

Covid-19

Working in Offices

Introduction

Covid-19 is a new strain of Coronavirus that originated in China. The virus is contagious and although it causes relatively mild symptoms in most people, it can have more serious effects including fatalities in some people. It is important to minimise the spread of the disease to these categories of people to protect the most vulnerable.

If a Unitas employee is in a vulnerable category as described by the government guidance below or is concerned that they may be, then they should speak to their line manager before working in an office environment. Managers should also identify employees who live with a critically extremely vulnerable person and take this in to account when planning their work.

If people can work from home then they should not go in to work. If they need to go in to work, they should minimise the number of occasions and the length of time that they need to work in the office.

Face Coverings must be worn when using public transport or when sharing a vehicle and from the 24th July 2020 anyone entering a Shop, Supplier's Premises or Unitas Stores must wear a suitable face covering.

Assessing the Risks from Covid-19 when Working in Offices

A risk assessment identifying the measures to control risks to employees' health and safety, including Covid-19 must be completed and made available to relevant Unitas employees before they are allowed to work in an office.

Managers must identify anyone who could be at increased risk from the effects of the Covid-19 virus. The risk assessment will need to be reviewed and amended for these individuals and changes or restrictions to their roles may be necessary.

The assessment must include access and egress to and from the office to other areas of the premises and arrangements for using and cleaning welfare facilities. The layout of offices and access routes may need to be changed to ensure social distancing and barriers may need to be installed to minimise the risk of spreading the virus where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

Employees and their Representative must be consulted during the risk assessment process and they must be informed of the results of the completed assessments. Managers must keep records that employees have understood the contents of the risk assessments.

Hierarchy of Control for People Working in Offices

Where employees work in offices:

- Encourage employees to work from home as the first option.
- Where working from home is not possible then access to offices must be managed. Someone should be appointed to manage a booking system for each area to control the numbers attending offices.
- It has been arranged for reception to carry out most printing and scanning activities by appointment.
- Where other printers need to be used social distancing must be maintained. Wipes are available to clean printer after use.
- 2m social distancing guidelines must be followed.
- Work stations must be a minimum of 2m apart and people should not be working facing each other.
- **Social distancing of 2m should be maintained but where this is not practical then 1m distance is allowed as long as additional measures such as barriers, guards, face masks etc are introduced to mitigate the risk.**

MINIMUM STANDARD

Pandemic Coronavirus

Green markers to limit desk usage and maintain social distancing

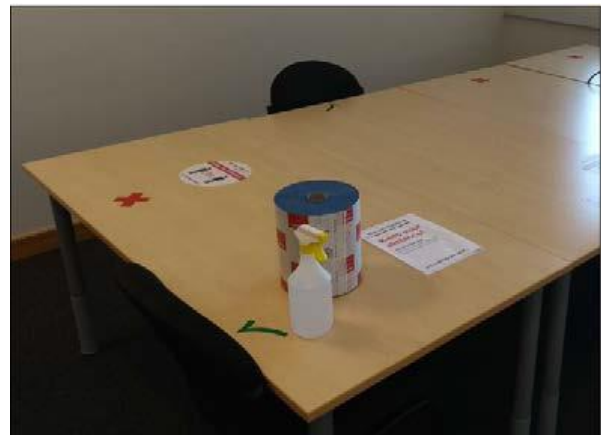


- Use electronic methods for meetings where possible.
- Keep offices well ventilated by opening windows and doors.

NOTE: Fire doors must not be propped open.

- If this is not possible arrange for the meeting in a room that has sufficient space to allow for social distancing to be maintained and ensure that people are not seated face to face. (Install physical barriers if people are sitting face to face)
- Mark out rooms where meetings are held regularly to encourage social distancing

Aiding social distancing and cleaning in meetings





Floor plan and signage to enable social distancing and safe working in the office

- Consider restricting access to offices to small groups of fixed teams and partnering.
- Use side by side or back to back working if possible.
- Access and egress routes should be separated where possible by installing a “one way system” to enable social distancing where possible.
- Where one way system is not possible allow people to leave an area before entering including communal areas and corridors.
- Ensure that you have sufficient facility to wash with soap and water or hand wash, Spray Bottles and Hand Soap PPE and waste bags. Additional hand cleansing facilities should be installed at entrances to premises and offices.
- Wash/Cleanse your hands before each visit to the toilet, welfare/kitchen, smoking shelter or other office.
- Start times and Rest breaks should be staggered so that social distancing can be maintained.
- Encourage employees to bring their own utensils in to work. Do not share kitchen utensils where possible. Clean the kitchen touch points and any utensils after use.
- Do not accept drinks or food from other employees.
- Dispose of any waste in to the waste bins provided. Waste bins should have lids.
- Clean your desk top area and equipment regularly.
- Emergency arrangements need to be reviewed to ensure that there is sufficient first aid and fire warden cover and if they are amended then employees must be informed. Where emergency arrangements are not changed then employees also need to be informed.

What to Do if Someone Develops Covid-19 Symptoms while at Work

- Person to leave site and go home immediately; avoid touching anything or coming in to contact with anyone.
- Line manager to be informed.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.
- Clean areas where the ill person has worked and items that he may have touched.
- Follow the guidance on self-isolation and do not return to work until their period of self-isolation has been completed.
- Inform the SHE Team as this could be a RIDDOR Reportable incident if it can be shown to be caused at the work place.
- For Guidance on cleaning following a Covid-19 incident see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Use of Personal Protective Equipment

The Government's guidance is that additional PPE is not required to control Covid-19 infections as the wearing of face covering has little effect. If people make a personal choice to wear face coverings while at work then they must follow the government's guidance. (O:\UNITAS\H&S\General\Unitas SHEMS\009 Guidance\Covid-19 Guidance.)

Welfare Facilities

- Using safe outside areas for breaks or creating additional space by using other parts of the workplace or building that have been freed up by remote working.
- Installing screens to protect staff in receptions or similar areas.
- Vacant – Engaged system for kitchens and toilets to be arranged.
- Reconfiguring seating and tables to maintain spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.
- Additional hand washing/sanitising stations to be installed at entrances to kitchens and toilets.
- Additional cleaning to be arranged for welfare facilities.
- Signage and markings to be installed to encourage and remind employees of social distancing and hand washing.



Getting to Work

Reference the Minimum Standard for Covid-19 Vehicles.

Emergency Arrangements

Managers must complete a first aid risk assessment to ensure that there is a sufficient number of First Aiders available for the number of people working in the offices.

- It may not be safe for people to stay 2m apart.
- People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.
- Competent persons to issue 1st aid treatment instructions where possible for minor injuries and treat personally only when necessary.
- Where social distancing guidelines will not be achieved, First Aiders to wear PPE as per existing government guidance.
- Appointed First Aiders to ensure that first aid kits are fully stocked and replenished as required.

Managers must also ensure that there are a sufficient number of fire wardens available.

Any incidents must be reported to the SHE Team following the requirements of the Incident, and Near Miss Reporting Standard (SHEMS-STD-GR-011)

Raise any concerns with your line manager.

- Note Guidance below for Safe Removal of Gloves



Visitors to Alton House Depot

- Electronic contact should be encouraged to ensure that a minimum number of people attend the depot site.
- Signs to be installed to direct visitors to Reception.
- Visitors will initially be dealt with over the Video Intercom and only allowed access if necessary
- If access is required the visitor will be asked to use the hand sanitiser at the entrance before entering and signing the visitors book in reception (if appropriate)
- If the visitor is just dropping off a letter/parcel this can be passed through the opening in the Perspex screen covering the reception desk
- Unitas staff members who do not work in the reception building must also use the Video Intercom and wait to be given permission before entering to ensure safe distancing is maintained

Competence/Training

- All employees are to be made aware of the dangers from coronavirus and the control of such through inductions, telephone, remote briefings and documented systems of work.

Further Guidance/Reference

- <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>
- SHEMS-STD-GR-083 Occupational Health Standard
- SHEMS-STD-GR-087 Infectious Disease Control Standard
- SHEMS-STD-GR-087 First Aid Standard
- SHEMS-MST-DPS-0001f: Covid-19 Vehicles
- O:\UNITAS\H&S\General\Unitas SHEMS\009 Guidance\Covid-19 Guidance\SHEMS-GUI-GR-004: Face Coverings
- Government Guidance Documents - O:\UNITAS\H&S\General\Unitas SHEMS\009 Guidance\Covid-19 Guidance