropriate for employees to use their own face coverings in these workplace areas, or whether it is more practical or appropriate for you to supply face coverings for your employees.

- whether these face coverings have to be stored in certain places when not in use, and where these will be stored.

- the logistics of employees having to retrieve face coverings, and the possibility of employees having to travel through communal areas, without their face covered, to retrieve these.

- how used face coverings will be disposed of or washed safely and hygienically.

- using signs which clearly identify each designated workplace area, the rules that apply regarding the wearing of face coverings in each of these areas, and at which point these should be worn.

☐ Enforcement:

- Consider both employer and employee legal responsibilities under Employment and Health and Safety Law

- Consider how you will use these laws to ensure health and safety is complied with to provide a safe working environment for everyone

- Consider how you will communicate this message to your employees

Staff Safety: Other methods of reducing transmission

- ☐ Provide hand sanitiser if hand washing is not practical, in locations around the workplace, including at entry/exit points, reception desks, communal areas and workstations.

- ☐ Provide a nearby supply of hand sanitiser for employees to use when boarding vehicles or handling deliveries when handwashing is not practical and ensure staff have access to and are able to regularly wash their hands.

- ☐ Increase ventilation where possible and where it is safe to do so. i.e. do not keep fire safety doors open.

- ☐ Stagger break times and make use of outdoor space for breaks where possible.

- ☐ Use a consistent pairing or grouping system where employees work on shifts together.

Visitors

- ☐ Maintain a record of all visitors, if this is practical

- ☐ Consider physical distancing protocol for on-site visitors:

    - o Provide clear guidance on physical distancing and hygiene expectation, for example, inbound delivery drivers or safety critical visitors, on arrival, for example, signage, visual aids, and before arrival, for example, by phone, on the website, by email.

    - o Establishing host responsibilities relating to COVID-19, providing any necessary training for people who act as hosts for visitors.

    - o Review entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors to maintain physical distancing.

    - o Coordinating and cooperating with other occupiers for those working in facilities shared with other businesses, including with landlords and other tenants.

o   Limit the number of visitors at any one time

o   Limit visitor times to a specific time window and restrict access to required visitors only

o   Determine whether schedules for essential services and contractor visits can be revised to reduce interaction and overlap between people

o   Revise visitor arrangements to ensure social distancing and hygiene, for example, where someone physically signs in with the same pen in reception areas

☐ Consider the requirement for visitors to wear face coverings in workplace communal areas

o   Consider signs at visitor entrance points that identify the rules that apply regarding the wearing of face coverings when visiting your workplace

o   Consider how you will make your suppliers and their delivery drivers aware of your rules concerning the wearing of face coverings in your workplace

Enhanced hygiene

☐ Staff should be encouraged to use contactless or cashless payment where possible, if required in staff canteens.

☐ If staff have to use touch-based security devices such as keypads to enter the business through controlled areas, either seek alternatives or implement cleaning and diversification arrangements.

☐ Use signage, tannoy announcements and any other relevant communication tools to remind staff to maintain hygiene standards. I.e. hand washing and coughing etiquette.

☐ Encourage staff to wash their hands by providing hand sanitation facilities at entry and exit points and in any common areas.

Cleaning

☐ Work areas, staff rooms, canteens and equipment should be cleaned frequently between uses. A cleaning schedule should be designed and staff trained to implement the schedule.

☐ Frequent touch points should be identified and disinfected regularly including all objects and surfaces that are touched regularly. Adequate disposal arrangements should be made available for any additional waste created.

☐ Workspaces should be kept clear and all waste should be removed. All personal belongings must be removed from work areas at the end of a shift, i.e. water bottles, mugs, stationary etc.

☐ Set clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean.

☐ Consider whether additional waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection can be provided.

☐ Where shower and changing facilities are required, setting clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean and clear of personal items and that physical distancing is achieved.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Cross-Sectoral Guidance for Laboratories and Research Facilities – Summary

To support non-essential work in laboratories and research facilities across all sectors to [restart in phase 2 of the route map](), including research libraries and research archives, [specific guidance]() was published. This remains the position for all areas in Scotland that are subject to Protection levels 0-3 described in the [Strategic Framework](). **However, in areas that are subject to Protection Level 4, or in lockdown, only essential work should be carried out in laboratories and research facilities, including research libraries and research archives, similar to the situation in other workplaces**.

We have worked with employers and trade unions from universities and the life sciences and other science-related sectors to ensure that this guidance remains evidence-based, fair and ethical, clear and realistic. As each workplace is different, it is for individual organisations to work with trade union or workforce representatives to determine how best to apply this guidance in their circumstances.

This guidance sets out our expectations on what laboratories and research facilities of all sizes, sectors and disciplines need to consider as part of their planning for continued working in the context of national and local restrictions, based on five key areas for planning:

(1) assessing risk;

(2) workforce planning;

(3) operational guide;

(4) deliveries, distribution and visitors; and

(5) training and compliance.

As a minimum, we expect laboratories and research facilities to:

- Take a risk-based approach to protect health and safety of employees and ensure the longer-term economic viability of the organisation (1);

- Engage employees fully in that process, through trade union or workforce representatives (1);

- Working from home to continue, where possible (2);

- Revise all work processes to ensure all those who can work from home are working from home, (2);

- Consider health factors, in particular those of employees who are on the shielding list, when making any decisions around who should be at work (2);

- Test and modify new arrangements through collaboration between employers and employees (2);

- Take travel to work and childcare considerations into account in decisions around who should be at work (2);

- Ensure enhanced health and safety measures are in place (3);

- Consider safe travel to work arrangements as part of a risk assessment (3);

- Treat all site visitors including contractors, suppliers and those making deliveries, as if they were employees (4);

- Consider how training around processes and working environment expectations to be provided for all staff (5); and

- Establish measures, in collaboration with trade union or workforce representatives to monitor compliance with relevant regulations and processes put in place to enable a safe return to production (5).

The key message is that it is essential organisations undertake a robust risk management approach, developed and actively maintained through collaboration between organisations and trade unions or employee representatives.

This operational checklist has been developed as an aid to support efforts to fully consider the range of activities needed to ensure safety in the workplace.

Our approach is a mixture of regulation and guidance:

- The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 came into force on 26 March, imposing the two metre rule on all businesses and service providers that remain open. Physical distancing rules are now set out in the Schedules 1 – 5 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020.

- On 16 October, regulations were introduced requiring anybody in a workplace canteen to wear a face covering when they are not seated at a table - for example if they are queueing, or are entering or leaving the canteen or going to the bathroom. These regulations were extended on Monday 19 October, requiring face coverings to be worn in communal areas (in general terms, any area where a person is not at their workspace and may mix with others), such as corridors.

- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is treating COVID-19 as a workplace health issue, taking action where necessary to ensure compliance with the relevant public health guidance to control COVID-19 health risks to workers.