



Department for  
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To All MPs

11 May 2020

Dear Colleague,

**New COVID-19 Secure Guidelines for Workplaces**

New 'COVID-19 secure' guidelines are available to UK employers to help them get their businesses back up and running and workplaces operating as safely as possible.

This follows the Prime Minister setting out steps to beat the virus and restart the economy, so we can protect jobs, restore people's livelihoods and fund the country's vital public services. Our message is clear: [everybody should stay alert](#) so that we can control the virus and save lives.

The government has consulted approximately 250 stakeholders in preparing the guidance. It has been developed with input from firms, unions, industry bodies and the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and in consultation with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), to develop best practice on the safest ways of working across the economy, providing people with the confidence they need to return to work.

The new guidance covers eight workplace settings which are allowed to be open, from outdoor environments and construction sites to factories and takeaways. This sets out practical steps for businesses focussed on five key points, which should be implemented as soon as it is practical:

**1) Work from home, if you can**

All reasonable steps should be taken by employers to help people work from home. But for those who cannot work from home and whose workplace has not been told to close, our message is clear: you should go to work. Staff should speak to their employer about when their workplace will open.

**2) Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment, in consultation with workers or trades unions**

This guidance operates within current health and safety employment and equalities legislation and employers will need to carry out COVID-19 risk assessments in consultation with their workers or trade unions, to establish what guidelines to put in place. If possible, employers should publish the results of their risk assessments on their website and we expect all businesses with over 50 employees to do so.

### **3) Maintain 2 metres social distancing, wherever possible**

Employers should re-design workspaces to maintain two metre distances between people by staggering start times, creating one way walk throughs, opening more entrances and exits, or changing seating layouts in break rooms.

### **4) Where people cannot be 2 metres apart, manage transmission risk**

Employers should look into putting barriers in shared spaces, creating workplace shift patterns or fixed teams minimising the number of people in contact with one another, or ensuring colleagues are facing away from each other.

### **5) Reinforcing cleaning processes**

Workplaces should be cleaned more frequently, paying close attention to high-contact objects like door handles and keyboards. Employers should provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitisers at entry and exit points.

A downloadable notice is included in the documents, which employers should display in their workplaces to show their employees, customers and other visitors to their workplace, that they have followed this guidance.

The guidance applies to businesses currently open. This also includes guidance for shops which we believe may be in a position to begin a phased reopening at the earliest from the 1 June. Guidance for other sectors, which are not currently open will be developed and published ahead of those establishments opening to give those businesses time to plan. The Government will also shortly set up taskforces to work with these sectors to develop safe ways for them to open at the earliest point at which it is safe to do so, as well as pilot re-openings to test businesses' ability to adopt the guidelines.

## **Health and safety in the workplace**

Our guidance operates within current health and safety, employment and equalities legislation. We have worked closely with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in developing this guidance.

The government has made up to an extra £14m available for the HSE, equivalent to a 10 per cent increase to its budget. This extra money will provide resource for additional call centre staff, inspectors and equipment, if needed.

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face coverings**

Based on the scientific evidence, the use of PPE in the workplace – outside of clinical settings and a handful of other roles where Public Health England advises – is not recommended by the Government.

Of course, if employees use PPE to protect against other hazards – such as dust in an industrial setting – they must continue to do this.

People have the option to use a face covering in the workplace. There are circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected, but have not developed symptoms.

Wearing a face covering is not required by law in the workplace. If workers do choose to wear them, they should follow the workplace guidance on how to use them.

The guidance is available at [gov.uk/workingsafely](https://www.gov.uk/workingsafely).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alok Sharma', with a stylized flourish below the name.

**THE RT HON ALOK SHARMA MP**  
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