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COVID-19 – Update on 11 May 2020

A number of documents have been published by the Government setting out the proposed roadmap for easing lockdown measures and providing businesses in various sectors with guidance on how to reopen workplaces safely.

Links to Government publications

Government's recovery strategy/roadmap:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884171/FINAL_6.6637_CO_HMG_C19_Recovery_FINAL_110520_v2_WEB_1_.pdf

Sector-specific guidance for employers and businesses: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Staying Covid-19 Secure poster:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb97d30d3bf7f5d364bfbb6/staying-covid-19-secure.pdf>

FAQs on what you can and can't do: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do?utm_source=b00038e2-abee-41f1-9806-8b741af23f0e&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

Guidance for employers and businesses

Today's press release accompanying the guidance for eight different sectors summarises the requirements that businesses must follow:

- 📄 Employees should work from home if they can. If they cannot work from home and the workplace is open, employees should go to work;
- 📄 An employer will need to carry out COVID-19 risk assessments in consultation with their workers or trade unions, to establish what guidelines to put in place. If possible, employers should publish the results of their risk assessments on their website and all businesses with over 50 employees are expected to do so;
- 📄 Employers should re-design workspaces to maintain 2 metre distances between people by staggering start times, creating one-way walk-throughs, opening more entrances and exits, or changing seating layouts in break rooms;
- 📄 Where people cannot be 2 metres apart, transmission risk must be managed. Employers should look into putting barriers in shared spaces, creating workplace shift patterns or fixed teams minimising the number of people in contact with one another, or ensuring colleagues are facing away from each other.

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- ❏ Workplaces should be cleaned more frequently, paying close attention to high-contact objects like door handles and keyboards. Employers should provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitisers at entry and exit points.

A downloadable notice is included in the guidance, which employers should display in their workplaces to show their employees, customers and other visitors to their workplace, that they have followed the guidance.

Specific guidance has also been released covering the following sectors:

- ❏ Construction and other outdoor work;
- ❏ Factories, plants and warehouses;
- ❏ Homes;
- ❏ Labs and research facilities;
- ❏ Offices and contact centres;
- ❏ Restaurants offering takeaway or delivery;
- ❏ Shops and branches;
- ❏ Vehicles.

The sector-specific guidance tends to follow the same pattern in terms of headings and areas to focus on:

- ❏ Thinking about risk;
- ❏ Who should go to work;
- ❏ Social distancing at work;
- ❏ Managing customers, visitors and contractors/ interacting with householders;
- ❏ Cleaning the workplace/ work area;
- ❏ PPE and face coverings;
- ❏ Workforce management;
- ❏ Inbound and outbound goods/ deliveries to the home.

Shielding of extremely vulnerable people

A number of individuals who are shielding in line with the guidance have reported that their letters state they must shield for 12 weeks “from the date of this letter”. In many cases, this goes beyond the end of June. The published FAQs now clarify as follows:

2.2 How long will shielding be in place?

We’ve advised individuals with very specific medical conditions to shield until the end of June and to do everything they can to stay at home. This is because we believe they are likely to be at the greatest risk of serious complications from coronavirus.

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The need for flexibility and agility

The UK will need to be agile in adapting to and shaping this new world if the Government is to improve living standards across the nation as it recovers from COVID-19.

“...stopping hotspots developing by detecting infection outbreaks at a more localised level and rapidly intervening with targeted measures.”

The Government also anticipates targeting future restrictions more precisely than at present, where possible, for example relaxing measures in parts of the country that are lower risk, but continuing them in higher risk locations when the data suggests this is warranted. For example, it is likely that over the coming months there may be local outbreaks that will require reactive measures to be implemented reactively to maintain control of transmission

We cannot predict with absolute certainty what the impact of lifting restrictions will be. If, after lifting restrictions, the Government sees a sudden and concerning rise in the infection rate then it may have to re-impose some restrictions. It will seek to do so in as limited and targeted a way as possible, including reacting by re-imposing restrictions in specific geographic areas or in limited sectors where it is proportionate to do so.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

So as the UK adjusts the current restrictions, the Government will also need to wind down the economic support measures while people are eased back to work.

The above suggests that the CJRS will be terminated gradually (by virtue of the words “wind down”) perhaps with tapering off of support; it may be the case that the scheme remains open for those in sectors which will reopen later, such as hospitality, leisure and retail.