

HAZARDOUS TIMES

Health and Safety in the time of Coronavirus Pandemic

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Greater Manchester Hazards Centre

For staff safety and to reduce virus transmission, we shut our office on 18th March. Despite difficulties of home-working and financial losses, we carry on our local GMHC work, national and international Hazards Campaigning activity, and continue to inform advise and lobby for workers lives and health against all workplace hazards. The new SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID19 presents new risk and


challenges but is essentially another workplace hazard and the same principles of preventing the risks to workers apply. Reluctantly we had to cancel the Hazards 2020 conference and book Hazards 2021 for **Friday 30th July to Sunday 1st August 2021**, and a series of zoom conferences on specific issues will be announced shortly. We took #IWMD20 online, and it achieved its highest level of participation locally, nationally and globally, focusing on stopping the Covid-19 pandemic at work. We have never stopped advising and informing safety reps, regional and national union officers, and individual workers. Janet Newsham has become an accomplished host of Zoom meetings and spoken at many national, local union and campaign group meetings plus carrying out training in risk assessments. We have published information to help safety reps in workplaces, and supported campaigns to close non-essential construction #Shutthesites #PayEveryWorker and the #NoKitNoCare demands for all social care and health workers to have correct PPE based on need not supply.

“The virus has exposed 10 years of destructive government attacks on health and safety and the impact of austerity, deregulation and privatization on lack of workers health, safety protection, job security, rights to full wage sick pay and inequality, and on NHS and public services which has turned the virus into a full blown health and economic crisis.”

Produced by Greater Manchester Hazards Centre

If you want any more information about anything in the Newsletter or about other occupational health and safety issues please email: mail@gmhazards.org.uk

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STOP THE PANDEMIC AT WORK

Scientists have been warning of a new pandemic for years but were ignored by governments. Austerity has crippled medical research and damaged health systems.


Erosion of workers' rights, health and safety and paid sick leave are driving the spread of infection. Lack of universal social protection means sick people have to work to survive.

Governments must respond to urgent needs:

- Economic stimulus to save jobs and lives - money must reach people.
- Paid sick leave for ALL workers.
- Income support and employment protection.
- Occupational Health and Safety must be a fundamental right.

The prevention of more deaths requires workers' rights to negotiate hygienic workplaces and work practices through their unions.

www.ituc-csi.org/covid-19-responses



International Workers' Memorial Day • 28 April 2020 | #iwmd20 | www.28april.org

We have demanded throughout that workers health and safety is central and paramount, and that if it is not protected than public health cannot be protected either. Using the latest science and health and safety principles, we have challenged government, Public Health England on late and incomplete lockdown, on fitting PPE standards to supply not need, and on HSE' being missing in action, failing to stand up for workers and not carrying out any enforcement action.

On 23rd March the Govt announced the 'lockdown' but too late to save tens of thousands of lives. It was incomplete as one third to half of all workers, both essential and non-essential, had to carry on exposing themselves to risk while others were told to 'Stay Home Protect the NHS Save Lives'. The pandemic is the biggest occupational health disaster for years. It has killed from 40,000 to over 65,000 in the UK. Up to 20th March it had killed 2,500 people of working age with lower paid workers twice as likely to get ill and die than higher paid workers - construction, security, cleaners, chefs and bus drivers/transport workers as well as health and social care workers suffering the most.

Poorer, and black and ethnic minority people and workers face risks from twice to four times greater than better off professional workers and have experienced the largest number of deaths. This disproportionate effect reflects and exacerbates the existing deadly consequences of social, economic and occupational inequality made more toxic by racism and sexism.

The greatest risk now is the chaotic unplanned and too early relaxation of the partial lockdown and return to work and school announced by PM at beginning of May, without guidance for employers or enforcement action to back it up and while Government's own 5 tests not met and infection rate very high, especially in the North West. Workers lives are at risk well as likelihood of it driving a second wave of infection and deaths amongst the general population. We supported teachers and school unions in resisting unsafe return to school and published **Hazards Campaign – Going Back to work safely or not at all!** on 6th May *Read the detailed report* <http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/blog/hazards-campaign-we-go-back-to-work-safely-or-not-at-all>

In summary, we called for an approach based on precaution, prevention, protection and participation, set pre-conditions to be met before lockdown eased and 12 requirement of employers to ensure work can be done safely. **No easing of Lockdown until these Seven Pre-conditions are met:**

1. Proven sustained low level of COVID-19 infections and deaths.
2. Testing, Tracing, Isolating via a demonstrably effective intelligence gathering system for infection rates. An open and transparent, locally situated public health system of testing, tracing and isolating for those with COVID-19 infection, with all results made public. This must include:
3. Hospital, Care and Residential settings have proven capacity and ability to cope with normal demand of all illnesses and injuries plus COVID-19 infections without being under excessive pressure
4. Strict maintenance of social/physical distancing rules of 2 metres minimum in public spaces backed up by hand washing, sanitisers and cleaning of surfaces
5. Safe for workers to use public transport and public spaces including:
6. In all workplaces the prevention of work-related COVID-19 infections must be the enforced goal.
7. Complete closure of all non-essential workplaces for at least 3 weeks before easing of the lockdown to enable employers to plan, consult with union reps, workers' reps and health and safety regulators, to develop and implement plans to ensure their workplaces and job organisation meet the highest level of ordinary health and safety plus compliance with additional public health guidance, and to give the gradual easing of lockdown the best chance of success.



Going back to work– Moving forward we set out 12 requirements for all employers to demonstrate that in consultation with union safety reps or workers representatives, union officers or health and safety inspectors, that they have reviewed existing risk assessments including generic pandemic planning and made new COSHH risk assessments, then established safe systems of work, training for workers and constant monitoring.

They must use the COSHH hierarchy of control to prevent exposure to SARS CoV-2 by adapting work organisation and workplaces to ensure safe and healthy working is practical, possible in all circumstances, and will be enforced:

1. consultation and involvement of trade unions safety reps,
2. Review all risk assessments
3. Review safety of premises and equipment, checking ventilation, electrical, mechanical, structural, fire and other relevant safety issues in light of COVID19 risk.
4. Deep clean work premises before work is reopened maintain high cleanliness
5. Review staffing levels and work-loads
6. Review safe travel to and from work
7. Support for the mental health for all workers
8. Provide supportive occupational health services and health surveillance.
9. Ensure no disciplinary detriment for sick/caring leave/self-isolation
10. Provide mental and physical disability/ill health support
11. Provide additional measures in higher risk essential
12. Wider worker protections that must be ensured

If it is impossible to adapt workplace to meet health and safety requirements including the additional public health guidance for COVID-19 then workplaces cannot reopen.

It's clear that we cannot depend on employers or the regulators or the Government to keep us safe, it's up to us to organise collectively in trade unions and hold employers and government to account

It's a fast moving issue so we keep our social media updated with links to research, union and government actions, with analysis and best advice. Follow us on Facebook: Greater Manchester Hazards Centre <https://www.facebook.com/GreaterManchesterHazardsCentre/> We didn't vote to die at work-HazardsCampaign <https://www.facebook.com/groups/123746101003963/> And on Twitter @CentreGreater @hazardscampaign @Jnewsham @Hildapalmer
See also Greater Manchester Hazards Centre newly redesigned website <https://gmhazards.org.uk/> and those of Hazards Campaign <http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk> Subscribe to Hazards Magazine <http://www.hazards.org/> and TUC weekly RISKS <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/risks-union-health-and-safety-news-number-951-13-june-2020>
For specific enquiries contact us mail@gmhazards.org.uk and [janet@gmhazards.org.uk](https://www.janet.org.uk)



Reviewing our workplaces

Is it all about assessing and controlling the risks?

Are you returning to work? If there is something you don't know in the list below – ask your employer. Your employer has a legal duty of care to ensure your health, safety and welfare. They must assess and control all the risks to your physical and mental health. Covid-19 is an additional risk and therefore needs additional measures to control it. It is also important to remind ourselves and our employers that all the



existing health and safety law and guidance still applies.

Before returning to work **your employer should be consulting the Trade Union Safety Rep about Health and Safety Arrangements.**

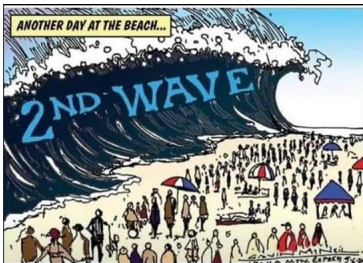
See below a list of issues that should be addressed:

- ⇒ According to Government guidance your employer should let you work from home, if possible.
- ⇒ Check that your employer has reviewed the workplace to ensure that any risks from the property or work activity being vacant for a few weeks has created any risks
- ⇒ Check that your employer has reviewed the workplace to ensure social distancing rules can be met and introduced new procedures to ensure this.
- ⇒ Check that they have implemented new hygiene and cleaning policies – including hand sanitisers, washing stations, disposal of waste procedures, no hand dryers, reviewed canteen/food procedures
- ⇒ Check that increased cleaning has been introduced on the site – daily or more enhanced cleaning, cleaning of all touch points after each person
- ⇒ Check that cleaners are properly trained and wearing high level of protection
- ⇒ Ensure your employer has reviewed all

the RA (Risk Assessment) to ensure that social distancing and restricted access included. If you are the Safety rep you should know who the 'competent person' is that has assessed and updated the RA.

- ⇒ If you don't have an elected Safety Rep – volunteer, you will get training and support and your employer has no alternative but to consult you. Your trade union will need to write to the employer to inform them you are the safety rep.
- ⇒ If there is no safety rep the employer still needs to consult an 'elected/worker rep' about health and safety arrangements
- ⇒ Make sure that your employer has consulted everyone with any health risks or potential health risks about the risks to their health and alternatives to going to the workplace
- ⇒ Make sure that your employer has covered travel to work in their assessment of the risks which should include varying and staggering start times, introducing flexible arrangements.
- ⇒ All access to your workplace should be restricted to numbers of people and authorised people only
- ⇒ Any contractors, agency workers, casual workers must follow the site safety procedures – check how this will happen
- ⇒ Know when, by who and where reviews of all controls will take place and be included if you are the safety rep or worker rep
- ⇒ Do you know who the first-aider is and if they have been given additional training for Covid-19
- ⇒ Make sure everyone has been trained in the new procedures and in what to do if they are exposed to 'serious and imminent danger' of exposure to Covid-19

See the GMHC Fact sheet for more information: <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/How-do-we-approach-reviewing-the-Risk-Assessments-in-the-Workplace-because-of-Covid-1.pdf> and other places



What if we have no Safety Rep?

If there is a trade union safety rep, for a recognized trade union, the employer must consult them about Health and Safety issues. If there isn't one then volunteer and ask your trade union to write to the employer telling them you are the safety rep.

Even if there isn't a trade union safety rep the employer must consult with the workforce and they should ask workers to elect a representative for the sake of consultation. This is a far more limited role and is not covered by the SRSC Regs, which ensures safety reps have functions including consultation, investigation, inspections and safety committees.

But at the very least you will be able to question any risk assessments and risk control measures that are being introduced and make representation to your employer on behalf of other workers.

Links to helpful information:

SRSC Regs: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/BrownBook2015.pdf>

Reviewing Risk Assessments: <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/How-do-we-approach-reviewing-the-Risk-Assessments-in-the-Workplace-because-of-Covid-1.pdf>

Safety Reps short guide: <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/safety-reps-guide.pdf>

TUC visual guides:

- * Safe return to work: <https://learning.elucidat.com/course/5eb42594092f7-5ebc26efb60ce>
- * Risk assessments for working from home: <https://learning.elucidat.com/course/5ea8201298996-5eac468ab5b70>

TUC report on returning to work: [file:///C:/Users/SASquith/Downloads/Preparing_for_the_return_to_work%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/SASquith/Downloads/Preparing_for_the_return_to_work%20(1).pdf)

TUC report on test and trace: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/testing-tracing-covid-19>

TUC webinars, on a whole range of issues, can be found here: <https://crowdcast.io/tuc>

We go back to work safely or not at all <http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/blog/hazards-campaign-we-go-back-to-work-safely-or-not-at-all>

TUC guide on risk assessments for home working: <https://learning.elucidat.com/course/5ea8201298996-5eac468ab5b70>

GMHC Working from home with computer guide: <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Working-with-a-computer-at-home.pdf>

To raise a concern with the HSE: <https://tuccampaigns.typeform.com/to/Ypm6Pq>

HSE information on Covid-19: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>

Various employment and health and safety law explanations <https://www.thompsonstradeunion.law/news/news-releases/employment-matters/briefing-on-employer-and-employees-responsibilities-in-the-wake-of-coronavirus> App

Health and safety information - Training Safe
– image of TS Android <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.elitesporttechnologies.trainingsafe>
Apple: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/training-safe/id1471097285>

Joining a Trade Union: www.tuc.org.uk
<https://www.tuc.org.uk/join-union><https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/>



Relevant Laws

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

Under these regulations (often referred to as RIDDOR), certain work-related accidents are reportable by law to the Health and Safety Executive. HSE have issued this for Covid-19 reporting to employers

You/employer must only make a report under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) when:

- an unintended incident at work has led to someone's possible or actual exposure to coronavirus. This must be reported as a dangerous occurrence.
 - a worker has been diagnosed as having COVID 19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work. This must be reported as a case of disease.
 - a worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus.
- It is your employers responsibility to make a Riddor report, but if they don't do it and it should have been reported then raise it as a concern with the HSE. Keep a copy of any evidence to support the reporting of the incident, this can be requests to put the incident in the accident book, or an email trail about the incident with photographs if possible.

The Workplace, (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

These regulations deal with physical conditions in the workplace and require employers to meet minimum standards in relation to a wide range of matters, which include: Maintenance of buildings and equipment, Lighting, Provision of drinking water, Temperature, Rest facilities, Ventilation, Toilet facilities, First aid, Cleanliness, work-stations, Floor and traffic

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended) (COSHH)

This legislation sets out in details the duties imposed on the employer to protect workers from exposure to hazardous substances at work. They apply to all substances that are hazardous to health including dusts and biological agents. The key duties are for employers to assess the risks, prevent exposure and where that is not reasonably practicable, control the exposure using 'hierarchy of controls'.
<http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/dangeroussubstances.pdf>

The Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974

The main piece of legislation affecting the management of health and safety in is the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 (HSWA). This Act provides a framework for ensuring the health and safety of all employees in any work activity and outlines the general duties.

Employers and employees (as well as manufacturers, suppliers and the self-employed) must comply with the duties set out in the Act, which are summarised as follows:

- Section 2 places a duty on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees as far as is reasonably practicable. It also requires employers to consult with trade union safety representatives on matters affecting health and safety in the workplace. Moreover, employers of more than five people must prepare a written health and safety policy and bring it to the attention of employees. Set up safety committee.
- Section 3 requires employers to ensure that non-employees (e.g. pupils/students etc) who may be affected by work activities are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.
- Section 4 places a duty on anyone responsible for the workplace to ensure that the premises, plant and machinery do not endanger the people using them.
- Section 6 places duties on designers, manufacturers and suppliers to ensure that articles and substances are safe for use.
- Section 7 states that it is the duty of every employee while at work to take reasonable care of him or herself and of any other person who may be affected by his or her actions. This section also requires employees to cooperate with their employer in relation to health and safety issues.
- Section 8 requires employees not to interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interest of health and safety.
- Section 9 provides that no employer may charge his/her employees for anything done or equipment provided for health and safety purposes under a statutory requirement.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The main requirement of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations is that employers must carry out risk assessments to eliminate or reduce risks:

- Regulation 3 – Employers must conduct suitable and sufficient risk assessment to identify hazards and value risk, put effective controls in place to eliminate or reduce risks and manage the work process so it is safe, record the main points where more than 5 workers employed and review the assessment when necessary. Any assessment must take into account young people's inexperience and immaturity and other factors.
- Regulation 4 – Employer to control hazards at source
- Regulation 5 – Employers to ensure the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of preventive and protective measures in workplace
- Regulation 6 – Employers must make arrangements for health surveillance where identified as needed by assessment
- Regulation 7 – Employer to appoint one or more 'competent person' - with sufficient knowledge, skills, experience and training to help them to implement these arrangements
- Regulation 8 - Set up emergency procedures to be followed in emergencies and in serious and imminent danger and ensure that people can stop work and immediately proceed to a place of safety in the event of being exposed to serious, imminent and unavoidable danger and not return to work until the danger is removed.
- Regulation 9 – employers to have contact with emergency services
- Regulation 10 – workers must be told about the risks identified and what action has been taken to protect them from the risk, the procedures for emergencies. And if children are in the work setting, inform the parents.
- Regulation 11/12 - Work together with any other employer(s) operating from the same workplace, sharing information on the risks that other staff may be exposed to, e.g. cleaning, catering or maintenance contractors
- Regulation 13 – employers to ensure workers are capable of doing their job, and trained where necessary
- Regulation 14 - Workers must work in a safe manner, and tell the employer if there is a serious and imminent danger or where they believe there is a short-coming in the employers protective arrangements
- Regulation 15 - employers must provide comprehensive information to fixed-term and agency staff on their premises
- Regulation 16 /17/18 - take particular account of risks to women of child bearing age, new and expectant mothers. Night work for new and expectant

Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 (SRSC)

Regulation 4

- To investigate potential hazards and dangerous occurrences Reg 4(1)(a)
- To investigate the causes of accidents Reg 4(1)(a)
- To investigate complaints by your members Reg 4(1)(b)
- To raise hazards, problems and complaints with your employer Reg 4(1)(c)
- To make representations to your employer on general matters affecting your members health, safety or welfare Reg 4(1)(d)
- To carry out inspections of the workplace Reg 4(1)(e)
- To represent your members with the inspector or other enforcing authority Reg 4(1)(f)
- To receive information from an inspector Reg 4(1)(g)
- To sit on the safety committee Reg 4(1)(h)
- To be consulted in good time on:
 - The introduction of any measures that may substantially affect your members health and safety Reg 4A(1)a
 - The arrangements for appointing competent persons Reg 4A(1)b
 - Any information the employer is obliged by law to give employees Reg 4A(1)c
 - The planning and organisation of health and safety training Reg 4A(1)d
 - The consequences of the introduction of any new technology into the workplace Reg 4A(1)e

If you are exposed to covid-19 at work

Ask for a copy of the 'serious and imminent danger' procedure before you are at risk which should explain what to do if you are exposed to Covid-19 at work.

If you are exposed to Covid-19 at work follow the employers 'serious and imminent danger' procedure, which should include removing yourself from the danger and taking yourself and anyone else nearby to a place of safety, calling for help, self-isolation, deep cleaning (see below) This should be reported under RIDDOR, put the accident book and if your employer refuses put in a written request. If the employer tries to carry on regardless, contact your trade union, escalate the issue and report the issue to the enforcement authorities. All people exposed must be informed and an assessment made about self-isolation. Ask your employer to review the Risk Assessment and the 'serious and imminent danger' procedure to consider any changes or improvements.

Useful links: RIDDOR <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/riddor-reporting-coronavirus.htm>

Complaint to HSE <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>

Further information about advice if you have to self-isolate:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/what-to-do-if-you-or-someone-you-live-with-has-coronavirus-symptoms/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

Hazards Campaign Fact Sheet to Risk Assessments: <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/How-do-we-approach-reviewing-the-Risk-Assessments-in-the-Workplace-because-of-Covid-1.pdf>

Useful research/ information about Covid-19

1. Trade Unions:

- https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/z3bjn9/study-finds-unions-make-companies-more-productive

2. Timeline:

- <https://bylinetimes.com/2020/04/11/a-national-scandal-a-timeline-of-the-uk-governments-woeful-response-to-the-coronavirus-crisis/>
- https://webmail.myphone.coop/appsuite/api/mail/Watterson%20-%20COVID%2019%20in%20the%20UK%20and%20OHS-predictable%20not%20inevitable-NEW-20-0022_Proof_hi.pdf?action=attachment&folder=default0%2FIN-BOX&id=19064&attachment=2&user=8&context=2584&decrypt=&sequence=1&delivery=view

3. Symptomatic/viral load:

- https://relief.unboundmedicine.com/relief/view/Coronavirus-Guidelines/2355000/all/Coronavirus_Disease_2019_COVID_19
 - <https://thehill.com/policy/international/china/497020-wuhan-reports-first-symptomatic-coronavirus-case-in-month>
 - <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2001737>
- ### 4. Social distancing
- <https://aip.scitation.org/doi/10.1063/5.0011960>

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/01/risk-of-infection-could-double-if-2-metre-rule-reduced-study-finds>
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/25/business/coronavirus-meatpacking-plants-cases.html>
- ### 5. Virus staying on surfaces
- https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973?fbclid=IwAR04mB_ul_6mW8TWqPsuQ4zPw20oI4fjt4r5rfSoBlvDSoWdgpAN8Aj69c
- ### 6. Face coverings
- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/21/face-mask-rules-more-political-than-scientific-says-expert>
 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/china/reduction-secondary-transmission-sars-cov-2-households-face-mask-use-disinfection-and>
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/01/health/masks-surgical-N95-coronavirus.html>
 - <http://www.bohs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Face-Coverings-and-the-Workplace-Rev-4-1.pdf>
- ### 7. Ventilation / Air Conditioning
- <https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/new-research-says-air-conditioning-can-spread-covid-19-but-its-more-complicated-than-that/ar-BB13h28W>
- ### 8. BAME/other vulnerabilities
- <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.25.20079491v2>
 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/889195/disparities_review.pdf
- ### 9. Health and Safety importance
- <https://www.ituc-csi.org/health-and-safety-is-paramount-for>
- ### 10. Transmission
- <file:///C:/Users/janet/Downloads/Work-relatedCOVID%2019transmissioninsixAsiancountries%20areas%20A%20follow-upstudy.pdf>
- ### 11. Estimating number of infections
- <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/medicine/mrc-gida/2020-03-30-COVID19-Report-13.pdf>
- ### 12. Call Centres
- <https://strathcloud.sharefile.eu/share/view/56d4a143b7824092>
- ### 13. Toilets
- <https://aip.scitation.org/doi/10.1063/5.0013318>
- ### 14. Failings of Government
- <https://journalsblog.sagepub.com/blog/guest/covid-19-in-the-uk-and-occupational-health-and-safety-a-tale-of-predictable-but-not-inevitable-failures-by-government-when-labor-and-nongovernmental-organization-offered-better-solutions>

New Fact Sheet – Working Safely at a computer at home

What are the health concerns when we work at home on our computers and what is the employers responsibility to our health and safety? <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Working-with-a-computer-at-home-.pdf>

