**Covid-19: A Summary of the Government Guidance**

The full guidance on working in offices is available [here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres).

Thinking about risk

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risks to the lowest practical level.

* Carry out a risk assessment. This doesn’t have to be complicated – list areas where problems may arise, and in each case what you will do to reduce the risk.
* Discuss the risk assessment with staff and get their feedback.
* Remember that this is not an all-or-nothing process. It may be best to develop a mixture of old and new working practices. Some staff might come into work but not others, or staff might come in on some days but not others.

Initial decisions

* Is it possible for a person to work from home? Could it be made possible, for example if you bought new computers or changed your IT system? Remember that funding may be available to help with this.
* Is it possible to deliver services to service users without face-to-face contact? Could you support people over the phone, using your website, or through using systems like Zoom or Teams? If your service users don’t have smartphones or IT skills, could you help them get hardware (perhaps a family member could give them an old phone, or could you get funding to buy hardware?) or access training (for example through Redbridge Institute)?
* For each activity, consider whether you need to do it. If it presents a risk, could it be done in another way? If grant funding depends on you completing the activity, remember that many funders have agreed to be flexible about outputs.

Making work safe

If you do need to carry out the activity and it can’t be done from home, think about how to make it safe:

* People should stay 2 metres apart if at all possible
* Activities which pose a risk should last as short a time as possible
* Everyone should wash their hands thoroughly and frequently. Make sure facilities are available, and also hand sanitiser.
* Use screens or barriers to separate people.
* Move workstations further apart. If this isn’t possible, rearrange workstations so that people work back-to-back or side by side, not face-to-face.
* Change staffing arrangements so that each person has contact with only a few others.

Who should come to work?

* People who are vulnerable should not be asked to come to work. Check whether staff/volunteers do face any particular risks, and if so, talk to them about what you can do to reduce that risk.
* If people are working from home ensure that you are in regular touch with them and providing support for any mental health issues that may arise. Remember that employers have a duty to ensure a person’s work space is safe if they are working from home. For example, see the Health and Safety Executive [checklist](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.htm) for people working with computers.
* The law says that you cannot discriminate against people on grounds including age, disability or ethnicity. This means that you should take steps so that people in these groups are not put at particular risk from covid.
* Consider whether a minimum number of people need to be at work for the workplace to operate.

Travelling to and from work

* Using public transport increases the risk of infection. Encourage staff to walk, run or cycle to work. Could you help this, for example by providing cycle racks or changing facilities?
* Risk will be greatest during the rush hour. Could you introduce staggered arrival and departure times? Remember that free travel for people over 60 has been suspended on TfL before 9am.

Inside the workplace

Consider some of the following changes:

* Reducing congestion by having more entry points.
* Providing more storage for clothes and bags
* Make entrances and exits one-way only – put up signs
* Try to reduce movement between different areas.
* Introduce rules about how many people can enter a confined space, like a lift.
* Use floor tape or paint to help people stay 2 metres apart.
* Set limits on how many people can be in the room/office/building at once.
* Avoid hot desking and shared spaces if possible. If unavoidable, clean and sanitise equipment between different users.
* Reduce face-to-face meetings. If meetings can’t take place online, remain 2 metres apart. Consider meeting outdoors. Be careful not to share pens or other items.
* Ensure social distancing happens in break areas – move chairs and tables to encourage this. Stagger break times. Consider creating outside areas for breaks.
* In areas where social distancing isn’t possible, consider the use of face coverings such as masks – consider providing masks.

Cleaning

Consider some of the following changes:

* Make sure work areas and equipment are regularly cleaned and rubbish is removed daily.
* Ensure that surfaces which are touched often, such as door handles, are cleaned regularly.
* Restrict use of devices touched by many people, such as a printer or copier, or provide wipes for before and after use.
* Put up signs encouraging regular handwashing and personal hygiene.
* Provide hand sanitiser in multiple locations.
* Ensure people can dry their hands, with either an electric dryer or paper towels.
* Think about how to keep toilets clean and to ensure that social distancing is enforced in them.