

Covid-19 Risk Assessment Guidance for Managers

Introduction

This guidance document has been created to help managers and those responsible for developing, amending and reviewing risk assessments. Services that have continued to operate during this pandemic and those that are starting to plan to reopen following the easing of lockdown restrictions, it is important that established risk assessments and safe working procedures continues consider the Coronavirus as a risk in the workplace. In the absence of a suitable risk assessment, managers must ensure they now develop a suitable assessment as part of the permission to return to safe operation phases 1-3. To adhere to legislative obligations, risk assessments need to be consulted on and shared with employees, trade unions and other health and safety representatives.

Bradford Council is a very large diverse local authority so the exposure risk to Coronavirus will differ across the organisation from one service to another, for example health and social care, construction, front line services, our back office support and schools. Despite these differences, the logical approach to assessing and managing the risk of Coronavirus remains the same.

As you read through this guide it will prompt you to think about the risk and effect of Coronavirus in the workplace and offer examples of suitable controls required to manage that risk. The subheadings will help with the layout and recording of the risk assessment. The [Risk Assessment Form Template](#) can be used to record the assessment information. There is [additional guidance](#) available to help users understand the risk assessment process.

A risk assessment in itself does not control risk; it is the actions of everyone involved applying the controls that will help to mitigate the risk to keep the workplace safe. Involving your employees, trade unions and other safety representatives in the assessment process will help create successful safe working controls and practices.

One of the management controls required is to routinely review the effectiveness of a risk assessment and the implemented controls. It is important to ensure these controls are kept under constant review and improved as the knowledge about the virus, its transmission and its control develops.

Risk Assessment

As an employer, we must to take reasonable steps to protect people (employees and others) from harm, this includes Coronavirus. The following bullet points outline the risk assessment process that will help to manage risk and protect people.

You must:

- identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus
- think about who could be at risk
- decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed
- act to remove the activity or situation, or if this isn't possible, control the risk

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Hazard

Risk assessments must identify the Coronavirus (Covid -19) as a hazard and on the assessment document and you need to briefly describe how it is spread e.g.

- in minute water droplets that are expelled from the body through sneezing, coughing, talking and breathing
- be transferred to the hands and from there to surfaces
- close contact with persons who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic with the virus

If the virus is transferred from one person to another e.g. close contact or touch transmission, whilst many may suffer a mild infection effect and survive, for others it may prove fatal, so this virus should be considered as a **high** risk hazard.

Don't forget to note who may be affected by the virus in the workplace.

Likelihood of Exposure

Consideration must be given to how staff may be exposed to the virus whilst being in the workplace and carrying out work activities. Both the Government and the Council still advise good hand and respiratory hygiene (regular hand washing/sanitising and face coverings as appropriate); regular cleaning of the workplace and social distancing as best practice. All staff are also encouraged to take up the offer of vaccination and booster vaccination when offered, as well as using regular LFD testing.

The following pages will help you to consider the various aspects of your workplace, working activities and the potential risk of exposure to the virus. Under each subheading are examples of suitable controls, which can be implemented to mitigate the risk. It is not a definitive list. Decisions about what control measures are required need to be realistic, reasonable and proportionate to the risk faced.

Attending the workplace?

Think about where and how your work is carried out,

- consider if there are jobs and tasks that can be changed to reduce risk; identifying those in your service who could “hybrid work” (priority groups 2-3) which includes working from home:
 - providing equipment needed for employees to work safely and effectively at home or as part of home/hybrid working (for example laptops, screens, specialist equipment provided as part of reasonable adjustments, mobile phones, video conferencing equipment)
 - keeping in regular contact with employees working from home, making sure you discuss their wellbeing and helping them to feel they are still part of the workforce

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- Ensure that flexible or homework and or lone working assessments are completed for those who no longer work in the office. This includes, remote, virtual and peripatetic workers and those in dispersed teams
- where it is not possible to work from home, managers are required to implement suitable control measures to ensure those employees who need to be at work can do so safely
- where an employee raises a concern about their return to the workplace; you must complete an individual assessment with them prior to their return and monitor progress.

Protecting people who are at higher risk

Think about:

- planning for clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) workers who are allowed to return to the workplace
- helping workers who live with someone who is CEV to come to work where implemented risk mitigations (controls) can be adhered to
- continuing to allow workers at increased risk to work from home, or hybrid style
- supporting those persons who are at an increased risk who cannot work from home or hybrid style, to safely return to the workplace.

Work Places and Working Areas

Following the easing of the majority Covid restrictions, council buildings and assets will still have Covid safe operating arrangements in place. Managers are advised to liaise with the Facilities Management Team with regards to the latest buildings safe operating arrangements.

Think about how you can organise your work areas, so that employees can work safely, for example ensure:

- work areas are suitably spaced, are not overcrowded and employees can socially distance should they wish to
- hand washing facilities are available and cleaned regularly. Continue to provide hand sanitiser in the workplace and vehicles used for work
- that all work areas are suitably ventilated eg keeping windows or purging a work area on a regular basis. Where CO2 monitors are in use, take regular readings and where high readings are noted take the appropriate action
- suitable cleaning regimes are implemented and adhered to for all work areas not just “high touch” points
- there is no requirement to remove physical barriers (screens etc) especially where they continue to support safe working and reduce the risk of viral transmission.

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Moving around the workplace or work area

Think about how people travel through work environments.

- Work related trips, site visits and travel between building can resume; however, everyone is encouraged to consider if it is necessary in the first instance.
- The need to adhere to any control measures that are still in place in various buildings and sites.
- The wearing of face coverings is not mandatory in council buildings, but employees are encouraged to wear a face covering (unless exempt) when transitioning about the workplace and communal areas (lobbies, corridors, break out areas, print rooms, canteens, toilets, showers, and changing facilities).
Note- Face coverings do not need to be worn whilst sat at a desk.
- Employees should be supported where they choose to wear face covering in the workplace.
- Respecting people's personal space. Reducing close contact with others, especially in enclosed spaces, will help reduce the spread of the virus

Meeting Rooms

when planning to hold in person meetings with one or more persons please continue to make best use of online meetings, as these reduce contact with other people that we do not usually mix with.

- Consider that gatherings create a risk of transmitting the virus to others. Do not create a high-risk environment by having too many people in an enclosed area. Do not exceed room capacities.
- If you have an in person meeting, ensure there is adequate space and ventilation. Ask employees to used lateral flow tests before attending and follow the other workplace safety measures in place.
- If the meeting is of a more unusual type, such as a public event, managers and organisers should carry out a risk assessment and implement controls where needed. Services and organisers may already have risk assessments in place, so a review of these would be sufficient.
- Consider cleaning regimes for the meeting rooms post use.

Good Hygiene

Think about:

- ensuring that you have hand washing facilities that provide running water, soap and paper towels;
- providing hand sanitiser in addition to washing facilities;
- ensure signs and posters are still on display showing good **hand washing technique (20 sec)**;

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- providing regular reminders on avoiding touching your face and to cough/sneeze into your arm;
- ensuring hand sanitiser are available in multiple locations in addition to washrooms;
- setting clear guidance for the cleaning of toilets, showers and changing facilities to make sure they are kept clean;

Information and Guidance

Think about:

- providing people (including workers and others) with information on procedures, guidance or ways of working that have been introduced
- sharing this information with them before they start work
- sharing this information with others who are not your workers (for example visitors, customers or contractors), where required; this could include signs or notices
- how you will pass information and guidance to people who don't have English as their first language and others who may struggle with written and verbal communication
- holding conversations with your workers, listening to and acting on their concerns
- wellbeing of staff and access to additional support.

PPE (personal protective equipment)

Continue to provide the PPE that you normally use to protect employees, for example exposure to wood dust, flour, welding fume, silica dust, medical need.

Only consider additional PPE when the above control measures listed in this guide are not enough to control the risk e.g. close work and or intimate care. Remember that incorrectly applied/worn PPE will not offer the protection it is designed for and be worthless.

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Additional Guidance

The BEIS has produced specific workplace safety guidance for a number of different industries and sectors and are a useful aide to the risk assessment process. You can find details at www.gov.uk/workingsafely.

HSE's latest news and advice on coronavirus

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/index.htm>

DfE - Schools Guidance – [Implementing Protective Measures Educational Settings](#)

Occupational Safety team website (risk assessment/flexible /homeworking/lone working /display screen equipment) - www.bradford.gov.uk/hands/

Employee Health and wellbeing Website (support services available/useful information and guidance documents) - [Link](#)

Bradnet – “Your Workplace Matters”