Overview (top left-hand tab)

This guidance is for all laboratories and research facilities in Scotland, including those on university campuses. It came into effect on 29 June 2020 and extends until further notice. It will be reviewed in line with Coronavirus restrictions.

The scope of this guidance covers all indoor research environments including:

- research and testing laboratories
- engineering centres
- clean rooms
- prototyping centres
- wet laboratories
- wind tunnels
- computer laboratories
- simulators
- material development laboratories
- specialist testing rooms
- field research centres
- research libraries and research archives
- all similar workplaces

These environments are in a variety of organisations, such as life sciences and other science-related businesses, universities, colleges, innovation centres and research institutes. They are collectively referred to as ‘organisations’ throughout this guide.

Scotland’s protection levels and labs and research

We have been taking an approach based on five levels of protection. At each level, working from home (WFH), where possible, has remained the default position for research. Currently, where WFH is not possible, both essential and non-essential work can take place in laboratories and research facilities in all areas at any of the protection levels 0 to 4.

The virus presents a risk when carrying out activity in enclosed spaces. Extra caution must be taken when operating environments, including the continued use of non-pharmaceutical interventions, in particular the use of ventilation in lab settings.

The postcode checker can be used to check a local COVID protection level and the rules associated with it. Going to work in labs and research facilities, if that work cannot be done from home, is allowed at all levels under current regulations.

This guide is part of a set about how to work safely in different types of workplaces, should it not be possible to work from home which remains the default.

This guidance is underpinned by a spirit of collaborative working between organisations and their workforce, staff and students. Throughout, the terms organisations and trade union or workforce representatives are used in that context, acknowledging that organisations have a legal responsibility to maintain workplace health and safety and must consult with the health and safety representative
selected by a recognised trade union or, if there is not one, a representative chosen by staff. Employers cannot decide who the workforce representative will be.

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.

This is provided as guidance only and does not amount to legal advice. Individual facilities or institutions may wish to seek their own advice to ensure compliance with all legal requirements.

The guidance emphasises in particular the importance of undertaking robust and ongoing risk assessments with full input from trade union or workforce representatives, and to keep all risk mitigation measures under regular review so that workers, staff and students continue to feel, and be, safe.

The remainder of this guidance sets out our minimum expectations across five key areas that organisations will need to consider as part of their planning for restarting or adapting activity, while minimising the transmission of the virus:

- assessing risk – involving the workforce, staff and students in a risk-based approach to a safer workplace
- workforce planning – supporting those who should come to work and those who should not
- operational guide and checklist – changing the workplace environment to protect your workforce, staff and students
- deliveries, distribution and visitors – protecting your workforce, staff and students and those who come on-site
- training and compliance

The regulator for health and safety at work is the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who will utilise the powers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure people at work are protected.

**Related guidance**

Universities should also use guidance on universities, colleges and student accommodation providers.

Organisations working in multi-purpose sites, for example those in the life sciences sector, may also find it useful to consider the manufacturing guidance.

A Sector Advice Card is now available for labs and research facilities.

Organisations may also find it useful to refer to the general guidance for safer workplaces.

If appropriate, laboratories and research facilities may also want to consult Health Protection Scotland’s guidance on Covid-19 sampling and laboratory investigations.
Laboratories and research facilities may also wish to consult policy guidance on support for CSO funded research projects. This includes a framework published by NIHR for restarting research activities paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Where we are now (2nd left-hand tab)

On 23 February 2021, the First Minister announced the publication of the revised Strategic Framework, which sets out our strategic approach to suppress the virus to the lowest possible level and keep it there, while we strive to return to a more normal life for as many people as possible. To best tackle the virus, and protect people, we will continue to use a strategic approach to outbreak management based on five levels of protection.

Scotland follows a COVID-19 levels system. There are 5 levels (0-4) and each has a different set of rules.

Find out the level and rules for an area using the postcode checker.

Get more information on the current COVID position in Scotland at:


We will keep any protective measures under regular review – ensuring we minimise their use and time in force, to suppress the virus to the necessary level.

We will provide, as far as possible and with the resources available to us, support to businesses and individuals – to keep them safe, and to keep as much of society open as we can.

While this updated version of the framework sets out a refreshed, strategic approach to the crisis, at an individual level, we should always remember the most simple but important advice - FACTS:

Face coverings

Avoid crowds

Clean hands

Two metres

Self isolate

Further updates to this guidance will be provided as the current situation develops.

Read the Health and Safety Executive advice on home working and our guidance to support the continuation of homeworking.

Working from home as a public health measure has been a crucial factor in mitigating the transmission of the virus amongst the general population. Employers should continue to support employees to work from home wherever possible.

Full home working guidance provides more information on this.
If you are on the shielding list there is also extra advice available. This is in addition to the restrictions and guidance at protection Levels 0 to 4.

Laboratories and research facilities have continued to operate under the 2 metre physical distancing rule throughout the pandemic. Organisations must ensure that at least 2 metre physical distancing is applied to all parts of a workplace and all communal areas including entrances, exits, break rooms, smoking areas.

Physical distancing duties are set out in Schedules 1 – 5 of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020. A person who is responsible for carrying on a business or providing a service must take all reasonable measures:

- to ensure that the required distance is maintained between any persons on the premises (subject to certain exceptions, including between members of the same household, children under 12 and any other person, or a carer and the person assisted by the carer)
- to ensure that they only admit people to its premises in sufficiently small numbers to make it possible to maintain that distance
- to ensure that the required distance is maintained between any person waiting to enter the premises (subject to certain exceptions)

Physical distancing requirements are set out in the schedules of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Scottish Government’s and NHS Scotland’s business and physical distancing guidance which still applies.

Workplace canteens can operate at 1-metre physical distancing in areas under Level 2 and lower levels. In Level 4 and 3 they must maintain a 2-metre physical distancing.

Organisations may also want to refer to the guidance on calculating physical distancing capacity in public settings.

Physical distancing has been an important tool for controlling the virus but, as with all restrictions, it should not be kept in place longer than is absolutely necessary. As the First Minister announced on 11 May, we are currently reviewing physical distancing, taking account of available and emerging evidence, including the ongoing rollout of the vaccination programme. An announcement of the outcome of this review is due shortly. Labs and research facilities will be considered as part of this review.

This guidance will be further updated at that time to reflect the outcome of the review, including the proposals for a clear route to the reduction / removal of physical distancing to enable organisations to plan effectively.

Face coverings are an important part of stopping the spread of coronavirus. The guidance on face coverings explains where you need to wear a face covering and exemptions from wearing one.
Protection levels for labs and research facilities

- Level 0 - Open – WFH default where possible with a phased and limited return
- Level 1 - Open – WFH default where possible
- Level 2 - Open – WFH default where possible
- Level 3 - Open – WFH default where possible
- Level 4 - Open – WFH default where possible

Essential work has continued in labs and research facilities throughout the pandemic. Non-essential work in laboratories and research facilities resumed in phase 2 of the route map, including research libraries and research archives but was halted temporarily in level 4 and lockdown areas.

Following the publication of the updated Strategic Framework and the timetable for easing restrictions, non-essential work in laboratories and research facilities, including research libraries and research archives, can now be carried out in Protection Levels 0-4. In all Protection Levels, working from home remains the default position where this is possible. However, in areas that are subject to Protection Level 0, a phased and limited return to the workplace for any type of work can be started.

Use of libraries and archives

Staff, students and researchers should follow the guidance for public libraries in Scotland for levels 0 to 3.

In level 4, staff, students and research should refer to the guidance for colleges, universities and accommodation providers, where some extra mitigations are in place.

Business support

There has been an unprecedented package of support announced from both the Scottish and UK Governments to support businesses. This support should help many employers preserve their business, maintain jobs and pay their workers throughout this crisis. Information on business support is available through findbusinesssupport.gov.scot. We urge all businesses to make use of this. In the event of closures for businesses involving laboratory and research work, all available support measures must be utilised to protect the jobs and incomes of the sector.
Assessing risk (3rd left-hand tab)

- health and safety
- public health measures
- involving the workforce in a risk-based approach
- joint working
- implementation phases
- planning
- preparation
- pilots
- dynamic assessment
- utilising expertise
- building confidence, supporting wellbeing
- shielding

Health and safety

In aligning with the above principles and planning, this guidance does not supersede existing health and safety legislation and organisations will continue to abide by these obligations, including the legal duty on employers to conduct risk assessments and engage with health and safety committees (SRSC).

Specifically on COVID-19, at all protection levels of the Strategic Framework and through all phases of the route map, organisations will have regard to general health and safety guidance and to the requirements for reporting cases.

Employers must ensure that the risks are controlled so far as is reasonably practicable. All employers need to have in place an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, as they would for other health and safety related hazards. This is a risk-led approach to identify and implement sensible measures to control the risks. The assessment should consider what measures need to be implemented to protect the health and safety of all staff, students, visitors and contractors. These will be influenced by site specific factors. See: further advice on carrying out COVID-19 risk assessments.

To support employers and individuals to understand personal risks to COVID-19, use of the Individual Occupational Risk Assessment Guidance is encouraged. This is relevant for all staff, but is particularly relevant for staff who are returning to work who are on the shielding list, those who have an underlying health condition, or are anxious about risks in the workplace.

Controls should be considered following the hierarchy of control approach, i.e. measures such as working from home and physical distancing, enhanced ventilation and cleaning regimes should be prioritised with the use of PPE being a measure of last resort. Outcomes should explain to others what they are required to do and help staff with planning and monitoring to ensure the controls are implemented and remain effective and are updated in the light of emerging evidence or changes in public health advice.
Employers should keep existing Risk Assessments under active review to ensure any new or increased risks can be identified, recorded and mitigated.

* For example Risk assessment - HSE.

**Public health measures**

To stay safe and protect others we must minimise the opportunity for Coronavirus (COVID-19) to spread from one person to another. Physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene, and appropriate ventilation are the most important and effective things we can all do to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Essential public health measures in labs and research facilities include:

- minimising contact with others (physical distancing, quarantine, cohorting)
- enhanced hygiene and environmental cleaning arrangements
- improved ventilation
- wearing face coverings or appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary
- a requirement that people who are ill, self-isolating or under an obligation to quarantine stay at home
- active engagement with Test and Protect, including the use of the Protect Scotland app

Organisations should encourage staff, students and visitors to follow the Scottish Government’s FACTS advice:

- wear a face covering in enclosed spaces
- avoid crowded places
- clean your hands and surfaces regularly
- 2 metre physical distancing
- self-isolate and book a test if you develop coronavirus symptoms

**Involving the workforce in a risk-based approach**

As a minimum we expect:

- a risk-based approach to be followed to protect the health and safety of employees, staff and students and ensure the longer-term economic viability of the organisation
- employees, staff and students to be fully engaged in that process, through trade union or workforce representatives

The Health and Safety Executive’s guidance section can help to support employers with what they need to do to comply with the law. The risk assessments required to implement a risk-based approach may be considered to fall in two broad categories.

Firstly, there will be risk assessments to underpin general protocols describing how people can use a research facility or laboratory building. These will address questions regarding safely entering the building, moving around within it and using
facilities that are allowed to be open (depending on the local protection level) such as offices, networked printers, canteens, toilets, etc. These will apply to everyone on the site and be drawn up by the management for the building, in consultation with relevant interested parties.

Secondly, further sets of risk assessments will be required relating to particular scientific operations undertaken in each research facility or laboratory. These will be immediately relevant to the groups of staff using each of the laboratories and facilities, and may be much less relevant to the rest of the staff. Delivery of these risk assessments will require considerable understanding of the risk assessment process as well as technical expertise in the relevant scientific operations, together with detailed knowledge of how people interact in the laboratories or research facilities.

**Joint working**

This guidance has been developed in collaboration with industry and trade unions on the basis that both have essential roles to play in adapting on-site activity to the local protection level. Organisations that have successfully and safely been able to continue essential, on site laboratory and research activities, during the COVID-19 crisis have highlighted the importance of joint working. Protecting the health of employees, staff and students/apprentices has been at the heart of this joint approach which is fundamental to establishing shared confidence around the safety of returning to places of work and supporting a recovery in productivity as soon as is safely possible. Use of the accompanying operational checklist should aid this process, though the specific circumstances of individual organisational needs to be considered.

**Implementation phases**

Carrying out a robust risk assessment with full workforce involvement (of recognised trade union safety representatives or relevant employee safety representatives) will identify the practical measures that can be put in place to minimise the spread of the virus at a workplace level. Risk assessments should be completed for different laboratory and research facilities within the same building. The assessment should include a phased implementation timetable, structured broadly as set out below.

**Planning**

Plans to re-open, or continue to keep open, a workplace should be developed in consultation with the workforce, staff and students and updated on an ongoing basis. Planning must be based around risk assessments and safe systems of work, emphasising physical distancing and hand washing, fair work principles and be designed to enable an approach that allows the organisation to operate while protecting employee health and well-being.

**Preparation**

Physical distancing and hygiene measures require certain activities to be carried out before a restart – for example screens installed, one-way personnel movement.
systems established, two metre zones put in place, canteen re-arrangement, personal protective equipment (PPE) provision, hand sanitisers, etc. Briefings and inductions into the new ways of working must take place. These all take time and require resourcing and commitment.

**Pilots**

Experience confirms the value of trialling new ways of working before wider implementation is attempted. A limited-scale pilot to test systems, find weaknesses and make improvements before a wider implementation is essential.

**Dynamic assessment**

A risk assessment or adoption of mitigation measures should not be a one-off exercise, rather part of regular, ongoing dialogue between employers and trade unions or workforce representatives to identify what measures are working, where refinements are possible and any gaps remaining. Reviews of measures and risks should be frequent, with daily assessments of progress initially not unusual.

Open and ongoing engagement between trade union or workforce representatives should enable adjustments to be made quickly and smoothly at the relevant stage. This may include tightening workplace restrictions or reducing numbers on-site if there is a change or increase in protection level in the local area or the dynamic risk assessments indicate this is necessary.

COVID-19 is a new risk that must be incorporated into workplace risk assessments, and employers must therefore carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment if they have not already done so. It is critical that risk assessments cover all parts of the business where there may be a risk of COVID-19 transmission between staff and/or visitors/customers.

It is therefore important for all support staff, students/apprentices and researchers to understand that these risks do not apply only to their working area. Careful consideration must also be given to other parts of the workplace where there is scope for people to congregate in groups and physical distancing and hygiene measures will be needed to reduce the risk of the virus from spreading.

Employers will need to assess the high risk areas that apply to their own circumstances, taking account of arrangements for transporting staff to the workplace, and communal spaces on site such as toilet facilities, staff and changing rooms, canteens, smoking areas and hygiene stations. These are all areas where there are opportunities for staff to congregate and it is therefore essential for employers to ensure these are considered in the development of plans for controlling the spread of COVID-19.

Those carrying out work in laboratories and research facilities should also be regularly reminded of the mandatory requirement to wear face coverings in indoor communal areas, including corridors and workplace canteens (but people are not required to wear a face covering to eat or drink).
Utilising expertise

Organisations should ensure their health and safety professionals and representatives have the skills, training and knowledge to understand the risks associated with COVID-19. Where organisations and their workforce do not have access to these skills in-house, they should explore external support options to put in place appropriate mitigation measures. For example, through their trade association, health and safety consultancies or trade union health and safety representatives. All of these can help organisations understand the risks associated with different activities and situations within individual organisations and offer the support that managers, staff and students may require.

For workplaces without union representation, union health and safety representatives are available upon request to support the development of workplace risk assessments.

Building confidence, supporting wellbeing

Staff and students may have concerns about how safe the working environment may be and so may require reassurance and evidence that recommended measures have been put in place to ensure safety. Employers should ensure that communication with staff and students on COVID-19 risks and measures for reducing the risk of transmission are refreshed to take account of any updates to guidance and ensure levels of knowledge and understanding are maintained and that messages are not becoming stale. Employers should recognise the need to have clear and regular communications with employees, using multiple channels to reinforce key messages. Visual material has proven to be beneficial in demonstrating changes that have been, or are being, made, especially where language barriers exist.

Simple, clear messaging should be used to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of people who may struggle with some aspects of the English language and those with protected characteristics such as visual impairments. Posters, leaflets and other materials are available online which can be used to reinforce these messages throughout the workplace. NHS Inform also provides general advice on COVID-19 in a range of translated formats which will help those people who may struggle with some aspects of the English language.

A clear message from employers and trade unions is that building and maintaining employee confidence is vitally important and a challenge that should not be underestimated.

Advice for people on the shielding list

You should follow the advice for those on the shielding list, even if you have had one or both doses of the coronavirus vaccine.

On 26 April 2021 Scotland returned to a levels approach. There is some extra advice at all Protection Levels for people on the shielding list. The Chief Medical Officer
sent updated advice in March 2021 to people who are on the shielding list about going to work. The advice at all levels, is that you should work from home if you can. The advice at Levels 0-3 is that you can return to work in the workplace if you can’t work from home as the infection rates will be low enough to greatly reduce your risk of catching coronavirus.

As highlighted in this guidance, employers have a responsibility to regularly carry out workplace risk assessments and put in place measures to make the workplace as safe as is reasonably practicable to try and minimise the risk to staff including contracting COVID-19. If you are concerned, you should ask your employer for copies of the risk assessments for your workplace.

Employees also have a responsibility to follow safe working practices.

For people on the shielding list, we also advise that you carry out an individual risk assessment to calculate your personal risk from COVID-19. This can help you to highlight your individual risk to your employer in order to discuss any additional changes that may be needed to make your workplace and duties safe for you. There is advice about individual risk assessments on gov.scot: Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on individual occupational risk assessment - gov.scot (www.gov.scot).

If you still feel unsafe after a workplace risk assessment you should discuss any concerns with your manager or your employer. You can also get further advice from:

- Occupational Health Services (if your employer offers them)
- the Health and Safety representative in your workplace
- HR (your employer’s Human Resources team, if there is one)
- your trade union or professional body
- the Citizens Advice website or the free Citizens Advice Helpline on 0800 028 1456, (Monday to Friday, office hours)
- the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

Further information available is at: Coronavirus (COVID-19): shielding advice and support - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

Advice about working in level 4 in the future

If you live or work in an area that goes up to Level 4 in the future, you should keep working from home if you can. If you cannot work from home, and are on the shielding list, our advice is that you should not go to work. You should follow this advice until the areas where you live and work have gone down to Level 3 or lower.

This advice remains even if you have had one or both doses of the coronavirus vaccine. We know the vaccine offers significant protection to a population, but we do not yet have evidence of exactly how effective it is for an individual and in particular people with some underlying health conditions.

Whilst we are still understanding the effectiveness of the vaccine, you should continue to be cautious to help keep yourself safe. We will keep this under review as new evidence emerges.
The Chief Medical Officer has issued a letter called a Shielding Notification which has a similar purpose to a fit note and can be used to show your employer that you cannot go into the workplace. This can be used at any time the area where you live or work is at Level 4 up to 30 June 2021.

Further advice and support for those on the shielding list can be found at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/
Workforce planning (4\textsuperscript{th} left-hand tab)

- working from home
- pilot measures
- employee health and wellbeing
- equalities
- mental health
- childcare, home schooling and return to school
- Test and Protect
- contact tracing
- vaccination
- outbreak management

Information about supporting those who should come to work, and those who should not.

As a minimum we expect:

- working from home to continue to be the default, where possible. That might include a blended approach, using laboratory or other specialist facilities when necessary, while working from home for office-based activities such as to analyse and interpret data, or tele-conferencing to discuss findings with colleagues
- employers to support employee choice of workplace where possible, to the best of their organisation’s capacity and ability.
- new laboratories and research facilities arrangements to be tested and modified through collaboration between employers and employees
- organisations to take travel to work and home schooling, childcare and returning to school considerations into account in decisions and to manage travel demand through staggered start times and flexible working patterns

Working from home

Anyone who is able to work from home should do so.

Minimising the spread of the virus will remain important in ensuring the overall protection of public health. Therefore planning for safe work should assume that those able to work from home will continue to do so. Organisations should plan for the minimum number of people needed on-site to operate safely and effectively, with a limited attendance on-site for many organisations.

Working from home as a public health measure has been a crucial factor in mitigating the transmission of the virus in the general public and is an effort we must continue.

In all areas, we need every organisation to work with their workforce to look again at their operations, and to make sure that every single function that can be done by people working at home is being done in that way.
This means that only work that requires access to laboratories and research facilities should be completed on-site. If work can be completed from home or outdoors, it should be.

Home working may have been implemented at pace, without normal health and safety planning to ensure people have suitable working arrangements and equipment. Organisations should also consider how to best support working from home (for example, provision of laptops, mobile phones, video conferencing services, etc.). Please see the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advice on home working for further information.

The Scottish Government has also published guidance to support the continuation of homeworking during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Scotland has also provided guidance for employers for those who are homeworking with protected characteristics.

Pilot measures

Implementing enhanced safety measures may take time to bed in. It is good practice to pilot measures, either within part of a facility and / or with a proportion of the workforce at lower risk from the virus, before rolling out across the workplace as a whole. Travel to work and childcare and home schooling considerations for individual employees should be taken into account by organisations in discussion with trade unions or employee representatives, before deciding which individuals to involve in on-site pilots or adapted work activity.

Employee health and wellbeing

Employers should ensure the organisational culture is inclusive, with the aim that every employee should feel that they are returning to, or are continuing to work in, a supportive, caring and safe environment. The pandemic has had an unequal impact across the workforce, as different employee groups, and individuals, will have been affected in diverse ways according to factors such as their job role, geographic location, research discipline, and demographic/ personal circumstances. Therefore, it is important that organisations foster a fair and inclusive working environment that does not tolerate discrimination.

The following guides from the Health and Safety Executive provide useful sources of information:

- making your workplace COVID-secure during the coronavirus pandemic
- talking with your workers about preventing coronavirus

Equalities

Individual health circumstances and protected characteristics should be considered and discussed with workers before prioritising who is asked to work on-site.
Consideration should be given within the risk assessment as to whether staff might be at higher risk than others depending on their individual circumstances, health conditions or belonging to a group with legally protected characteristics. Further advice is set out below.

Organisations may also want to consult Public Health Scotland’s Updated analysis of COVID-19 outcomes by ethnic group.

In addition to the existing legal responsibilities under the Equality Act, there are other issues that employers should consider to ensure workplaces are inclusive and are taking account of the impact of COVID-19 on particular groups, such as women, disabled people and people from ethnic minority communities.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Scotland can provide advice on a range of issues such as:

- non-discrimination
- reasonable adjustments for disabled people and communication with employees on equality issues
- support for pregnant employees or employees on maternity leave
- flexible working for those with caring responsibilities
- how to deal with harassment at work

EHRC have also produced guidance for public sector employers about equality impact assessments and having due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and Scottish Specific Duties during the pandemic.

Reasonable adjustments should be made to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage, and the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers should be assessed. It is important to make sure the steps implemented do not have an unjustifiably negative impact on some groups compared to others, for example, those with caring responsibilities or those with religious commitments.

Given that there is some evidence which suggests that COVID-19 may impact disproportionately on some groups, in particular Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, employers should ensure that Occupational Health Service provide practical support to BAME staff, particularly where they are anxious about protecting themselves and their families. All minority ethnic staff with underlying health conditions and disabilities, who are over 70, or who are pregnant should be individually risk assessed, and appropriate workplace adjustments should be made following risk assessment.

Guidance is available to support employers and individuals to understand an individual’s risk to COVID-19 based on the latest evidence: Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on individual occupational risk assessment - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

This guidance translates known risks according to age, ethnicity, gender, BMI and health conditions to help you to better understand the risks. Those who are pregnant should follow the UK government advice: Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for pregnant employees which is applicable in Scotland.
Organisations should also acknowledge the range of factors likely to cause stress or anxiety amongst employees, ranging from living with restrictions to concerns about travel, schools, caring responsibilities and relatives impacted by the virus, amongst others. This may have implications for mental health with managers encouraged to be conscious of how these factors may impact on the well-being of individual staff members. Organisations and trade union or workforce representatives should be alert to this and direct anyone experiencing mental health issues towards available support.

Close the Gap, through their ‘Think Business Think Equality’ toolkit, have produced guidance on employers supporting workers affected by domestic abuse during the pandemic. A more general online self-assessment resource for employers on domestic abuse is also available. The RNIB also provide information on employing partially sighted and blind workers during COVID, and a COVID risk assessment tool.

Close the Gap have also produced some actions that employers can take to reduce discrimination and advance gender equality at work.

Returning to work

- Conduct individual risk assessments for pregnant women and women returning to work from maternity leave. Those who are pregnant should follow the UK government advice: Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for pregnant employees which is applicable in Scotland.
- Conduct individual risk assessments for workers who are on the shielding list, or are otherwise in need of one. There is further advice at Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on individual occupational risk assessment - gov.scot (www.gov.scot). This includes a COVID-Age tool, based on published evidence for the main identified risk factors. It works by translating the risks according to age, ethnicity, gender, BMI, and health conditions into years which are added to an individual’s age. This allows for the calculation of a person’s “COVID-Age” and which vulnerability risk category they fall into if they catch the virus – low, moderate, high or very high.
- Conduct individual risk assessments for BAME groups who are disproportionately affected by Covid-19.
- Ensure that all employees have access to PPE, where required, and that it is appropriately sized and well-fitting.
- Support disabled employees by conducting risk assessments, and make reasonable adjustments where required.
- Ensure return to work plans and risk assessments consider the impact of caring responsibilities, which mainly affects women, and include mitigation where this affects an employee’s ability to return to work safely.
- Ensure that all staff, including part-time staff who are mainly women, and those returning from maternity or other long-term leave are able to access training on returning to the workplace, and that this is delivered within working hours.
Caring responsibilities

- Adopt a default flexible approach to staff with caring or home schooling responsibilities, who are more likely to be women. This could include flexible hours, reduced or reallocated workloads, and/or using flexible furlough provisions.
- Regularly check-in with staff to see how they are managing balancing work with caring responsibilities. This may change if there is a move to blended learning in schools, or if individual schools, nurseries and care services are temporarily closed or reduced again.
- Ensure staff who are caring for someone that has been shielding, which will be more likely to be female staff, are supported to work from home if they wish to.

Data gathering

Collect intersectional gender-disaggregated data on the impact of COVID-19 on employees. This could include data on:

- staff who have been furloughed, by job role, grade, division/service, and the reason for furloughing;
- the impact of working from home, and how this was affected by childcare, home learning and care for older people and disabled people;
- which employees have returned to work
- changes to working patterns; and
- employees who have been made redundant, or are currently in a selection pool for redundancy, by job role and grade.

Close the Gap suggest that employers may want to use this data to identify gendered patterns in the experiences of male and female staff, which will help to inform workforce planning and employment practice during Covid-19.

Mental health

The main message employers should give to employees is: if you need help, help is available. It is important that everyone holds onto the reality that this is temporary, and things will get better.

It is important that organisations realise that the change and uncertainty arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and employment are impacting on people’s mental health and wellbeing, and that changing circumstances, including the rapid change to home working and furloughing, may create new challenges and demand for mental health support.

It can be challenging for workers to raise concerns about mental health when working remotely, especially if their living arrangements are not conducive to working from home. Some workers may find that working from home, and/or additional caring or home schooling responsibilities brings additional stress. The anxieties that some
may feel about continuing to attend work or returning to workplaces is also likely to be a factor.

Organisations and trade union or workforce representatives should be alert to this and direct anyone experiencing mental health issues towards available support.

In October, Scottish Government launched the Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan, which outlines our response to the mental health impacts of COVID19. In this plan, we recognise the economic and employment impacts that COVID-19 will have on the public’s mental health.

We would encourage employers and employees to use the resources available in the Scottish Government’s Clear Your Head campaign, which provides practical advice for maintaining good mental health and wellbeing throughout the pandemic, and directs those who need extra support to helplines operated by NHS 24, Breathing Space and Samaritans.

If someone you know is struggling with persistently poor mental health, we would encourage them to speak to their local GP. Alternatively, out of hours support can be provided by Breathing Space, Scotland’s national helpline for those experiencing low mood, depression, or anxiety, on 0800 83 85 87 - or NHS 24 on shortcode 111.

Organisations should also acknowledge the range of factors likely to cause stress or anxiety amongst employees, ranging from living with restrictions to concerns about travel, schooling, caring responsibilities and relatives impacted by the virus, amongst others. This may have implications for mental health with managers encouraged to be conscious of how these factors may impact on the well-being of individual staff members. Organisations and trade union or workforce representatives should be alert to this and direct anyone experiencing mental health issues towards available support.

**Childcare and home schooling**

Workers and organisations may want to refer to the guidance to help schools ensure a low-risk environment for learning and teaching. Where schools and childcare facilities are closed, workers may experience difficulties attending work due to being unable to secure appropriate child care, having to home school their children and managing other additional responsibilities on top of their existing workload.

This will affect working parents with children at home and we encourage employers to be flexible and provide support to employees during this time.

There are already some good examples within the sector. Some organisations have successfully trialled and implemented flexible working practices, and additional support measures. Where a worker is unable to attend work as a result of schools or childcare facilities closing, and home working or flexible working is not an option, check whether you are entitled to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Definitions of key workers that were agreed with local authorities during the previous wave of the pandemic will continue to apply. The definitions of key workers and
support for children of keyworkers can be found in the Scottish Government Coronavirus guidance on schools reopening which also sets out plans for a phased start to the 2021 spring term. Any queries regarding key worker status should be directed to the appropriate local authority.

Test and Protect

**Test and Protect**, Scotland’s approach to implementing the 'test, trace, isolate, support' strategy is a public health measure designed to break chains of transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the community.

Test and Protect will test people, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, trace people who may have become infected by spending time in close contact with someone who tests positive, and then support those close contacts to be tested and self-isolate. That means if they have the virus they are less likely to pass it on to others. Organisations will play a vital role in ensuring that their workers are aware of and able to follow the public health advice and should ensure that fair work principles are followed when staff members have to self-isolate.

Testing has an important part to play in our response to COVID-19, and has a vital but limited role as a confidence-building measure. A negative test result during the incubation period does not rule out infection as the person could still be developing the infection and could infect others.

Accessing twice weekly tests for people without symptoms is now available for those who are not participating in a workplace or education testing programme. If a person wishes to participate in weekly testing then they can pick up test kits from a local Test Site or order online for postal delivery via this website: Coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested in Scotland - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) or by phoning 119. If a person tests positive using these tests (LFD home tests) they will be advised to isolate and book a PCR test to confirm the result.

Organisations should follow public health guidance if a worker becomes unwell with coronavirus symptoms at work. The person should leave work to self-isolate straight away and, if possible, wear a face covering on route and avoid public transport.

Organisations should direct workers to NHS Inform or, if they can’t get online, call 0800 028 2816, to arrange to get tested.

Until they have been tested and told if it is safe to leave home, organisations should make sure that staff do not have to, or feel that they have to, come in to work. Workers can request an isolation note through NHS Inform and those required to isolate can also request, from Test and Protect, a letter to give to their employer which states the isolation timeframe and the employer’s responsibility during this time.

People who have tested positive for the virus will need to self-isolate for 10 days, unless certain symptoms persist. Test and Protect contact tracers will interview them and get in touch with people they have been in close contact with, and tell them they must self-isolate for 10 days and should also be tested. Where Infection Prevention
Control measures have been utilised such as protective screen or use of PPE, the contact tracer will conduct a risk assessment to identify contacts at risk. The priority is to public health in order to break the chain of transmission of COVID-19. If organisations are informed by a contact tracer that one of their employees or attendees should isolate, organisations should help them to do so straight away. They may feel well, as the virus could still be incubating when they are asked to isolate.

Some people who are asked to isolate may not become unwell, but they must stay at home and self-isolate for the full 10 days. Organisations can ask them to work from home if they are able to and they are not unwell. Organisations should not ask someone isolating to come into work before their period of isolation is complete, in any circumstances.

More information can be found on the Test and Protect website and the NHS Inform website provides further health advice and information including on duration of self-isolation.

For Test and Protect and contact tracing purposes, a ‘household contact’ is defined as:

- those who are living in the same household as a case (e.g. those that live and sleep in the same home, or in shared accommodation such as university accommodation that share a kitchen or bathroom)
- those who do not live with the case but have contact within the household setting: Those that have spent a significant time in the home (cumulatively equivalent to an overnight stay and without physical distancing e.g. 8 hours or more) with a case
- sexual contacts who do not usually live with the case
- cleaners (without protective equipment) of household settings during the infectious period, even if the case was not present at the time.

Pay for workers who are sheltering, self-isolating, sick or balancing care responsibilities is likely to be a source of concern for employees. Organisations should work with trade union or workforce representatives to provide early guidance to workforces on processes and support for individuals affected by these issues. Again, opportunities to facilitate home working where feasible should be actively pursued and maintained.

**Contact tracing**

Organisations must ensure that contact details for staff, students and visitors are up-to-date, and that staff and students are aware of their responsibility to alert the organisation to any changes.

Organisations should keep records of staff and students/apprentices who have attended labs and research facilities. Records should also be kept of visitors and contractors. Particular attention should be made to the guidance on lawful data collection and management.
Protect Scotland is an entirely voluntary, anonymous app that is an additional part of NHS Scotland’s Test & Protect service. Having the app should never be a requirement for any workplace. The app complements but does not replace manual contact tracing. It enhances contact tracing and quickly alerts app users that are at risk as they have come into close contact (less than 2 metres for 15 minutes or more) with an app user that has since tested positive for Covid-19. Further information about the contact tracing app for employers, workers and customers is available.

Vaccination

The vaccine represents an important step in our progress towards a safer return to workplaces. Evidence to date shows it will reduce both mortality and morbidity, however we do not know the extent to which the vaccine reduces transmission of the virus from an infected person to others. That is why it is important for businesses and employees to act responsibly, follow FACTS and continue to align their approach with published guidance.

The Scottish Government is committed to offering a vaccine to everyone in Scotland and will continue to work at pace to ensure as many people as possible are vaccinated as quickly as supply allows. Employers should support workers to self-isolate and attend for vaccination when advised to do so, without any financial detriment.

Individuals can sign up to view your vaccine status and get a paper certificate for international travel: Get a record of your coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination status | The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine (nhsinform.scot)

You must only order a paper certification if you are travelling in the next 21 days. A digital solution in the form of an app is expected in July.

We fully appreciate the challenges that businesses across Scotland have been facing throughout the pandemic and recognise the significant impact Covid-19 has had on turnover and staff absences. The success of the programme so far is something to be proud of and the Scottish Government remains grateful to all employers for their support and compliance with regulations so far.

Further information and guidance available at Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination.

Organisations may also want to refer to the vaccine deployment plan, which sets out how vaccinations are rolled out in Scotland.

Outbreak management

An outbreak might be identified through, for example, analysis of Test and Protect data; identification of two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a setting such as a workplace within 14 days; an increase in the rate of absence due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19; an increase in the rate of respiratory illness in a setting as this could be due to COVID-19.
In such circumstances the local NHS Health Protection Team (HPT) should be contacted using the contact details on the Health Protection Scotland website. The HPT will assume responsibility for managing the situation and will conduct an initial assessment. They may decide that the outbreak is contained and offer advice. If there is a risk that the outbreak might escalate then a meeting of relevant parties will be convened to understand the issues, risks and actions that may be required. Depending on the nature and extent of the outbreak, a number of meetings may be required until the outbreak can be declared over. Details of the processes involved can be found in the Scottish Covid-19 Workbook.
Operational guide and checklist (5th left-hand tab)

- safe workplace planning and communications
- enhanced hygiene and cleaning arrangements
- physical distancing
- face coverings
- ventilation
- shift patterns
- travel to work
- wearing appropriate PPE where necessary
- temperature checking
- legionella testing
- COVID-19 symptoms within the workplace
- dealing with emergencies
- checklist

As a minimum we expect:

- enhanced health and safety measures to be in place before staff and students/apprentices are asked to work on site, including physical distancing guidance and hygiene measures generally and at bottleneck situations
- safe travel to work arrangements to be considered as part of a risk assessment, with any relevant adjustments adopted

Safe workplace planning and communications

It is vital steps are taken to ensure a safe working environment and related workforce confidence. This is best done through early, regular and ongoing engagement between organisations and trade union or workforce representatives. As it will take time to complete the necessary risk assessment, identify the relevant mitigation measures and put those measures in place, the engagement between employers, trade union or workforce representatives must start well before a planned change date.

It is important everyone understands the measures taken to establish the safe working environment as this is likely to have a significant impact on workforce confidence. Being, and feeling, safe will play an integral role in supporting a recovery in productivity levels.

Enhanced hygiene

Enhanced hygiene measures should be a key plank of workplace-specific measures to create a safe working environment, examples of which are set out below.

Environmental cleaning

- more frequent cleaning of all work areas, including keyboards and mice, with usual cleaning products (detergents and disinfectants to maintain usual cleanliness)
- more frequent cleaning of door handles and other frequently touched surfaces
- additional use of 70% alcohol solution spray and wipe
- provide more frequent rubbish collection and more waste disposal facilities
- provide paper towels instead of hand dryers
- implement procedures for cleaning new equipment when entering the facility
- implement procedures for receiving and unpacking consumables, considering all surfaces as dirty and cleaned appropriately
- introduce measures to mitigate the risk of transmission in the use of shared equipment minimising the use, and increased cleaning, of touchpoints throughout buildings
- consideration of the circulation of air in working environments and the options available for improving and ensuring suitable ventilation

Health Protection Scotland has produced further guidance on enhanced cleaning procedures for non-healthcare settings.

The Scottish Government has published guidance on opening public and customer toilets.

Hand hygiene

- coronavirus is spread when respiratory secretions from an infected person enters the mouth, nose or eyes of another. One way in which this can happen is by touching eyes, nose or mouth with contaminated hands. It is therefore important to avoid touching the face with unwashed hands
- perform hand hygiene regularly, and especially before and after eating
- promote good hand, respiratory and surface hygiene for all staff/visitors/students
- ensure there are sufficient hand washing facilities and provision of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) at key areas such as entry/exit points and communal areas
- visual reminders around facilities to wash hands may be useful

Respiratory hygiene

- catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue and dispose of any tissues into a bin and wash hands immediately
- if an individual does not have tissues to hand, they should catch coughs and sneezes in the crook of their elbow
- wash hands with soap and water or use ABHR before eating and drinking, and after coughing, sneezing and going to the toilet

NHS Inform also includes clear advice around hand and respiratory hygiene.

Skin health surveillance

Enhanced hand hygiene measures may result in work-related skin conditions. It may be appropriate to consider enhanced skin health surveillance.
Physical distancing

Physical distancing is the other key plank of workplace-specific measures to create a safe working environment. Working from home should remain the default, where possible.

Factors organisations should have considered include:

- Facility layout and signage with clear marking of two metre boundaries around the workplace and workstations and signage which reinforces expectations of employees at relevant points. (As English may not be the first language for everyone onsite organisations should consider how best to use visual material to reinforce messages).
- Limiting access to parts of the workplace required by an individual to do their job as this will limit the chances for interaction with others.
- Staggering entry and exit times to prevent bottlenecks arising as people arrive or leave.
- Staggering break times and adjusting canteen arrangements to reduce opportunities for larger numbers of staff to interact on a face to face basis.
- Splitting the workforce into specific teams to avoid cross-team contamination and provide a level of operational resilience in case someone in one team develops COVID-19 symptoms.
- Considering opportunities to introduce additional technology support and systems to assist in managing the safe working practices and in particular physical distancing.

Face coverings

It is important to note the difference between face masks and face coverings. We advise the current face covering guidance on the Scottish Government website is followed. Here, we recommend that face coverings:

- Are made of cloth or other textiles and should be two, and preferably three, layers thick and fit snugly while allowing you to breathe easily.
- That users should please follow and endorse best practice on how to wash, store, wear and dispose of face coverings.
- That Workplaces should endorse and support staff and students to follow the best practice in the use of face coverings.

The guidance relates to use of face coverings by members of the public in specific circumstances. This advice in the guidance above is not intended as an infection prevention and control measure for the workplace where there are other health and safety considerations and measures in place such as physical distancing and hygiene controls. Physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene, are the most important and effective measures we can all adopt to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The wearing of facial coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions.
The Scottish Government also encourages use of re-usable, washable face coverings, rather than single use masks to minimise plastic waste.

**Ventilation**

Ventilation will form a part of employers’ risk assessment when considering the occupation of premises. This is particularly important when considering the increased transmissibility of new variants. Premises will have a variety of ventilation systems and it is imperative that employers identify the system that is in use and how this should function, including seeking expert input where appropriate. Such systems should be regularly cleaned and tested and be maintained in accordance with instruction manuals. Employers should seek to monitor the air quality of premises, perhaps through the use of Carbon Dioxide monitors, taking into account the occupancy, equipment and activities taking place within enclosed spaces. Risk Assessments should be revisited in light of new variants and public health guidance.

The Scottish Government has produced [detailed guidance on ventilation](https://www.gov.scot/). The Health and Safety Executive and Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers have also produced guidance on the safe reopening of buildings.

Organisations should ensure adequate levels of ventilation. Where centralised or local mechanical ventilation is present, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air. If this is not possible systems should be operated as normal. Where ventilation units have filters present enhanced precautions should be taken when changing filters. Ventilation systems should be checked or adjusted to ensure they do not automatically adjust ventilation levels due to differing occupancy levels. Any ventilation system needs to take account of the activity within the space and the occupancy rate. All systems must be regularly maintained with cleaning and servicing according to the installation guidelines and manufactures instructions.

Desk and ceiling fans may be used to increase localised air flow but only where adequate levels of ventilation is present.

Wherever it is safe to do so, doors, vents and windows should be kept open to increase natural ventilation. It is important to highlight that in winter, even opening windows and vents by a small amount can have a positive impact, whilst reducing the cold air coming into the premises. This will also help to reduce contact with door handles. However, internal fire doors should never be held open (unless assessed and provided with appropriate hold open and self-closing mechanisms which respond to the actuation of the fire alarm system). The Fire Safety Risk Assessment should always be reviewed before any internal doors are held open.

Organisations may also find [this video](https://www.gov.scot/) from the Department of Health and Social Care on ventilation useful.

Organisations may also want to refer to the latest ventilation advice card for employers.
Shift patterns

Organisations may develop plans to change shift patterns to both protect the workforce and optimise productive capacity. This could include considering opportunities to reduce the need for travel at peak times and opportunities for flexible working patterns. This will require proper negotiation with trade union or workforce representatives if it involves a change in employee terms and conditions.

Travel to work

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are self-isolating (e.g. through household isolation or Test and Protect measures), you must not travel and should follow the ‘stay at home’ advice. The HPS advice and any subsequent safe travelling advice should be factored into company decisions on planned returns to work.

Transport Scotland has produced guidance to assist the public to travel safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is important that the latest version of the guidance is read and used in context of the local protection level, and related measures on transport, listed in the Strategic Framework and local protection levels.

All arrangements for those staff who need to travel to work should be reviewed and consideration given to the need for additional measures to ensure these staff are able to maintain physical distancing when using public or private transport and are applying effective hand hygiene before and after journeys. For employees who live a reasonable distance from their workplace, the best and advised option is to walk or cycle.

Employers currently offering staff transport may need to re-schedule trips or offer an enhanced service to facilitate appropriate physical distancing. In light of the requirements, managers should also discuss with staff the need to review other travel arrangements, such as car sharing.

You should not share a vehicle with anyone from another household, unless you absolutely have to.

If this is the case, you should take the following steps and precautions:

- if sharing a vehicle with anyone from another household, limit the number of people in the vehicle to as few as possible, ideally no more than 2 (applies to adults and children aged 12 and over)
- use the biggest vehicle available for car sharing purposes
- occupants should sit as far apart as possible, ideally the passenger should sit in the back seat diagonally opposite the driver, aiming for 2 metre distancing between occupants
- windows in the car should be opened as far as possible taking account of weather conditions to improve ventilation in the space
- occupants in the car, including the driver, should wear a face covering provided it does not compromise driver safety in any way
• occupants should perform hand hygiene before entering the vehicle and again on leaving the vehicle
• occupants should avoid eating in the vehicle
• passengers in the vehicle should minimise touching any surfaces
• keep the volume of any music/radio to a minimum to prevent the need to raise voices in the car
• the longer the journey, the higher the risk; keep journey times to the minimum feasible and do not linger in the vehicle before or after the journey itself
• where non-household members are car-sharing, the car must be cleaned regularly (at least daily) and particular attention should be paid to high risk touch points such as door handles, electronic buttons and seat belts. General purpose detergent is sufficient unless a symptomatic or confirmed case of COVID-19 has been in the vehicle in which case a disinfectant (e.g. chlorine-based product) should be used

Use of PPE

COVID-19 guidance for non-healthcare settings sets out guidance on use of PPE. This advice confirms that workplaces should use PPE consistent with local policies and in line with measures justified by risk assessment.

Both the Scottish Government and the HSE recommend a risk-based approach focused on a hierarchy of control which seeks to eliminate risks, combat risks at source, adapt workplaces to individual needs, ensure adequate staff training around processes to manage the risk and then use PPE where required. Where PPE is deemed necessary, an adequate supply and quality must be maintained, which is provided free of charge to workers and which must fit properly.

Where reusable PPE is used, such as laboratory coats, enhanced and more frequent cleaning should be considered.

Temperature checking

The Scottish Government does not recommend the use of temperature checking employees as a means of testing for COVID-19 due to the low efficacy rate of this method. Further information about the reliability of temperature checking as a test for COVID-19 can be found on the MHRA website.

Legionella testing

There is an increased risk of Legionnaire’s Disease when buildings have been out of use, or not running at full capacity. This is because water systems may become stagnant when not in use, increasing the risk of legionella within water supplies. Many public and office buildings have been closed during the COVID-19 crisis, making legionella a legitimate concern as restrictions are eased.

The Health and Safety Executive have published advice on the risk of Legionella in buildings which are closed or running with reduced occupancy during the COVID-19 crisis on the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) website.
Building owners or operators should undertake a health and safety check of buildings, and deep cleaning prior to reopening where necessary, to mitigate risks. More information can be found on the HSE website at this link.

Displaying COVID-19 symptoms in the workplace

The virus is expected to remain in the population for some time, even after lockdown restrictions have been eased and people begin to return to work. This will cause anxiety for people who will also want to understand how any outbreaks in the workplace will be handled. As part of risk assessments, organisations should explore with trade union or workforce representatives how to respond should anyone develop symptoms while at work, including whether it is possible to identify any particular parts of the site the individual may have accessed or equipment used while symptomatic. As part of this, consideration should be given how best to monitor the health of all individuals in a workplace.

Employees have a responsibility to ensure they adhere to overall COVID-19 advice which says people with symptoms should remain at home and self-isolate. Organisations and employees should remain in regular communication throughout any period of self-isolation, with organisations encouraged to work with trade union or workforce representatives to enable individuals to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate.

Organisations and workers may also want to refer to the Test and Protect guidance.

Organisations and workers should also note that even though the use of public transport by symptomatic individuals or those who have tested positive should be discouraged, those individuals who have no other option but to use public transport should adhere to mitigation measures such as:

- use of face coverings
- physical distancing
- hand & respiratory hygiene
- minimise the time spent on the public transport system

Dealing with emergencies

Protocols for dealing with emergencies, evacuations and accidents will be impacted by the need to maintain physical distancing while individuals who would normally lead or coordinate site responses in such situations may be amongst those working from home. Emergency, evacuation and accident response processes must be considered and reviewed where necessary to ensure effective arrangements are still in place. Everyone on-site should be familiar with new processes.

The HSE has also produced guidance for First Aid during the coronavirus outbreak.
Checklist

A checklist to support organisations implement this guidance has now been developed. The actions in the checklist should be fully considered and implemented where possible as part of procedures to ensure a safe workplace.

Organisations who wish to increase workforce or public confidence are encouraged to display the checklist to help to communicate actions being implemented or undertaken.
Deliveries, distribution and visitors (6th left-hand tab)

Protecting your workforce and those who come on-site.

As a minimum we expect organisations:

- to provide early clarity to their supply chain about honouring of orders in the system, linked to new production capacity and consumer demand/contracts
- to treat all site visitors, including contractors, suppliers and those making deliveries, as if they were employees, ensuring they are offered the same protections and are expected to follow the same rule

Site and campus visitors

Many sites and campuses, especially larger ones, may normally have a number of contractors and visitors working at the site who are not employed by the organisation owning it. This presents an increased risk of virus transmission if people do not adhere to the same interpretation of rules. Organisations should ensure safe working practices and activities and implementing a permit to work system for contractors and external visitors who require access the site or campus. This would set out requirements for how everyone behaves on a site or campus, including entering and leaving, clarifying responsibilities for all around, maintaining good hygiene and physical distancing.

Factors to consider will include:

- minimise the number of visitors and reduce visiting times
- prepare self-declaration forms for visitors, issue these in advance and maintain in records, prepare instructions for arrival and prearrange a meeting point, ideally outside
- use entrances and exits direct to the outside where possible to reduce interactions with others
- designate a meeting area for visitors with appropriate safety equipment and personal hygiene equipment
- provide clear guidance to visitors on physical distancing in the facility
- provide clear instructions to visitors on emergency procedures
Training and compliance (7th left-hand tab)

- workforce training
- apprenticeships and training providers
- home working
- compliance
- security

As a minimum we expect:

- training around processes and working environment expectations to be provided for all staff and students/apprentices before starting work on-site
- organisations to establish measures, in collaboration with trade union or workforce representatives, to monitor compliance with relevant regulations, local restrictions and processes put in place to enable a safe operation

Workforce training

Every workplace should look and feel substantially different for employees, staff and students/apprentices. Physical distancing and enhanced hygiene will change how workplaces operate. Training will therefore be essential to build a common understanding of requirements within the new working norm, instilling confidence that changes put in place contribute to a safe workplace.

Training methods should ensure effective delivery of relevant overarching and organisation-specific measures and expectations of staff while on-site, in a way which maintains physical distancing.

Organisations should consider, as part of their risk based planning, how training can be safely delivered, especially if elements are normally outsourced to third parties. Visual aids may be required as part of the training and for ongoing guidance and communications.

Training should also be in place for staff who undertake the cleaning of a premises.

Some organisations have initiated a universal induction process covering their new, enhanced hygiene and physical distancing measures. This induction process can help demonstrate organisations are taking the COVID-19 risks seriously, building confidence amongst the workforce that they are returning to a safe workplace while also reinforcing the importance of individual employee responsibilities.

Apprenticeships and training providers

Apprentices can work on-site at the same time as their co-workers. For specific concerns regarding safe work for apprentices there is information and support and apprentices can speak to an advisor directly on 0800 917 8000.

It is important to ensure there is a functioning training infrastructure to support economic recovery and the sustainability of apprenticeship programmes. For those
Training Providers and assessors that are providing continuity of contracted services for apprentices, learners and employers in the workplace during the pandemic must adhere to the applicable sectoral guidance and local restrictions.

The following guides from the Health and Safety Executive provide useful sources of information:

- [working safely during the coronavirus outbreak - a short guide](#)
- [talking with your workers about working safely during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

At all protection levels, working from home is the default position where possible.

**Home working**

Organisations may want to refer to the [home working guidance](#).

**Compliance**

As a minimum we expect:

- organisations to establish measures, in collaboration with trade union or workforce representatives to monitor compliance with relevant regulations and processes put in place to enable safe working.

Employers should also put in place, with trade union or workforce representatives, robust local arrangements to monitor compliance with new operational arrangements. Remedial actions should flow from that monitoring, and be augmented by advice, guidance and support from external enforcement authorities.

It is vital for workers to have confidence in the steps being taken by their employers. Employers should look to establish processes to allow employee feedback on physical distancing and safety protocols, enabling employees to input on areas of concern and for employers to act upon these concerns.

A single point of contact has also been established for trade union or workforce representatives to help the Scottish Government understand how all COVID-19 workplace guidance is being implemented, and to help shape and refine that guidance based on the real experience of workers in the workplace. The mailbox can be contacted through scottishtradeunioncovidenquiries@gov.scot.

This contact is not intended to be a reporting mechanism for potential breaches of legislation. To ensure appropriate enforcement action is taken when needed, any potential breaches of legal requirements must be raised with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The regulator for health and safety at work, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is constantly applying their expertise to ensure people at work are protected, utilising the powers at their disposal under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
HSE is treating COVID-19 as a workplace health issue with regard to the protection of workers from infection. HSE can and will use the Health and Safety Work Act to ensure physical distancing in the workplace in relation to workers. HSE can be contacted by phone on 0300 003 1647 or online at HSE contact form.

Where HSE identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health guidance to control COVID-19 health risks to workers, HSE will consider a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks including the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices.

These actions will be taken under existing health and safety law. A framework agreement between Police Scotland and local authorities supports the referral of complaints about lack of reasonable physical distancing at work.

Organisations may also want to use the compliance self-assessment tool to assess the effectiveness of COVID-19 control measures within the workplace.

Security

The interpretation and use of any guidance should be considered in line with normal protective security operations and practices. Organisations should consult with and involve their security departments in the interpretation and implementation of the guidance. In particular, security should be considered in any revised risk assessment.

Under no circumstances do we advise the removal, or alteration of, or reduction in, existing protective security measures without providing clear recommendations (e.g. from the National Technical Authority or police counter-terrorism specialists) on how to maintain effective protective security.

This should extend to measures not primarily intended to provide a protective security benefit, but nonetheless doing so, for example removal of street furniture that could make moving or queueing pedestrians more vulnerable to vehicle-as-a-weapon attacks. Security staff should remain focused on security duties. Where COVID-19 creates additional staffing requirements, e.g. for queue management, employers should ensure additional suitable staff resource is made available.

Employers should ensure security staff feel safe, e.g. having access to appropriate PPE and hand-washing facilities, and that they are able and confident to raise any concerns.

Read further detailed guidance on security:

- www.cpni.gov.uk/staying-secure-during-covid-19-0
**Next steps (8th left-hand tab)**

**Review and future development**

This guidance extends until further notice. It sets out our current advice and guidance for organisations with laboratories and research facilities in helping to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19, and how organisations respond to local or national changes as set out in Scotland’s Strategic Framework Update and as we move in a phased manner as set out in the Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making – Scotland’s route map through and out of the crisis.

The route map provides an indication of the order in which we will carefully and gradually seek to lift current restrictions after lockdown, but does not attempt to specify dates for all the different phases. All of this will be evidence-led.

Easing restrictions will not mean returning to how things were before the pandemic. Physical distancing, hand hygiene and other critical behaviours will be essential in each area to ensure public and workforce confidence.

This guidance will be updated and reviewed as required in consultation with relevant employers and unions. Please ensure you use the latest version.

It is for individual organisations in conjunction with trade union or workforce representatives to decide how best to successfully adopt and adapt guidance for their individual circumstances.
**Related information** *(9th left-hand tab)*

**Scottish Government advice and support**

*Summary of COVID-19 developments in Scotland*

Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making

Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making – Scotland’s route map through and out of the crisis

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland’s Strategic Framework

Coronavirus (COVID-19): local protection levels

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Returning to work safely


**Coronavirus (COVID-19): business and physical distancing guidance**


Further guidance on physical distancing can be found on [NHS inform.](https://www.nhsinform.scot)

Advice on substantive [support packages available for business and their employees](https://www.gov.scot)

COVID-19 information and [guidance for general (non-healthcare) settings](https://www.gov.scot)

**Test and Protect: Advice for Employers**

**Guidance on childcare**

Guidance for [key workers and critical childcare](https://www.gov.scot)

A list of [Scottish Procurement Policy Notes (SPPNs)](https://www.gov.scot) can be found on gov.scot.


SPPN 5/2020 sets out guidance for public bodies on options for payment to their suppliers to ensure service continuity during the current COVID-19 outbreak.

**NHS Inform**
Please refer to relevant sections of the NHS Inform website, in particular the advice on physical distancing, shielding, Test and Protect, and symptoms. Each of these sections notes the date last updated, so please take particular note of whether some of the above guidance has been updated since your draft guidance was produced to ensure this guidance remains aligned.

- Coronavirus (COVID-19): General advice
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Check your symptoms
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Physical distancing
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Shielding
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Test & Protect
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Contact tracing
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Testing
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): households with possible infection
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): Communications toolkit

The following UK-level guidance may also prove useful:

- Staying safe outside your home
- UK guidance: COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings

Legislation

Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020

Fair Work during the COVID-19 crisis

Joint Statement with the STUC on Fair Work

Other sources of COVID-19 information

UK Government guidance on working safely during COVID-19 in different workplaces

The Health and Safety Executive has provided advice related to COVID-19

Food Standards Scotland provide guidance for food business operators and employees.


To contact Police Scotland for Protective Security advice, please contact your local Counter Terrorism Security Adviser:
- North: SCDCTSAberdeen@Scotland.pnn.police.uk
- East: SCDCTSAEdinburgh@Scotland.pnn.police.uk
- West: SCDCTSAGlasgow@Scotland.pnn.police.uk