

How to Review Your Covid19 Health & Safety Risk Assessment to Ensure Your Workplace is Covid Safe

In light of continuous high numbers of Covid19 infections and deaths – many attributable to the new variant and its increased transmissibility and the latest Public Health advice, we are advising businesses that they must review their health & safety Covid19 Risk Assessment, along with the effectiveness of all measures/controls in place, to determine which enhanced measures may need to be introduced.

Why: the new variant strain of COVID-19 is more widely transmitted, at least 50% more than the original strain, and therefore risk assessment controls need to be adapted;

Risks: if you do not review your risk assessment to adapt to the new variant COVID-19 virus, the virus can take advantage to infect workers, putting you at risk of serious outbreaks in the workplace.

These enhanced measures include:

- Staff working from home where possible
- Increased distancing of at least 2m
- Improved ventilation rates
- Enhanced environmental cleaning
- Reducing the number of staff and customers on the premises
- Increasing spaces to reduce interactions
- Online rather than face to face interactions
- Reducing group sizes within workplaces
- Use of suitable face coverings in high risk areas rather than reliance on physical barriers alone

Along with implementing the above, here are some questions to ask when reviewing your Risk Assessment AND reviewing how effectively your measures and controls work in practise:

- Are your staff working from home (if this is possible for your business) in line with government guidance? <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>
- Are the measures you put in place working effectively in reality? How do you know? How do you monitor this?
- What measures are not working well enough and what additional mitigations can you put in place to rectify this?
- Do your staff understand the risks in your workplace and measures put in place to mitigate the risks?
- Have you considered any staff that are exempt from wearing face coverings/masks and staff that are considered vulnerable? You need to ensure that you are able to keep them, other staff and customers safe
- How do you communicate your control measures and changes in your RA to your staff?
- Do you provide training to ensure your staff understand what they must do to play their part in your business trading safely? Do you need to provide refresher training? This will help ensure your staff don't become complacent
- Do you remind your staff that their interaction outside work could impact on the safety of their colleagues, for example car sharing?: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers)

- Have you asked your staff for feedback on how the measures and controls put in place are working?
- Have you put staff 'bubbles' in place if there is no option but to have your staff work from the workplace?
- As more people get tested, this may result in more positive tests leading to the need to self-isolate – consider minimum staff levels and contingency plans for business continuity whilst remaining Covid safe
- Have you installed any new equipment since you wrote/last amended your Risk Assessment?
- If your business has a head office with other branches, how do you ensure effective regular communication and monitoring of Covid Secure measures working effectively between them?

Enhanced measures, should, where appropriate, be introduced without delay to help to reduce transmission of the virus.

If you have any positive cases within the workplace, you should notify your local council environmental health team via their website; **here's a list of reporting links for all 10 councils in Hertfordshire:**

Hertsmere: [Coronavirus - advice for businesses - Hertsmere Borough Council](#)

Stevenage: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/town-and-community/emergencies/coronavirus/report-a-coronavirus-outbreak-in-your-business>

Welwyn Hatfield: <https://www.welhat.gov.uk/coronavirus/report-business>

Broxbourne: <https://www.broxbourne.gov.uk/report-outbreak>

St Albans: <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/covid-19-coronavirus>

Dacorum: [https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/coronavirus-\(covid-19\)-advice-and-updates/coronavirus-\(covid-19\)-workplace-outbreak-notification-form](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/coronavirus-(covid-19)-advice-and-updates/coronavirus-(covid-19)-workplace-outbreak-notification-form)

North Herts: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/emergency-planning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-business-support/report-outbreak>

East Herts: <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-businesses-0/report-coronavirus-outbreak-your-business>

Watford and Three Rivers:

https://www.watford.gov.uk/info/20286/coronavirus/1140/report_a_coronavirus_outbreak_in_your_business

Further information, checklists and templates can be found via the Hertfordshire Better Business for All Partnership's Covid19 Trading Safely toolkit for local businesses. This includes risk assessment templates, FAQs for re-opening, risk assessment responsibilities, checklists on trading safely and much more.