

## **RISK ASSESSMENT – Coronavirus (Covid-19)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Covid-19 has presented a global situation that we could not possibly have imagined at the start of the year. It has significantly impacted our society and economy.

The UK is past the peak of the pandemic, although at the time of writing there is a resurgence in positive cases and we are aware that with the reopening of schools and universities and the approaching autumn months that may change. The current guidance encourages employers to return employees to work.

We published our first firm-wide risk assessment in June 2020 and we continue to review this in light of current Government guidance and our experiences during the return to work. We are continuing to take steps to return employees to the workplace where it is safe to do so but also to continue working at home where it is practical and desirable.

Employers have clear legal duties under health and safety law. There are three overlapping general obligations:

- the duty to protect the health and safety of their employees;
- the duty to protect others who may be exposed to health risks as a result of the employer's activities, including members of the public, clients and contractors;
- the duty to manage the health and safety risks from workplaces under the employer's control, which includes the means of access to the workplace and any plant such as lifts and air conditioning systems. The extent of the duty depends on the level of control.

The duty is to do everything "reasonably practicable" to manage these risks and to treat everyone in the workplace equally.

Key to a safe return to the workplace is strong communication and a collaborative approach between employers and employees. Each will have an important part to play to achieve a return to the workplace and clear guidelines and obligations will be set out.

A number of steps have been taken to facilitate a return to work and these will be reviewed on a regular basis. The steps taken to date include this firm-wide risk assessment, individual office risk assessments, staff consultations on return to work to determine concerns, travel, and individual risk. Office Rules have also been published to staff and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

This risk assessment will be reviewed on **1 October 2020** or sooner subject to changing Government guidance.

### COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

<b>Who might be harmed?</b>	<b>Controlling the risks</b>	<b>Our actions to control the risks</b>
<p><b>Our staff</b></p>	<p><b>Staffing the offices</b></p> <p>Current Government guidelines encourage staff to return to the office where its is a safe to do so.</p> <p>We have embarked on a phased return to work which is ongoing.</p> <p><b>Prior to return to work</b></p> <p>Before a return to work at the office, staff must complete a "Pre-Return to Work Form" signed the day before return. The form will require staff to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disclose any sickness and/or potential Covid-19 symptoms, including the date when symptoms commenced, when they</li> </ul>	<p>Consultation with staff through Return to Work survey.</p> <p>Determine which staff are required in the office and identify vulnerable staff who should continue to work at home.</p> <p>Staff who continue to work at home to be made aware of and agree to our policy regarding working from home during the Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Send regular reminders to those staff working in offices to ensure compliance with our rules.</p> <p>Prepare the Pre-Return to Work Form and advise returning staff of the new office rules.</p>

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	<p>ceased and whether a Covid-19 test was undertaken and the results.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>confirmation to the best of their knowledge that the staff member has not been in contact with somebody with the virus in the last 14 days, they have no symptoms including no loss of taste or smell, temperature and/or cough, they have not been told to self-isolate by a doctor.</li> </ul> <p>Staff travel arrangements to be assessed prior to return to work.</p> <p><b>At the office</b></p> <p><u>Hand washing hygiene</u></p> <p>Staff to wash their hands regularly and frequently throughout the day.</p> <p>Staff to comply with hand washing guidance <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/">https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/</a></p> <p>Staff to dry hands with paper towels only.</p> <p><u>Respiratory hygiene</u></p> <p>Staff to exercise good respiratory practices and cough etiquette.</p>	<p>Review individual replies to Return to Work surveys.</p> <p>Supply all offices with soap, sanitiser and paper towels.</p> <p>Encourage staff to report any problems.</p> <p>Display posters, leaflets and other materials as appropriate in all offices.</p> <p>Provide tissues, masks and bins.</p>

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	<p><u>Workstation hygiene</u></p> <p>Staff to sanitise their workstation at the start of the day and throughout the day if required.</p> <p><u>Common areas</u></p> <p>Staff to wash hands after visiting common areas including using the copiers and/or communal printers.</p> <p><u>Enhanced cleaning</u></p> <p>Tailor professional cleaning to amount of staff in each office (see section on Cleaners below).</p> <p><b>Social Distancing</b></p> <p>Maintaining appropriate and safe staff levels in office to maximise social distancing with particular attention to meeting rooms, kitchens, toilets and other communal areas.</p> <p><b>Staff with symptoms of Covid-19</b></p> <p>If any staff member develops the symptoms of Covid-19 in the office, they will be sent home and advised to follow the stay at home guidance.</p>	<p>Empty bins regularly.</p> <p>Provide surface wipes and spray.</p> <p>Office Manager or another nominated by them to ensure common areas are sanitised.</p> <p>Office specific plans to be reviewed to ensure social distancing guidelines can be adhered to.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to any other steps that should be taken including but not limited to, tracing those members of staff that have been in contact with</p>

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	<p>Staff will only be permitted to return earlier if they have a negative Covid-19 test.</p> <p><b>First Aiders</b></p> <p>With limited staff numbers in the offices, trained first aiders may not be in attendance and an alternative arrangement for cover needs to be established.</p> <p>Trained first aiders may need to vary their treatments in the event of accidents/illness at the office.</p> <p>All staff in attendance at the office need to know what to do in the event that a colleague or visitor becomes unwell at the office with Covid-19 symptoms.</p> <p><b>Fire Wardens</b></p> <p>With limited staff numbers in the offices, trained fire wardens may not be in attendance and an alternative arrangement for cover needs to be established.</p>	<p>the person showing symptoms, closing the office, deep cleaning the office.</p> <p>Training on infection control and the proper use of PPE for appropriate staff.</p> <p>A list of current trained first aiders with contact telephone numbers will be available at all offices in the event that assistance or advice is required when dealing with a first aid issue. Copies of the contact details to be available in the first aid kit and on reception at each office.</p> <p>Trained first aiders to be sent the up to date information published by the Health and Safety Executive on first aid during Covid-19. This information also provides links to further guidance including from Resuscitation Council UK.</p> <p>Updated guidance to be circulated to all staff with copies on reception, on notice boards and in the first aid kit.</p> <p>Owner Partners are in attendance across the offices and have completed the required fire warden training to provide cover in the absence of fire wardens.</p>

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	<p><b>Mental Health</b></p> <p>The HR Manager will promote mental health &amp; wellbeing awareness to staff during the Covid-19 outbreak and will offer appropriate support.  <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/">https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/</a></p>	<p>Regular communication of mental health and wellbeing information. Staff to be reminded of the Employee Support Programme provided through the firm by Care-First.</p>
<p><b>Clients and other visitors</b></p>	<p><b>Visitors to the office</b></p> <p>All external office doors to be kept locked so that visitors can only enter by invitation.</p> <p>Meetings with clients or prospective clients to be held remotely by video conferencing wherever possible.</p> <p>Where face to face meetings are unavoidable, they should be by appointment only and in a reception area or meeting room where social distancing guidelines can be complied with.</p> <p>Visitors without an appointment to be allowed in on an office by office basis.</p> <p>Staff to encourage all visitors to comply with the social distancing guidelines.</p>	<p>Maintain supplies of gloves, masks, shields and hand sanitiser.</p> <p>Visitors to be asked screening questions when booking an appointment and when attending the office.</p> <p>Masks, gloves and hand sanitiser to be made available to clients and other visitors to the office.</p> <p>Face shields to be available in reception for staff dealing with clients or other visitors attending the office for meetings.</p> <p>No more than one client group in reception at any one time.</p> <p>Clients to wear masks at all times whilst in the office</p>

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	Staff to wear protective gloves, and where appropriate masks or face shields, when passing or receiving documents or meeting clients or visitors. Staff to wash their hands in accordance with the guidelines at the conclusion of the interaction.	Staff to be told to ask visitors who do not comply to leave the office.
<b>Vulnerable groups – the elderly, pregnant workers, those with existing underlying health conditions</b>	Assess vulnerable staff.	Regular reminders to staff about the extra precautions to be taken in relation to vulnerable individuals.  Limit contact with vulnerable clients by utilising all other methods of communications.
<b>Professional Cleaners</b>	Professional cleaning regime to be adapted to ensure offices are appropriately sanitised.	Ensure cleaning contractors have a risk assessment ensuring their cleaners adhere to the latest Government guidelines.  Cleaning to take place outside of normal office hours to minimise contact between cleaners and staff.
<b>Other contractors</b>	Limit contractors to essential visits only.	Review contractors' timetables and minimise visits to the offices where possible.

### Other considerations

In the course of undertaking this risk assessment we have considered the following additional precautions:

- Temperature checks on staff and visitors entering an office - we have concluded that these are not necessary at present given the other measures in place.
- The wearing of masks and/or gloves at all the time in the office – we have concluded that this is not necessary at present, but staff are free to do so if they wish.
- The wearing of face shields at all times in the office – we have concluded that these are not necessary at present given the other measures in place, but face shields are available for staff dealing with visitors in reception/meeting rooms if they wish to use them.
- We are considering perspex screens in some reception areas and meeting rooms.