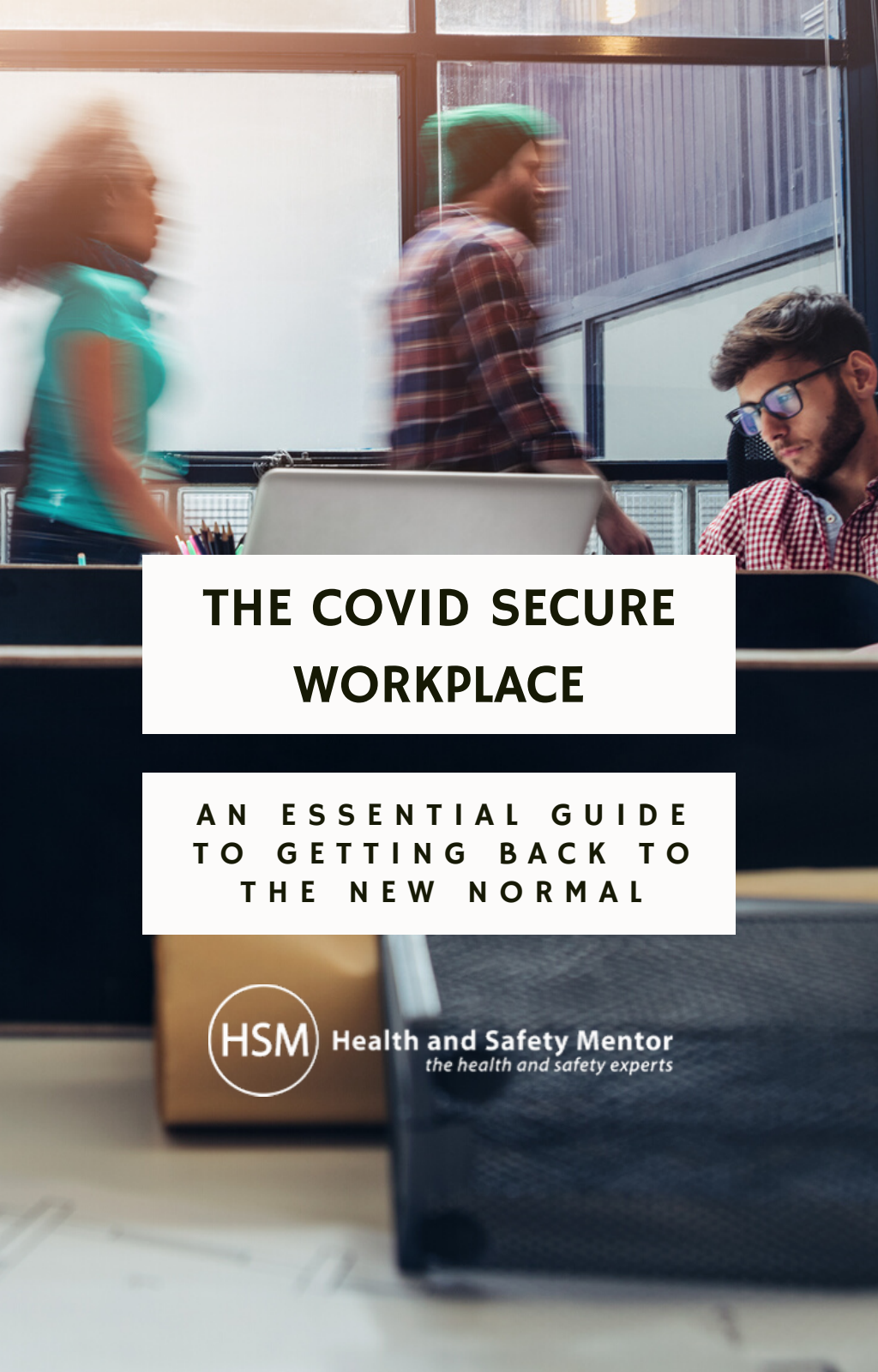




THE COVID SECURE WORKPLACE

AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE
TO GETTING BACK TO
THE NEW NORMAL



Health and Safety Mentor
the health and safety experts

THE NEW NORMAL

Life is not normal at present; the workplace is somewhere that we might not have been for many months.

Lockdown has presented businesses with lots of challenges and getting back to normal will also through up some tasks that perhaps you hadn't had to consider previously. Issues around workplace layout, who attends work, how they work, how you keep the workplace safe and what about the use of PPE?

All of these are valid questions and real concerns...not just for owners, directors and managers but all the workforce. One of the biggest challenges that workplaces face is confidence - confidence in the safety of the measures in place, confidence of staff to be in work and perhaps confidence in your clients and customers to deal with your company.

This simple guide is an overview of what is required. It's all based on UK government guidance, along with our years of experience and expertise in helping businesses manage and work safely.

If you require assistance in getting all of this together – as there is more to it than just this guide, then please get in contact via:

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I. THINK ABOUT THE RISK

The government requires ALL businesses to carry out a COVID 19 risk assessment. This is to both gauge where the hazards pertaining to your business are from a Covid 19 standpoint, and more importantly to work out how you are going to put measures in place to keep everyone as safe as possible.

A risk assessment is not a complicated thing to do, it's not all about masses of paperwork but rather identifying the hazards in your workplace, understanding the risk and making sensible and practical adjustments.

If you need help with that, then drop us a line and HSM can assist you as we have helped many other companies at this time.



2. PEOPLE – THINK ABOUT THE PEOPLE THIS IS GOING TO EFFECT

Staff are everything to your business – they are the lifeblood for your success as a business. You have legal obligations to keep them safe.

However, make sure that you have thought about which staff need to come back into work right now. Prioritise the following:-

- Workers in roles critical for business and operational continuity, safe facility management, or regulatory requirements and which cannot be performed remotely.
- Workers in critical roles which might be performed remotely, but who are unable to work remotely due to home circumstances or the unavailability of safe enabling equipment.

The current guidance is that those that can remain working from home should do so.

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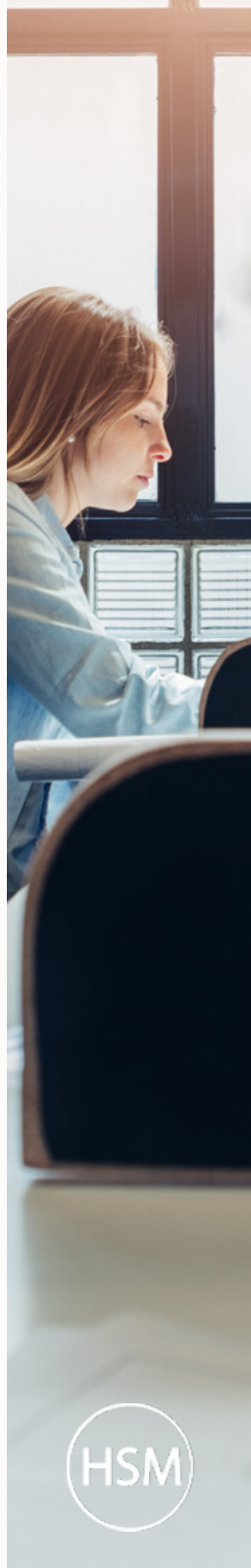


PEOPLE (CONT.)

Other people considerations would be around workers with particular health concerns and whose family circumstances are such that being at home would be safer than coming into the workplace. Knowing your team and who is at higher risk from infection from the disease, is key to your decision making.

Also, if people are working from home, how are you managing their well being remotely? Have you provided equipment and systems to allow remote working properly – have you considered their mental health from being a remote worker?

The key to the people element is knowing your people, knowing their circumstances and concerns about returning to the workplace and making sure that you either facilitate the continued remote working or you put steps in place that they can confidently return to the workplace, safe in the knowledge that you have done all you can to reasonably reduce the risk, so far as is practicable.



3. COMING INTO AND LEAVING WORK

Sounds simple, doesn't it. In the old order of things nothing is usually more straightforward than coming in and out of your workplace.

However, nowadays entering and leaving are potential pinch points where the transmission of the disease could be more prevalent. Here are some things to think about when addressing this issue.

- Do staff need to spend a lot of time on public transport? Is car sharing something that was encouraged previously – how are you going to overcome this.... getting people to the workplace can be an issue.
- Staggering the times people enter and depart the building
- Can you facilitate people walking to work – more car parking or bike racks / storage of bikes etc.? A bit more storage for clothing might be needed.
- Can you facilitate more entrances to the workplace to allow pinch points to decrease?
- One-way entrance and exit flow – can this be facilitated?
- Handwashing facilities (or hand sanitiser where not possible) -would need to be placed at entry and exit points.



4. MOVING AROUND THE WORKPLACE

Getting around work is something that is an everyday occurrence that we have not really had to think too much about beyond being shown around at our induction. However, in these challenging times, you need to think about how to ensure safe passage around the building(s) whilst maintaining social distancing.

Here are some things to consider:

- Can you restrict staff movement between sections of your business? For example, admin staff not being able to access the warehouse area.... or the production and dispatch staff not coming into contact with each other? Might not be possible, but you have to, through your risk assessment consider it.
- If you currently have some form of job rotation or team personnel shifts, that these are reduced or stopped. Thereby reducing the flow and interaction of people.
- One-way traffic system through your building – marked out on the floors to ensure that people have those visual reminders.

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MOVING AROUND THE WORKPLACE (CONT.)

- How many people can use your lifts at any one time.... a pinch point. Signage and instruction needed for this key area of movement.
- Can you regulate the use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts, turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing?
- Have you considered the way that members of your teams (or contractors / visitors if you allow them) who require special consideration will move about your building? Those with mobility issues, sight or hearing impairment and expectant mothers will all need to be individually considered...just like in normal times, as to what reasonable adjustments you will need to make to keep them safe.



5. WORKSTATIONS AND PLACES OF MAIN WORK

To maintain social distancing within the workplace is one of the key objectives of all these measures.

It can also be one of the biggest challenges – lack of space being one of them. Here, the consideration of how many people should currently be in your physical workplace is critical.

Here are some other things to consider:

- Through careful use of your risk assessment, you must review your current layout to ensure that workstations and people are further apart. The objective is that workers are 2 metres apart, as per government guidelines.
- The use of floor markings – mapping out where people should have
- their workstations, is a way of doing this.
- Do your staff work face to face? If so, you will need to rethink this is a big challenge in a lot of modern office spaces.

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PLACES OF MAIN WORK (CONT.)

- If you can't move people's workstations – then the use of screens will need to be considered.
- Cut out the use of Hot Desking – whilst its great use of space and facilities normally – it doesn't fit in the workplace at present.
- Make sure that you manage occupancy (staffing levels) to ensure social distancing at all times. It comes back to those that need to be in the workplace, or can they still work from home?

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HSM

6. MEETINGS

We all love a good meeting, don't we? British commercial life is based on meetings and is a key part of managing businesses effectively.

However, in the current Covid world, they can become another area of concern and something that a business has to manage carefully. Some points to consider when looking at meetings:

- Can you zoom it? Instead of being in a room, can you do it via zoom or another remote working tool? Its lovely to be in the same room but there are dangers that, unless we can socially distance then the possibility of spreading infection is by far increased.
- If you have to be in the same room, then adjustments to the layout and the number of persons attending have to be considered. 2 metres of social distancing must be maintained.
- If you are in the room avoid sharing pens, pads or other objects – make sure that there is hand sanitiser in the room and that participants are encouraged to use it before they start and at the end of the meeting.
- Keep meetings as brief as possible – have an agenda and stick to it. Take socially distanced breaks if you have to...but in essence, don't stay in the same room together for too long.
- Consider meeting outside – the disease is less communicable outdoors. Make use of any summer we may or may not have!
- Again, consider floor signage where regular meetings take place.



7. USING COMMON AREAS AND SPACES

We completely take for granted the use of common spaces, such as receptions, staircases and staff rooms / canteens. These are free movement areas normally – no restrictions and everyone is in with everyone else. 'We all have lunch together' might be a great way of team bonding but, at the moment it can be an area where transmission rates might be higher. Some ideas and thoughts on this area and how to keep it safe:

- Are you in a shared building – with a common reception, staircases, toilets etc? If so, you need
- to have a conversation with the FM or landlord about the policies and proceed for common areas. Ask to see their risk assessment and safe system of work.
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- Stagger times for people taking breaks – this can reduce the pressure on the staff rooms and places to eat.
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- Consider the use of outside spaces for not only meetings but for breaks too...weather permitting!
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- If you have areas within the workplace currently not being used due to the pandemic (or other reason), consider them for use for breaks.

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COMMON AREAS AND SPACES (CONT..)

- Installing screens in receptions are more and more common – consider these to keep your reception staff (who are there all day with potential virus carrying persons coming in from unknown areas).
- Encourage your teams to bring their own food in – reduces the need for canteen interaction – queuing etc.
- Swap furniture and seating around in the staff areas so people aren't sitting face to face.
- Encourage your teams to stay on site during breaks.
- Regulate the use of locker rooms to discourage concurrent use by staff
- Think about signage and floor markings to promote and encourage social distancing for common areas such as toilets, locker rooms, shower rooms / changing rooms where queues could typically form.



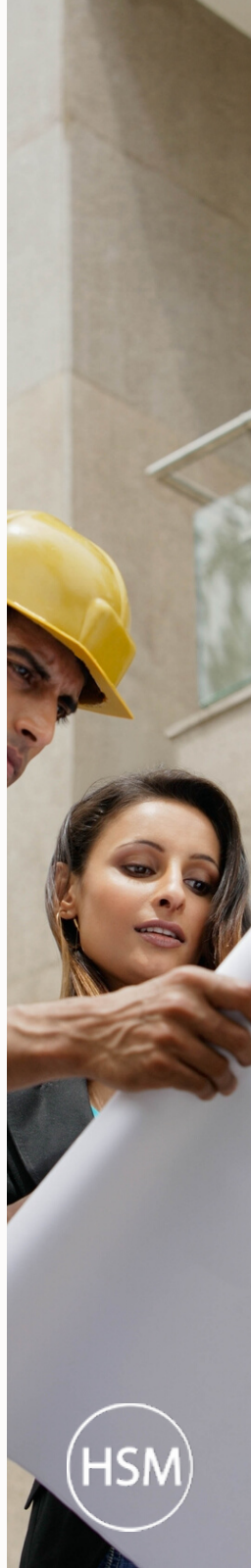
8. MANAGING CONTACTS....

CLIENTS, CONTRACTORS

AND VISITORS

People coming to your place of workplace might be commonplace or it might be something that happens infrequently. However, we all get deliveries and we all have contractors visit our sites. We need to think about how we manage these visitors to the workplace, and measure to keep them and you/your teams safe. Things to consider:

- Do they need to be there? Can their visit be conducted remotely by online means such as zoom?
- If they do have to come onto site, provide them with guidance as to what you require them to do and how to behave, and that they should only be onsite for as little time as the job requires and to leave using the socially distant methods that are in place.
- Limit the numbers.... don't have your PAT testing done on the same day as you are getting the office painted, with the fire alarm being serviced. Minimise numbers and plan ahead.
- Manage the times that they visit – can it be done out of hours? Nighttime work with none of your staff on site reduces the risk. Ensure that specific risk assessments are in place for this though.
- Maintain a record of visitors to site at all times.
- Revising visitor arrangements to ensure that social distancing and hygiene are maintained.



9. COMMUNICATION – CHANGE IS HARD...SO IT'S GOOD TO TALK.

Your staff are going to be concerned or maybe even frightened to come back to the workplace. It's important that by completing your risk assessment and following government guidance, that you communicate to those effected confidently and clearly. Some areas to consider:

- Make sure that you provide clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival via signage and the use of visual aids. If you can even before they arrive. Your risk assessment should be on your website.....so that others know that you are serious about your Covid secure workplace and practices. It's a legal requirement to do this if you have 50 or more employees.
- Engaging with workers and worker representatives through existing communication routes to explain and agree any changes in working ,arrangements.
- Develop communication processes to allay fears and to explain procedures before people come back to the workplace
- Keep talking to people when they come to work – have a safety conversation, make reasonable adjustments, take on board ideas from the team to help with the challenge.
- Make sure that you use simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines and display images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language and those with protected characteristics such as visual impairments.



10. WORKPLACE CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE

The objective here is make sure that the workplace is clean and by doing so, prevent the transmission by touching surfaces that might be contaminated. It's all a bit more than asking your cleaner to give the place, the once over three times a week instead of twice.

It's incumbent on all staff to play their part in maintaining the workplace to a high standard. This is crucial to the success of being Covid safe, and along with social distancing measures can really reduce down the likelihood of transmission in the workplace. Things to think about:

- Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses, using your usual cleaning products is fine.
- Encourage staff to take ownership of this and be responsible for their own work areas and perhaps allocate common areas and equipment for cleaning also.
- Clearing workspaces and removing waste frequently – that clear desk policy that you have been thinking about...now is the time to implement it....it will help.
- Pinch point items such as door handles, reception desks, communal seating areas.... all should have increased frequency of cleaning in place.

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WORKPLACE CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE (CONT.)

- Make sure that signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available are posted within the premises.
- Make sure that in meetings, briefing and other communication process that you are reminding the team of good hygiene techniques are.
- Hand sanitiser – make sure that it's in multiple locations and that they are full and operational.
- Contact your cleaning company to make sure that enhanced cleaning is taking place.
- Speak to your cleaning company if you have been out of the premises for a while, to have a deep clean carried out before any staff return.
- Make sure that you have run all the taps within the building for 1 to 2 minutes to ensure that good water management is maintained and reduce the case of legionella. Speak to your facilities or water management company for more information on this too.
- Lead by example...make sure that you are doing all you can in this area too – along with demonstrating social distancing and the other tips in this guide.



COVID SECURE H&S GUIDANCE

These tips are part of the solution to having a Covid 19 secure workplace. There is further guidance available through the government website. There are a series of guides, depending on the business that you are in.

However, these are some of the key issues that you need to not only think about but commit to a risk assessment for your business. This is not a nice to do, it is a government requirement.

If you have more than 50 employees, you will need to publish your assessment on your website. You will need to have it to hand ready for inspection, should a local authority or HSE inspector calls.

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