

Introduction

Employers have a legal duty under Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSW) 1999 to carry out a Risk Assessment to control the risks. The Risk Assessment has to be 'suitable and sufficient', carried out by a competent person in consultation with union safety reps or workers representatives, it is how employers evaluate the risk and put effective controls in place to eliminate or reduce the risk and manage the work process so it is safe.

MHSW Regulation 4 requires the employer to control hazards at source, according to the list of priorities set out in Schedule 1 to the Regulations. A risk assessment must be carried out by a 'competent person' (MHSW regulation 7).

There has been additional guidance issued because of Covid-19.

Risk assessments should identify all potential hazards, the likelihood of harm evaluated and should identify who is at risk of harm.

Risk assessments should take a precautionary and collective approach to controlling the risks, this means they should encompass all the risks of the work/workplace to make it safe for all workers. However, there may be a requirement to mitigate against additional individual risks, but this should be in exceptional circumstances i.e. pregnancy or other rare health conditions.

HSE

HSE say in their document urging business to become Covid secure
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

Risk assessment

You should start by updating your risk assessment to manage the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your business. This will help you to understand what you should do to work safely and protect people.

[Complete your COVID-19 risk assessment](#)

Social distancing

Where possible you should keep people 2 metres apart. If this is not viable, keeping 1m apart with risk mitigation is acceptable.

[How to maintain social distancing in the workplace](#)

Cleaning, hygiene and handwashing

Keeping your workplace clean and frequent handwashing reduces the potential for coronavirus to spread. It is a critical part of making and keeping your business COVID-secure.

[Cleaning, hygiene and handwashing in the workplace](#)

Ventilation and air conditioning

Good ventilation (including air conditioning) can help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus. There are simple steps you can take to improve ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature in your workplace.

[Ventilation and air conditioning during the pandemic](#)

Talk to workers and provide information

Consult and involve people in the steps you're taking to manage the risk of coronavirus in your workplace so you can:

- explain the changes you're planning to work safely
- make sure changes will work and hear their ideas
- continue to operate your business safely

[Talking with your workers about working safely during the coronavirus pandemic.](#)

Working from home

If your people are working from home you should:

- provide the equipment they need, for example a computer, phone and videoconferencing facilities
- keep in regular contact with them, making sure you discuss their wellbeing

[How to protect home workers](#)

Vulnerable workers

Make sure you consider the risk to workers who are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus and put controls in place to reduce that risk.

[Protect vulnerable workers](#)

More guidance and advice

We have information and advice on other subjects including PPE, air conditioning, and managing work-related stress on our [coronavirus page](#).

This page is reviewed regularly and updated to reflect any changes in the guidance.

Page last reviewed: 30 June 2021

Next review due: 19 July 2021

In addition there is a Protect vulnerable workers during coronavirus pandemic document

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/protect-people.htm>

Supporting clinically extremely vulnerable workers at home

You should talk to clinically extremely vulnerable workers about their working arrangements and take every possible step to enable them to work from home. Consulting with workers will help you decide on the work they can do at home.

Make sure that you:

think about tasks that could be done in another way that means you don't need to go into work, for example customer consultations online, checking in with sites virtually, talking to managers about work that needs to be done using email, phone and conferencing

agree on providing the IT and other equipment they will need to work remotely

think about how you will keep in touch with people working remotely, to make sure they feel part of the team and involved

think about using online resources to look after their mental health and wellbeing

Employers are encouraged to talk to any clinically extremely vulnerable workers returning to their workplace, so they can explain the measures being taken to ensure where they work is COVID-secure. You could also consider using the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to furlough any of your clinically extremely vulnerable workers who cannot work from home.

HSE has a guide on talking with workers about preventing coronavirus.

You can find more advice on shielding and protecting vulnerable people on GOV.UK.

Further advice on employment rights is available on the Acas website or by calling the Acas helpline on 0300 123 1100.

Pregnant workers

During the pandemic, pregnant workers have been advised to follow strict social distancing to reduce the risk of severe illness from coronavirus.

There is a long-standing requirement for employers to put in place measures to ensure workplace safety where a significant health and safety risk is identified for a new or expectant mother.

Some pregnant workers will be at greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus. They are defined as clinically extremely vulnerable and they should stay at home as much as possible and work from home if they can (see Health Protection Scotland and Public Health Wales for any separate arrangements).

Employers will need to take this into account in their risk assessment.

If you cannot put the necessary control measures in place, such as adjustments to the job or working from home, you should suspend the pregnant worker on paid leave. This is in line with normal requirements under regulation 16(3) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

HSE has specific, non-COVID advice for new and expectant mothers.

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<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/assets/docs/risk-assessment.pdf>

Employers duty to assess the risks and control them

Employers have a legal duty to Risk Assess the workplace and work activities because of the risk of spread of COVID-19 and then to carry out an individual assessment if necessary where there is an increased risk of infection because of individual circumstances.

The workplace and work activities risk assessment – see <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> for more information on reviewing risks in the workplace because of Covid-19.

Risk assessments should take a precautionary approach. Not everyone who enters your workplace can be assessed for individual risks, therefore there needs to be a precautionary level of control. i.e. increased ventilation in all areas, strict adherence to the 2 m physical distancing, good signage displayed to instruct and prevent infection, cleaning stations with adequate supplies, clear instructions, redesign of entrances and exits

to provide free movement and distancing. PPE at FFP2 minimum standard and FFP3 for close contact or high risk work environments. **Employers need to make the workplace safe for everyone who enters it.**

MHSW Regulation indicates that all risk assessments should include assessment of higher risks to anyone who is:

Disabled

Young

Pregnant or of child bearing age

Employers should ensure that the RA takes a collective view to all the risks and it is good practise to take a precautionary approach to all risks. However, **employers also need to consider additional factors** with Covid-19 which has increased the risk of infection and severity for some individuals:

Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff

Emerging evidence shows that black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19. This concerning evidence suggests that the impact may also be higher among men and those in the higher age brackets. The health inequalities present for BAME communities have long been recognised and must be taken into account in risk assessments. A black man is four times more likely to die from Covid-19 than a white man.

Age

COVID-19 has a greater impact in older age groups. Therefore, older staff may be more at risk as a result of increased age and likelihood of long-term health conditions. Employers will need to consider this and take into account government advice on vulnerable workers and shielding. All new staff should be encouraged to disclose any medical condition that might compromise their health.

Disability and Underlying Health Conditions

Disabled staff are likely to manage their disability through the application of reasonable adjustments. Some of these adjustments will be formally agreed and some informally adopted by staff to suit their own circumstances. It is likely the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic will bring further challenges for disabled people at work.

Some disabled staff members may have a weak immune system, leaving them more vulnerable to getting an infection. There may be issues associated with personal protective equipment (PPE) and those with a mental health condition may feel increased levels of anxiety and stress.

Sex

There is emerging evidence to suggest that COVID-19 may impact more on men than women, so employers may need to review the approach they have taken in relation to risk assessment. In certain jobs young women have been identified as at more risk, though this may be because of ill fitting PPE. Men in all age groups more likely to die from Covid-19.

Pregnancy

Pregnant women at whatever stage of pregnancy are classed as at risk. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Royal College of Midwives and Faculty of Occupational Medicine have developed specific guidance for healthcare workers who are pregnant. In addition, staff who are returning from maternity leave should be assessed against government advice.

Religion or belief The current situation will coincide with religious events, most notably Ramadan, which will require staff to fast. This may have an impact on the ability of individual members of staff to perform their role fully, especially when wearing the highest levels of PPE.

Vulnerable workers and Shielding Workers

Government advice on **vulnerable workers and shielding** should be followed and every effort made to encourage all staff to disclose any medical condition that might compromise their health. Individual risk assessments should include need for additional controls, self-isolating and flexible and alternative

Assessing the Additional Risks to Individuals

Any **individual RA must be carried out in the strictest confidence** and any information disclosed must be collected sensitively. It would be good practice for any health discussions to take place with a medical person such as from Occupational Health Departments and not line managers.

As a first step, employers should allow any worker to **remain at home working** where it is possible. If there is a need for an individual with additional risks to return to the workplace, this may mean changing job roles (with all the support, training and equipment) either temporarily or permanently or changing the way the job is done to allow the person to remain at home.

Alternatively, for some workers who are more **vulnerable it may mean changing working hours or days, flexible working, start and end times. Providing PPE**, enhancing the standard of PPE along with fitting, maintenance, training in its use.

For some workers, the issue could be they are **living with someone who is more vulnerable** to the infection and therefore they may also need to consider different ways of working or changing jobs temporarily or permanently.

Follow the usual risk assessment 5 steps to risk assessment model:

- [Identify hazards](#)
- [Assess the risks](#)
- [Control the risks](#)
- [Record your findings](#)
- [Review the controls](#)

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/steps-needed-to-manage-risk.htm>

This information must be treated with the **highest confidentiality**.

Risk Assessment for vulnerable workers (Covid-19)	
Name	
Sex	
Age	
Ethnicity	
Department	
Job Role	
Location	
Other jobs	
Do you live with anyone who is vulnerable to infection?	
How do you travel to and from work?	

Do you have a condition or have had a condition that makes you more vulnerable to infection or serious complications if you become infected by Covid-19?

Consider the list below and indicate whether you have an additional risk factor to the disease, based on the list of conditions

You are at a higher risk if you are, have had or have been diagnosed with:

Pregnant	
Have a BMI > 30 = Weight (kgs) / Height (m) squared	
Cancer – specific	Undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy
	Lung cancer, cancer of blood or bone marrow cancer
	Targeted cancer treatments which affect the immune system
	Bone marrow or stem cell transplant in last 6 months
Solid organ transplant recipient	
Respiratory conditions including Cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	
Rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism such as SCID,- Severe Combined Immunodeficiency, or sickle cell disease	
Immunosuppression therapies which significantly increase risk of infection	
Severe single organ disease such as Liver, Heart, Kidney, Brain and nervous system	
High Blood pressure on medication	
Type 2 Diabetes	
Angina, Heart attack or Stroke	
Any other condition that makes you vulnerable to infection that hasn't been identified above	

If the individual is identified as being at higher risk than other workers, use the Control Hierarchy approach below, to determine how the risks of the work to that worker are going to be controlled:

Take each of the steps in order to ensure a precautionary approach to the control of risk:

1. Eliminate the risk by (individual shielding, working from home or moved to another role)
2. Substitute the risk by (individual moved to another department)
3. Isolate the individual from the risk (increase social distancing, cleaning, changing working days, hours)
4. Implement Engineering or administrative controls (i.e. put up Perspex screens, signage, walkways, staggered hours, flexible working)
5. For any residual risk PPE – does the individual need PPE or increased standard of PPE?

The vaccination programme has reduced the risk of severe complications from being infected with Covid-19, however it is still early days and with the different variants these all have to be continually assessed against the continuing effectivity of the vaccine. Also, people can still be infected and infectious whether they have had the vaccination or not. Some people who are vaccinated will become critically ill if they contract Covid-19.

Some people will not be able to have the vaccine.

Individual testing is another mitigation being used. However Lateral Flow Tests can be inaccurate and therefore they are a red light test (meaning if you test positive) you should isolate and get a PCR test but if you test negative they do not necessarily indicate you do not have Covid-19 so you still need all other mitigations in place.

What controls will be implemented?

Who is responsible for communicating the risk assessment outcomes with the individual?

Who has carried out the risk assessment?

When will it be reviewed?