A guide for employers and businesses

This information sheet is a guide to explain what to do if there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace.

As an employer, what is my role in preventing the spread of COVID-19?

As restrictions ease and businesses and sectors reopen, there are a number of considerations for employers around the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees, colleagues and customers.

COVID-19 is still a risk. Critical to success is prevention, which means working together to contain both single cases and outbreaks.

Businesses have responsibilities to undertake a risk assessment and put in place controls and mitigation to make sure they are COVID-secure following the sector-specific guidance.

The reopening of the economy is being supported by NHS Test and Trace. Businesses should support this by keeping a temporary record of customers and visitors for 21 days, and help NHS Test and Trace if they ask for the data.

There is more guidance about this here Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace , or contact covidregs@iow.gov.uk

One of my staff has coronavirus symptoms – what must they do?

As soon as an employee shows coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must go home immediately to self-isolate. The staff member should book a test immediately by visiting the NHS website or calling 119.

As well as people who have symptoms of COVID-19 themselves must self-isolate so must others who are directly linked to someone else who has symptoms:
- Those who live in a household or are in a support bubble with someone who has symptoms
- Those who are advised to self-isolate as part of the government's test and trace service regardless of whether or not they are showing symptoms.

Please note that people with symptoms, or those advised by NHS Test & Trace, must book a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test and NOT a lateral flow test.

What must I do if one of my staff has coronavirus symptoms?

This is what to do if there is a single case, if there are two or more cases linked to your establishment then please also refer to the later section and advice on outbreaks.

By following the governments sector-specific guidance, employers can reduce the risk of co-workers having to self-isolate if a member of staff is suspected or even in some cases if they test positive for COVID-19.

Things to do straight away

- You need to ensure that individuals who are advised to stay at home following government 'stay at home' guidance to stop infection spreading do not physically come to work.

- Enhanced hygiene, hand washing and cleaning regimes should take place in line with the COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings guidance.

- Employers may need to keep staff informed about suspected COVID-19 cases among their colleagues. But if possible, don't name the individual. This should be used as a chance to remind everyone about the symptoms and make sure they are aware of the process to follow to isolate and get tested.

- Carry out a review of the information and factors in your workplace and the implementation and effectiveness of your control measures. An example review sheet is given at the bottom of this document. You might decide, going through this review, that there has been a risk of transmission. You may then consider further additional measures to limit the access or a temporary close of the premises. If this is the case please make contact with your Public Health England (Local Health Protection Team) or the council's Environmental Health, Regulatory Services team for support and advice.

Negative test result?

If the test comes back negative, the member of staff will no longer need to self-isolate. Members of their household of support bubble can also stop isolating.

Positive test result?

If the test is positive, the member of staff should complete the remainder of their 10-day isolation period and their household/support bubble should complete the 10-day isolation period.

They will then be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service and should provide contact details for people they have been in close contact with in the 48-hours before they started to develop their symptoms. These details will be held in strict confidence and will only be used in compliance with data protection laws.

If a co-worker is at risk because of close contact with the positive case, then they will be notified to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace service. When you are notified of a positive test result you should identify any close contacts of the confirmed case in your workplace setting using the 'close contact' information below. Remember, contact might occur in a car if car-sharing or in staffrooms on breaks. Talk to the case and make a full list.

You may be required to complete a RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013). Check out this HSE guidance on RIDDOR reporting for more information.

How is 'close contact' defined?

According to the Test and Trace service, close contact can refer to the following:

- face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
- been within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- been within 2 metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)
- travelled in the same vehicle or a plane

An interaction through a Perspex (or equivalent) screen with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 is not usually considered to be a contact, as long as there has been no other contact such as those in the list above.

However, the wearing of personal protective (PPE) outside health and care settings will not be considered as mitigation when assessing whether a recent contact is likely to have risked transmitting the virus.

What is an outbreak and how is this different?

This is when more than one confirmed case is associated with your premises or business.

We are likely to have an increase in cases in the community as restrictions are lifted, so early outbreak management and intervention is critical to contain any outbreak and minimise possible wider cases in the community.

You can contact the PHE Hampshire and Isle of Wight Health Protection Team who can give support and advice to help you manage the situation.

Is there any media guidance in cases and outbreaks?

If your businesses is affected by COVID-19, good and appropriate communication is critical to support you staff, reassure customers and the community, in addition to protecting your reputation.

If you are busy handling a difficult situation, media enquiries can add to the challenge, so the Isle of Wight Council's communications team may be able to help if you need media advice or support as a result of COVID-19 cases or outbreaks.

Key Contacts

PHE Hampshire and Isle of Wight Health Protection Team T: 0344 225 3861

Environmental Health   T: 01983 823000 E: covidregs@iow.gov.uk

Isle of Wight Council Communications Team   E: media@iow.gov.uk

An example review sheet that can be used by the employer.

Information and investigation record – to be used when there is one case of suspected COVID-19 in the workplace	
Name of Business	Post code
Nature of Business	
Key Contacts:	
Name of case	
Contact details:	
Information Gathering	Please note answers and comments:
Date became unwell and what symptoms (please be exact as possible)	
When was the member of staff last present on the premises?	
When has the premises been open in the intervening time.	
Nature of roles/job undertaken by member of staff	
Any known links between the member of staff with COVID-19 (within workplace or outside)	
Number of people within the workplace which the member of staff has had close contact – including members of the public.	
Nature of the environment (layout of building, ventilation etc)	
Details of control measures that are in the risk assessment	

Have the control measures been implemented – please note any lapses or changes	
Action taken	**Please note action/date and comments:**
Isolate – member of staff sent home and clearly understand isolation requirements existing government guidance	
Test – member of staff aware on how to gain a test by visiting the NHS website or calling 119	
Date test completed	
Enhanced hygiene and hand wash and cleaning regimes implemented - Guidance	
Increased staff awareness of adherence to preventative measures	
Consideration of risk – following the above gathering of information are any additional measures required)	
Has there been any contact with other agencies – please use to document contact and advice?	
Test result	
If positive confirmed case	Need to immediately report to PHE (Health Protection Team) and refer to National Action Cards Tel: 0344 225 3861 and you must select option **2**
If negative	Need to review the process followed above and share any learning outcomes within the workplace. In addition to the reviewing of any risk assessment or procedures.