
West Midlands Combined Authority Coronavirus Work Place Guidance



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Introduction

Covid 19 is still prevalent within the region and recent outbreaks in Leicester, Hereford, Stoke and Sandwell have shown how quickly the virus can spread especially if not tackled early. As the West Midlands moves towards recovery, it is important that everybody continues to support the fight against COVID 19. As employers we are legally responsible for ensuring the health and safety of our staff. No longer are we focusing just on slips, trips and falls. We have all assumed a new duty to support the wider health of our workforce both physically and mentally.

5 steps to working safely

This guidance builds on the Governments 5 step approach to protect your workforce and highlights some of the learning we have taken from the recent outbreaks across the region. Make sure you read all the Government guidance relevant to your workplace. Each sectoral guide has specific actions for businesses to take. Further guidance will be published as more businesses are able to reopen.

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

1. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment

Before restarting work, you should ensure the safety of the workplace by:

- carrying out a risk assessment in line with the [HSE guidance](#)
- consulting with your workers or trade union
- sharing the results of the risk assessment with your workforce and on your website

2. Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures

You should increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning by:

- encouraging people to follow the guidance on hand washing and hygiene

Link: <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/stay-alert-to-stay-safe-/resources/Translations-Posters/>

- providing hand sanitiser around the workplace, in addition to washrooms
- frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly
- enhancing cleaning for busy areas
- setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets
- providing hand drying facilities – either paper towels or electrical dryers

3. Help people to work from home

You should take all reasonable steps to help people work from home by:

- discussing home working arrangements
- ensuring they have the right equipment, for example remote access to work systems
- keeping your workforce updated with the firm's latest developments in Covid recovery
- looking after their physical and mental wellbeing

o Sign up to 'Thrive at Work' – the WMCA's free Workplace Wellbeing Commitment
<https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/thrive/thrive-at-work/>

4. Maintain 2m social distancing, where possible

Where possible, you should maintain 2m between people by:

- putting up signs to remind workers and visitors of social distancing guidance
- avoiding sharing workstations
- using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people keep to a 2m distance
- arranging one-way traffic through the workplace if possible
- switching to seeing visitors by appointment only if possible

5. Where people cannot be 2m apart, manage transmission risk

Where it's not possible for people to be 2m apart, you should do everything practical to manage the transmission risk by:

- considering whether an activity needs to continue for the business to operate
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working whenever possible
- staggering arrival and departure times
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering'

Key learning -

The learnings from Leicester, Hereford and Sandwell vary due to the differing contexts of the outbreaks.

- Hereford saw a very contained virus transmission within farm workers spreading through the workforce with shared on-site accommodation.
- Leicester saw a rapid spike of transmission through workplaces and close community contact.
- Sandwell has seen a number of outbreaks linked to workplaces. The transmission spread through close community contact within and outside of the workplace. If businesses had made an early contact with the local public health teams, the spread could have been significantly reduced.

Key Actions

1. If there is more than one case of COVID-19 associated with your workplace, you should contact their local health protection team to report the suspected outbreak. The health protection team will:
 - a. Undertake a risk assessment;
 - b. Provide public health advice; and
 - c. Where necessary, establish a multi-agency incident management team to manage the outbreak.

The Public Health England Health Protection team can be contacted on 0344 225 3560 (option 2)

o The email for COVID-19 enquiries is WM.2019CoV@phe.gov.uk.

o To find out which is your local health protection team (East/West/North patch) you can use the postcode finder here: <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team>

o Guidance on NHS Test & Trace for employers is here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-workplace-guidance>

2. To prevent outbreaks, businesses must be very vigilant in stopping employees who are symptomatic entering the workplace. Remind your workforce that if they develop a cough, fever or change in taste or smell, they should stay home, book a test and self-isolate along with the rest of their household. No amount of cleaning or other measures can prevent an outbreak if symptomatic employees continue to come to work.

3. Ensure that all messages to employees are delivered in languages that they understand. Translated posters are included in this links

- a. <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/stay-alert-to-stay-safe-/resources/Translations-Posters/>
- b. https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/3588/working_safely

4. Your workplace may be COVID compliant but please think about how your workforce gets to work, travel about in their roles and where and how they live outside of work. Discourage car sharing and encourage staff to wear face masks if travelling on public transport.

5. The mental wellbeing of staff is paramount so please take the opportunity to sign up to the free Thrive at work commitment.

Link: <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/thrive/thrive-at-work/>

Self-Isolation

Self-isolate if:

- you have any symptoms of coronavirus (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste)
- you're waiting for a coronavirus test result
- you've tested positive for coronavirus – this means you have coronavirus
- you live with someone who has symptoms, is waiting for a test result or has tested positive

If you're self-isolating, you and anyone you live with must not leave your home:

- do not go to work, school or public places – work from home (if you can)
- do not go on public transport or use taxis
- do not go out to get food and medicine – order it online or by phone, or ask someone to bring it to your home
- do not have visitors in your home, including friends and family – except for people providing essential care
- do not go out to exercise – exercise at home or in your garden, if you have one

It is important to remember that one of the most effective ways of preventing COVID-19 from spreading is frequent and thorough hand washing. Good hygiene practices such as catching coughs and sneezes in disposable tissues, should be encouraged, as should cleaning frequently touched surfaces regularly and minimising contact with other people as far as possible.

Further information on self-isolation:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-long-to-self-isolate/>

Information on getting a test if you suspect you have COVID-19:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/ask-for-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>

Information on symptoms of COVID-19:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

