

COVID 19 FAQ Sheet for employers



It is hoped that these FAQ's will answer your questions but if not then we advise that a referral is made to Occupational Health so that a bespoke assessment can be undertaken and a management report provided.

- 1. I need advice on my employee's fitness for work?**
Create an OH management referral for bespoke advice
- 2. My employee has symptoms of a cold or respiratory infection – is this Coronavirus?**
If they have a fever $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ and / or a persistent cough they need to contact **NHS 111** online
<https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>
- 3. How do I go about getting my team tested?**
Contact your IPC teams if you work in the NHS OR Speak to your HR. Plans are developing to enable HCW's to be tested. **The government is currently not advising testing of the general public** <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-coronavirus-covid-19-tests-and-testing-kits>
- 4. Covid-19 is a notifiable disease:**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-listed-as-a-notifiable-disease>.
However please review this advice from HSE on RIDDOR reporting
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/riddor-reporting-coronavirus.htm>
- 5. Notice to data controllers:**
The ICO recognises the unprecedented challenges we are all facing during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. They know you might need to share information quickly or adapt the way you work. Data protection will not stop you doing that. It's about being proportionate - if something feels excessive from the public's point of view, then it probably is. And the ICO is here to help. If you need more help, call on 0303 123 1113.
<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-and-coronavirus/>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-notification-of-data-controllers-to-share-information>.
- 6. My employee has been in contact with a COVID 19 patients in a health care setting.**
This is excellent guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-healthcare-providers-who-have-diagnosed-a-case-within-their-facility/covid-19-actions-required-when-a-case-was-not-diagnosed-on-admission>
- 7. My employee doesn't want to come in to work**
Some people might feel they do not want to go to work if they're afraid of catching coronavirus. This could particularly be the case for those who are at higher risk.
An employer should listen to any concerns staff may have and should take steps to protect everyone. For example, they could offer extra car parking where possible so that people can avoid using public transport. If an employee still does not want to go in, they may be able to arrange with their employer to take the time off as holiday or unpaid leave. The employer does not have to agree to this.
If an employee refuses to attend work without a valid reason, it could result in disciplinary action.
- 8. What support could I provide to higher risk employees where I am unable to provide home working:**

Please read the risk assessment guidance found here <https://www.pamgroup.co.uk/covid-nineteen> under 'risk management'. Other than the suggestions in paragraph 6. Consider changing start and finish times to reduce the risk of coming into contact with people less than 6 feet apart; use of separate cups and utensils; different break times so as to avoid people; desks 6 feet apart; a different entrance; access to hand gel and cleaning materials for surfaces; a separate office; video meetings etc.

9. My employee is anxious and worried about the current situation

Does your organisation have an EAP (Employee Assistance program) service? This may be PAM assist; CALL 0800 019 8988; however, it may be another EAP and therefore provide the details to your employee. If you do not have an EAP service then you can refer to PAM for a Well Check which is a discussion with a psychotherapist for support. Or you may wish to contact a charity such as MIND <https://www.mind.org.uk/> ; Heads together <https://www.headstogether.org.uk/> Samaritans **116 123** or jo@samaritans.org or online programs like Mood Juice <https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/> ; Headspace <https://www.headspace.com/> which is free during the current crisis.

10. My employee is concerned about finances?

Your EAP if you have one includes financial and debt advice but if you do not have access to an EAP service then look at Martins Money Saving Website <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/> or consider Citizens Advice Bureau

11. I am concerned about my workforce because as essential workers they are under great strain?

Speak to your account manager about a mini mental health and fatigue assessment for your employees

12. My employee is concerned about attending work and I am not sure they should be in work?

Have you looked at our corporate risk assessment which can be found here <https://www.pamgroup.co.uk/covid-nineteen>.

If your answer cannot be found within the risk assessment or on the PAM COVID page then you can make a referral to Occupational Health for a COVID 19 risk assessment

13. My employee is pregnant and I feel I am unable to comply with social distancing at work?

Women who are more than 28 weeks pregnant, or have underlying health conditions, should avoid direct patient contact. **Those with cardiac conditions are especially vulnerable.**

Guidance here: -

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/news/updated-advice-for-pregnant-healthcare-workers-and-employers-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>

14. My employee has underlying health conditions however I need them to attend work; what shall I do?

If the health conditions aren't covered here then make a management referral to OH to obtain advice

15. I think my employee is a vulnerable person and I am unsure about them being at work?

Are they normally offered a flu vaccine via the NHS?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

16. I believe my employee may be very high risk and need to self-isolate (shielded person)?

Those in the very high-risk group (Shielded group) are advised to stay at home for 12 weeks.

The most vulnerable group includes:

- Certain types of cancer patients
- Organ transplant patients
- People with certain genetic diseases
- People with serious respiratory conditions like cystic fibrosis and severe chronic bronchitis
- People receiving certain drug treatments which suppress the immune system
- Pregnant women with heart disease

However, with more complex conditions you may wish to obtain an OH opinion via a management referral

17. My employee lives with a vulnerable person and I am unsure whether they should be in work?

If feasible, the person should work from home but if not feasible then stringent social distancing should apply. A risk assessment is advised – see “Risk Assessment” in PAM’s OHIO Portal on the front page “COVID 19” Guidance documents -

<https://www.pamgroup.co.uk/covid-nineteen>

18. I want to discuss my employee’s medical record and obtain an individual plan in relation to risk?

This requires a referral to OH

19. My employee has been self-isolating when can they return to work? >>>

Stay at Home guidance for households: current guidelines illustrated

Criteria and guidance applied as of 17/03/2020:

Incubation period = maximum 14 days

Day 1 is the first day of symptoms

The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill

If you live with others and you are the first in the household to have symptoms of coronavirus, then you must stay at home for 7 days

If anyone else in the household starts displaying symptoms, they stay at home for 7 days from when their symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period.

Household members who remain well stay in self isolation for 14 days due to maximum incubation period, calculated from day 1 of first symptomatic person

Household members do not need to restart the clock if other members become symptomatic during the 14 days self-isolation

DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Person in household																					
Example household 1	A	X																			
B				X																	
C																					
D																					
Example household 2	A	X																			
B				X																	
C																					
D																					

Key: X = when illness started - first day of symptoms
 = allowed to go out again

20. My employee has nursed a person who turned into positive case

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-healthcare-providers-who-have-diagnosed-a-case-within-their-facility/covid-19-actions-required-when-a-case-was-not-diagnosed-on-admission>

21. My employee is diabetic

All diabetics regardless of type 1 or 2 are at higher risk; however if you are unsure what this means for you then ask your manager to make an OH COVID 19 risk assessment referral

https://www.diabetes.org.uk/about_us/news/coronavirus

22. My colleague is obese (BMI > 40)

Follow social distancing advice <https://www.obesityuk.org.uk/covid19>

23. My employee has chronic kidney disease (CKD); may be on dialysis or may have chronic liver disease

They are advised to follow the advice of their clinicians who should be contacting you – you are at a higher risk. <https://britishlivertrust.org.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-health-advice-for-people-with-liver-diseaseand-liver-transplant-patients/>

24. My employee has MS

DMTs affect the immune system, which can make chances of infection, or complications from infection higher. These risks are different for different DMTs, but generally they are moderate. If your employee is taking a DMT and think they have coronavirus, they should be able to continue taking it if their symptoms are mild.

<https://www.mssociety.org.uk/about-ms/treatments-and-therapies/disease-modifyingtherapies/covid-19-coronavirus-and-ms>

25. My employee has HIV

There is currently no evidence that people living with HIV are more likely to catch COVID-19 than anyone else. It's not the case that all people with HIV are considered at increased risk. Those on HIV treatment with a good CD4 count and an undetectable viral load are not considered to have weakened immune systems. A 'good' CD4 count means anything over 200. If the CD4 count is less than 200, if they are not on treatment or if they have a detectable viral load, then it's particularly important that they follow the guidance on social distancing.

<https://www.tht.org.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.bhiva.org/coronavirus-and-HIV-responses-to-common-questions-from-BHIVA>

26. Immunosuppressants

The following immunosuppression therapies are sufficient to significantly increase the risk of infection: Azathioprine; Mycophenolate (both types); Cyclosporin; Sirolimus; Tacrolimus and therefore strict social distancing is required.

27. Sickle cell trait or problems with the spleen

Those with sickle cell trait need to follow the guidance given to the general public (as trait doesn't fall into the at-risk category) but they need to check the full vulnerable groups list in case they fall into another category such as if the spleen had been removed, they are pregnant or are over 70). <https://www.sicklecellsociety.org/coronavirus-and-scd/>.

28. Asthma?

those people with severe asthma will be followed up by the NHS

Guidance can be found here <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/triggers/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

29. Heart disease?

Anyone with a heart condition is considered high risk of more severe complications of COVID 19 coronavirus. An OH management referral can provide bespoke advice

30. A rheumatological condition

Guidance on the management, including risk stratification for rheumatological conditions can be found here: <https://www.rheumatology.org.uk/news-policy/details/Covid19-Coronavirus-update-members>. Should you remain concerned, please refer to OH

31. Antihypertensive medication

No higher risk has been found by the [Council on Hypertension of the European Society of Cardiology](#).

32. Ibuprofen

There is no evidence ibuprofen make COVID worse; however Ibuprofen is not advised for asthmatics and other groups so ensure they read the medication leaflet before taking <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ibuprofen-use-and-covid19coronavirus>

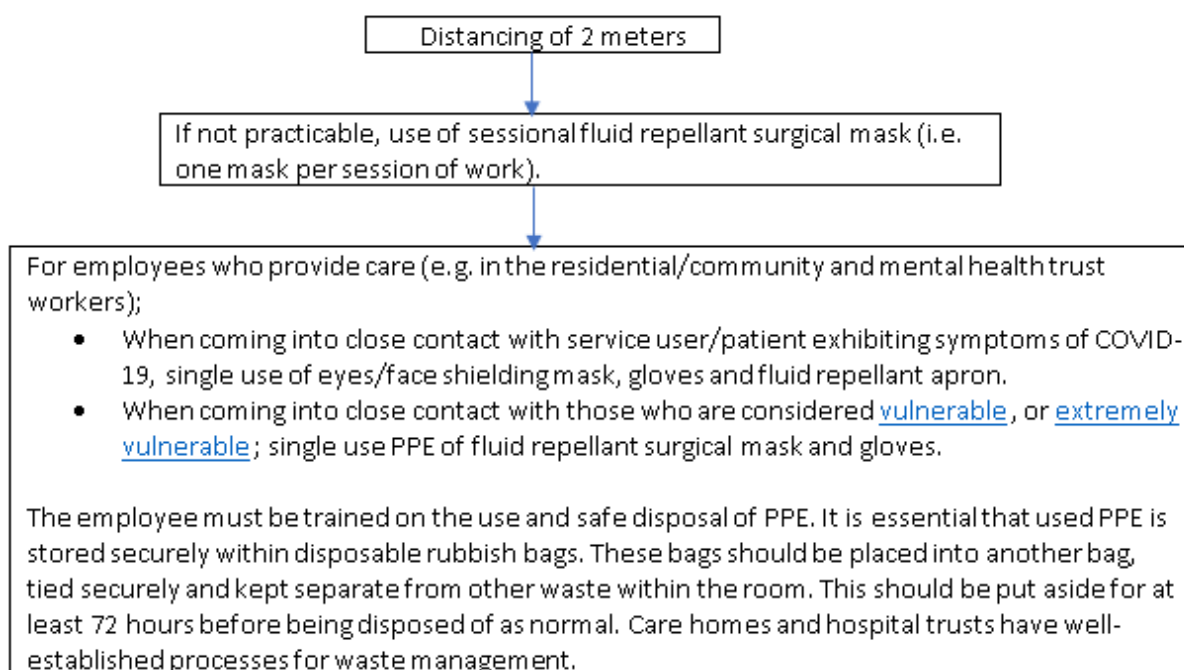
33. how does my employee get a certificate to provide to me?

if evidence is required by an employer, those with symptoms of coronavirus can get an isolation note from [NHS 111 online](#), and those who live with someone that has symptoms can get a note from the [NHS website](#)

Any other questions please don't hesitate to make a referral to OH. Your referral will be reviewed and triaged to the most appropriate and cost-effective service to enable you to get the information you require.

For Health and social care workers who are not vulnerable

This algorithm is intended as guidance only to the employer as part of a risk assessment for workers in general who are **not** in roles involving the assessment or admission of COVID-19 cases. In all cases, strict observation on hygiene must be observed (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/>). When at work, to observe:



Algorithm for assessing vulnerable employees.

This algorithm is intended as guidance only for employers when risk assessing their vulnerable employees attending work. The [vulnerable employee](#) (see section 16.) is an employee who is over 70 years of age or if under this age, has significant underlying medical condition(s) and/or receiving

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treatment for the same, with the potential for a lowered immune system (i.e. those instructed to have a flu jab as an adult on medical grounds each year). Included in this category are those who are pregnant, irrespective of trimester (). In all cases, strict observation on [hygiene](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/) must be observed (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/>).

For such employees, social distancing is highly recommended.

Consider the nature of the work for such employees (priority in descending order):

