

## Laboratories and research facilities - operational checklist

This checklist is for use by employers, employees, students/apprentices who use labs and research facilities until further notice, and should be used in conjunction with the [Safer Workplaces and Organisations Guidance](#) and the [Public Health Scotland Guidance for Non-healthcare settings](#)

### COVID-19 risk assessments

- Businesses and workplaces should utilise the [Public Health Scotland guidance on risk](#) to support their risk management.
- Complete and implement full risk assessments, across all areas of work and non-work activity on site, including the full range of lab and research work, administrative work, any other work activity, and non-work aspects such as movement between rooms and buildings as well as communal gatherings (e.g. to have breaks or meetings), in consultation with employees, employee representatives or trade unions.

As of 01 April 2022, HSE introduced changes to [Covid-specific risk assessments in the workplace](#).

UKG has removed the requirement for Covid-specific risk assessment unless as below:

- Complying with general health and safety law:
  - Employers must, as always, comply with the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 for [welfare facilities](#). We have guidance on [providing sufficient general ventilation](#) in workplaces.
- Under [COSHH Regulations](#), employers must protect workers who come into contact with COVID-19:
  - directly through their work, for example in researching the virus in laboratories
  - due to their work activity, such as health and social care workers caring for infectious patients
- In these cases, employers must still do a risk assessment and implement control measures.

- COSHH does not cover situations where:
  - one employee catches a respiratory infection from another
  - a member of the public has infected an employee with coronavirus through general transmission in the workplace

You can find guidance on [infections at work](#) and [health and social care](#).

Communicate to all employees, students/apprentices the availability of an individual occupational risk assessment, particularly individuals who are in the [highest risk category](#):

- use the [individual occupational risk assessment tool](#) to assess an individual's risk from COVID-19 in the workplace

Together with your workforce, trade unions and/or workplace representatives, regularly revise all risk assessments to reassess, record and mitigate any new risks. Identify:

- any changes to COVID-19 restrictions that impact the workplace
- the COVID-19 risk implications where any new work processes or new employees are introduced to the workplace
- whether there are any further distancing, hygiene or other safety measures that can be introduced to the workplace
- any significant changes in health status of individual employees

## Protecting the workforce – self-isolation and test and protect

Everyone should follow the [Test and Protect](#) rules.

- Know the rules and recommendations on self-isolation. The latest information on self-isolation can be found on the Scottish Government website at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Test and Protect - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Coronavirus-(COVID-19):-Test-and-Protect).
  - it is expected that employers will support employees, students/apprentices to be absent from work when suffering the symptoms of COVID.
  - organisations should also consider sign posting to employees, students/apprentices where they can receive [financial support](#).
- Have support mechanisms in place for employees, students/apprentices who are absent due to COVID:
  - check on employees, students/apprentices who are off work to identify how they are coping and whether they need advice or assistance.
- Encourage employees to get vaccinated.

## Ventilation

Ventilation should be considered as part of a hierarchy of risk controls approach, working alongside face coverings and enhanced hygiene (hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, surface cleaning etc.).

- Review ventilation as part of your risk assessments.
- Identify areas that are poorly ventilated – such as areas with no mechanical or natural ventilation.
- Use rooms with good ventilation and avoid use of those without.
- Restrict or reduce the duration of activities indoors.
- Maximise the use of outside spaces for meetings and breaks.
- Maximise the circulation of fresh air on the premises by opening windows where possible and following Scottish Government [ventilation](#) guidance and HSE [ventilation and air conditioning guidance](#).
- Avoid recirculation/transfer of air from one room to another unless this is the only way of providing a sufficient airflow to all occupied rooms.

- Consider the possibility of air cleaning devices to enhance indoor air quality – specialist ventilation engineering advice should be sought prior to investment/installation of these.
- Provide clear instructions to all building users on how ventilation systems should be used. Expert advice should be sought if uncertain.

### Physical distancing

Where practical you may wish to:

- Support staff who might need extra space or who prefer others to take extra care around them by becoming a [Distance Aware](#) partner and providing badges and lanyards (see link above) to staff who require them.
- Stagger the arrival and departure times of employees, students/apprentices and, where possible, use separate entry/exit points, to reduce crowding.
- Have one way systems in the workplace to reduce crowding.
- Where possible, stagger break times and make use of safe outside areas for breaks where possible.
- Use any workplace areas that have been freed up by home working to support spreading workers out rather than adding more people in and to maximise the space between those attending the workplace.
- Limit the number of people who are in an area or room, or who use a lift, at any one time.
- Implement digital processes or systems that replace the need for face to face interactions.
- Reconfigure seating and tables in canteens and break rooms to maintain reasonable distancing.
- Use protective screens in busy area where distancing is not possible.
- Regulate the use of locker rooms, changing areas and other facility areas to reduce the number of people using these at any one time.
- Encourage the storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage space, such as lockers, during working hours.
- Have physical distancing marking in areas such as clock machine areas, toilets, showers, lockers, changing rooms and any other area where queues are likely to form.
- Implement measures to reduce the potential crowding of people in pinch point areas such as corridors, stairwells, entry/exit areas.

- Reduce unnecessary movement within and between buildings, such as restricting access to certain areas and making use of technology (e.g. telephones, radio transmitters, text/email).
- Limit the numbers of people who travel on corporate transport (such as minibuses).

### Face coverings at work

We encourage everyone, including visitors and volunteers, to wear a face covering in indoor communal areas and shared spaces at work where there is poor ventilation, or distancing is difficult to maintain.

- Follow the [face covering guidance](#) when carrying out workplace and individual risk assessments. Record your findings.

Further advice and guidance is also available for employers and employees from:

- [Citizens Advice Scotland](#)
- [the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service](#)
- [Scottish Hazards](#)
- [the Scottish Trades Union Congress \(STUC\)](#)

## Cleaning and enhanced hygiene

Good hygiene and cleaning measures play a vital role in preventing the transmission of the virus.

- Encourage staff, students/apprentices to wash and/or sanitise their hands by providing washing facilities and hand sanitiser, at locations around the workplace, including entry and exit points, reception desks, communal areas, workstations and canteen.
- Provide a nearby supply of sanitiser for employees, students/apprentices to use in situations where hand washing is not possible or practical e.g. when boarding vehicles or handling deliveries.
- Design a cleaning schedule and train appropriate staff to implement this.
- Ensure work areas, staff rooms, toilet facilities canteens and equipment are cleaned frequently between uses.
- Identify frequent touch points, including all objects and surfaces, and disinfect these regularly, this could cover touch-based security devices, such as keypads to enter controlled areas, either seek alternatives or implement enhanced cleaning arrangements.
- Keep workspaces clear and remove all waste. Remove all personal belongings from work areas at the end of a shift, i.e. water bottles, mugs, stationary etc.
- Encourage the storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage spaces, such as lockers, during working hours.
- Introduce additional waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection if necessary.
- Where shower and changing facilities are provided, set clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean and clear of personal items.
- Encourage employees, students/apprentices to use contactless or cashless payment, where possible, in staff canteens or other vending points.
- Use signs, tannoy announcements, posters and any other relevant communication tools to remind staff to maintain hygiene standards, i.e. coughing and sneezing etiquette and hand washing.

## Supporting employees

It is important that employees, students/apprentices feel that workplaces are safe and that employers are able to support employees during the pandemic.

- To support employees, students/apprentices who may continue to be affected by childcare provisions, isolation due to illness, home schooling, or caring for vulnerable or elderly people in their household or wider family, consider what flexible support you can put in place, such as flexible or hybrid working.
- Identify workers who remain at [highest risk](#) of serious illness if they contract the virus, and through an [individual risk assessment](#), identify what additional support they need and what you can put into place.
- Consider introducing [Mental Health First Aiders](#) to the workplace to support workers whose mental wellbeing has been impacted by the pandemic.
- Provide written or verbal communication of the latest guidelines to staff, students/apprentices develop communication and training materials for workers who are returning to sites, especially around any new procedures that have been introduced.
- Engage with workers and workplace representatives through existing communication routes to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements and conditions.
- Ensure that disabled people are informed about new procedures and are able to access facilities i.e. hand washing facilities at wheelchair height, verbal direction for those unable to see any floor markings or signs etc.
- Consider the impact on new workers and how they are integrated into the workforce and undergo induction training etc. (particularly if working from home).
- Consider the impact on students, apprentices and others on site who may not be formal employees.

## Hybrid Working

We continue to encourage businesses to consider implementing hybrid working, where possible, with workers spending some time in the office and some time at home if possible and appropriate businesses should consult with workers and where appropriate, trade unions, on how best to manage the transition to hybrid working.

- Carry out a risk assessment to identify and mitigate any risks posed by the increased numbers of people returning to the workplace.
- Before any return to the workplace, ensure staff are aware of the latest workplace COVID-19 measures in place.
- Carry out an [individual risk assessment](#) where staff who are returning remain at [highest risk](#) of serious illness if they contract the virus and implement the appropriate measures.
- Follow workplace Health and Safety requirements and consult on how to ensure these are adhered to in a home working environment and the workplace.

## Visitors

To protect employees, students/apprentices and visitors, employers are encouraged to implement onsite visitor protocols, for example:

- Keep a record of all visitors, if this is practical.
- Implement protocols for on-site visitors:
  - provide clear guidance on any distancing and hygiene expectations on arrival (e.g. signage, visual aids) and before arrival (e.g. phone, website or email)
  - establish host responsibilities relating to COVID-19, providing necessary training for people who act as hosts for visitors
  - review exit and entry routes for visitors and contractors
  - co-ordinate and cooperate with other occupiers for those working in shared facilities
  - so far as is possible, plan to limit the number of visits at any one time and to limit the amount of time spent on the premises and consider restricting access to required visitors only
  - so far as is possible, schedule essential services and contractor visits to reduce interaction and overlap between people and minimise work when other employees are present



- revise visitor arrangements to ensure hygiene is maintained - such as not signing in with the same pen in reception areas (or providing hand sanitiser and cleaning between use)
- implement rules for visitors around the wearing of face coverings whilst inside the premises
- place signs at visitor entrance points that identify the rules when visiting the site/workplace/institution.

### **Managing in workplace outbreaks**

Outbreak management plans should be included in your COVID-19 risk assessment.

- Make all employees, students/apprentices aware of your outbreak management plans and protocols that have to be followed in the event of an outbreak or an employee becoming symptomatic in the workplace and follow [PHS non-healthcare settings guidance](#)
  - make sure employees, students/apprentices know who must be informed in the workplace e.g. managers, first aiders or other responsible person.
  - set aside designated areas where symptomatic individuals can self-isolate until they can return home and have protocols in place for safely retrieving personal belongings.
  - have plans in place regarding safe travel arrangements for employees who need to return home.
  - have plans in place regarding cleaning protocols and any restrictions in areas where symptomatic people have been working etc., and be able to implement these plans quickly.