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Work Safely Protocol

COVID-19 National Protocol for Employers and Workers

Contents

1. Introduction

A. Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every part of Ireland's society and economy. In the face of this, the biggest challenge we have encountered in decades, the people of Ireland have universally stepped up to the plate and adhered to the strict guidelines put in place by the Government, following the advice of the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET). We have all contributed to the progress that Ireland has made in containing the spread of COVID-19 and in so doing we have saved lives. However, our continued progress in reducing the spread of the virus remains challenging. We collectively and individually need to continue our efforts to keep the virus under control.

The revision of the Return to Work Safely Protocol has become necessary to ensure that it reflects the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 as well as updating the public health advice available since its first publication. This revised document is now called the **Work Safely Protocol**. It continues to be designed to support employers and workers to put infection prevention and control (IPC) and other measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The Work Safely Protocol also covers the measures needed to both ensure the safe operation of workplaces and the re-opening of workplaces following temporary closure due to local and regional restrictions.

This revision of the Protocol is a collaborative effort by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), the Health Services Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health. This Work Safely Protocol also follows discussion and agreement at the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF), which is the forum for high-level dialogue between Government, Trade Union and Employer representatives on matters related to the labour force. This work has also been overseen by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

The Protocol incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community and workplaces issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team

(NPHET) and Government. As the advice issued by Government and NPHET continues to evolve, this Work Safely Protocol and the measures employers and workers need to address will also evolve. The details included in this document are therefore non-exhaustive and are subject to change. This Protocol is a general document applicable to all sectors. It is not designed to prohibit the introduction of further specific measures in particular sectors or workplaces. Further specific measures can be introduced as long as they enhance the measures set out in this Protocol. On foot of this Work Safely Protocol, all businesses and sectors who have specific guidance are required to review and update their guidance in line with the advice contained in this document.

B. Working together to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace

The key to a safe workplace remains strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between employers and workers. It is also essential to achieve success and maximum buy-in. Employers, workers and/or their recognised Trade Union or other representatives need to continue to have regular engagement about COVID-19 infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in the workplace.

Employers should provide up to date information and guidance to workers. The type of information should include:

- the signs and symptoms of COVID-19,
- how COVID-19 spreads,
- advice about hand and respiratory hygiene and physical distancing,
- the importance of not going to work if displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or feeling unwell,
- use of face coverings/masks, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE),
- cleaning routines and waste disposal.

Procedures and steps to be taken in the event of a suspected or positive case or outbreak in the workplace and the role of public health authorities in managing an outbreak should also

be made clear. Employers will also need to provide COVID-19 induction training for all workers, after the re-opening of the workplace following a closure.

In addition, given the fact that COVID-19 is equally an issue in the wider community, general advice in relation to measures the worker should follow when not at work, including safe travel to and from work and living accommodation are also useful to provide (see section below on Worker Role).

Adherence to this Protocol will only be achieved if employers and workers have a shared responsibility to implement the measures contained in this Protocol in their place of work. A key role in each workplace is that of the Lead Worker Representative (LWR). Each workplace will appoint at least one LWR charged with ensuring that COVID-19 measures are strictly adhered to in their place of work. Further details on this role are provided in the section below.

Employers will also communicate with safety representatives selected or appointed under Occupational Health and Safety legislation and consult with workers on safety measures to be implemented in the workplace. For further information on the role of Safety Representative, visit the HSA website.

The employer can also use a competent person responsible for managing health and safety (internally or externally) as required to ensure the effective implementation of changes to work activities and the implementation of IPC measures at the place of work.

In addition to this Protocol, a range of COVID-19 templates and checklists are also available. These have been prepared and updated by the HSA to help business owners, employers and workers to keep businesses up and running and/or to facilitate their reopening after a period of closure. These resources are also available in Irish and other languages.

C. Lead Worker Representative (LWR)

Each workplace will appoint at least one Lead Worker Representative (LWR). Their role is to work together with the employer to assist in the implementation of and monitor adherence to the IPC measures in this Protocol to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their workplace. The number of representatives appointed will ideally be proportionate to the number of workers. The LWR, together with the COVID-19 response management team, should support the implementation of the IPC measures identified in this Protocol. The identity of the person or persons appointed should be clearly communicated within the workplace. They should also receive the relevant and necessary training by their employer. Further information and a short online course on the role of Lead Worker Representative can be found on the HSA website.

2. General Information on COVID-19

A. Introduction

The Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with Covid-19 puts in place a framework to manage the risk of spread of the virus. The controls escalate as infection levels and other public health COVID-19 indicators change on a regional and national basis.

Exposure to COVID-19 is a public health risk, which affects all citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic also has implications for all workplaces as it may present a health risk to workers. Ensuring that the economy remains open and operating goes hand-in-hand with the provision of both public health measures and occupational health and safety requirements to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19. Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the workplace is important in relation to the health of workers and is also important as part of general efforts to control the spread in the wider community and protect the most vulnerable.

The sections below provide details on the symptoms of COVID-19 and on how current evidence shows how it spreads in general and in the workplace. Employers and workers should keep up to date with public health advice as knowledge about COVID-19 continues to evolve.

B. Symptoms of COVID-19

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of cold and flu.

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:
- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above).
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry.
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.

- loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), self-isolate (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need a COVID-19 test. Other people in your household will need to restrict their movements (stay at home).

Getting an early diagnosis means, you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if you have it.

For the complete list of symptoms, please refer to the HSE Website.

C. How COVID-19 Spreads

You can get COVID-19 if you come into close contact with someone who has the virus.

COVID-19 is mainly spread through close contact and droplets that come from your nose and mouth. For example, from someone who is talking loudly, shouting, coughing or sneezing. This happens most when people are less than 2 metres from each other. It is why keeping a 2-metre distance from other people is so effective in reducing the spread of the virus.

You can also get the virus from surfaces. For example, when someone who has the virus sneezes or coughs, droplets with the virus can fall onto surfaces around them. If you touch that surface and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth, you could become infected too.

Airborne transmission is the spread of a virus in very tiny respiratory particles. This can happen over a longer distance and persist for a longer time than droplets, such as within a room. Airborne transmission does not appear to play a major role in the spread of COVID-19. However, it can happen in some situations. To minimise this risk, keep indoor spaces well ventilated (aired out) by opening windows and doors if possible.

COVID-19 (coronavirus) can survive:

- up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel
- less than 4 hours on copper
- less than 24 hours on cardboard

Common household disinfectants will kill the virus on surfaces. Clean the surface first and then use a disinfectant. A system of thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in the workplace is essential. For example, vending machines, coffee machines and door handles should all be cleaned frequently, as they can be particular sources of transmission. If disinfection is required, it must be performed in addition to cleaning, never as a substitute for cleaning. Please refer to section on Cleaning below for further details.

Current information suggests that infected people can transmit the virus both when they are symptomatic (showing symptoms) and asymptomatic (showing no symptoms). This is why it is essential that anyone who is showing symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, or anyone who has been in close contact with a confirmed case, should be tested.

Research has also now identified specific types of working environments where the spread of COVID-19 is more likely to occur, often due to environmental factors. For example, there have been reported outbreaks of COVID-19 in some closed space settings, such as meat processing plants, nightclubs, places of worship, restaurants, and workplaces where people may be shouting or talking loudly. In these outbreaks, airborne transmission (specifically in indoor locations that are densely populated and inadequately ventilated) cannot be ruled out. In these high-risk environments, a greater level of adherence by employers and workers to the specific public health advice for such settings is required.

3. Steps for Employers and Workers to Reduce Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in the Workplace

The Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 will provide the details on which workplaces can be open and operating at any given time. Therefore, at different times, a business may be open or may reopen following localised or national restrictions.

In this regard, employers, in consultation with the LWR(s), must take the following steps either for the first time or as part of a need to keep their response to COVID-19 up to date:

A. Keep their COVID-19 Response Plan up to date

E**mployers will continue to**:
- develop and/or update their COVID-19 Response Plan.
- develop plans in consultation with workers and communicate once finalised.
- facilitate the appointment of at least one lead worker representative for the workplace, which shall be done in consultation with the workers and/or representatives.
- review and update their occupational health and safety (OSH) risk assessments and safety statement.
- address the level(s) of risk associated with various workplaces and work activities in their COVID-19 business plans and OSH risk assessments. For example, where, how and from what sources might workers be exposed to COVID-19? Consider also exposure to/from the public, customers, co-workers etc. In this regard, particular locations (canteens, washroom facilities, access/egress points), where staff congregate can be particular hotspots for transmission.
- ensure that where work practices have been changed or modified to prevent the spread of COVID-19, workers are not inadvertently exposed to additional occupational health and safety hazards and risks.
- take into account workers' individual risk factors (e.g. older workers, whether a worker is considered very high risk or high risk due to the presence of underlying medical conditions).

- include measures to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- include the controls necessary to address the risks identified.
- include contingency measures to address increased rates of worker absenteeism, implementation of the measures necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, changing work patterns, etc.
- include in the plan any specific communication measures that are required for workers whose first language may not be English. In such workplaces, employers should identify leads who can act as communicators to particular groups. Such leads may also be nominated as the lead worker representative. The HSE have provided [translations](#) of their COVID-19 Resources.
- include in the plan any specific measures or response for dealing with an outbreak of COVID-19.

B. Implement and maintain policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of workers who may have symptoms of COVID-19

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in protecting the worker involved, their colleagues, customers or others at the workplace. It is also a crucial step in preventing an outbreak in a workplace from moving into the wider community.

Employers will:
- keep a log of contacts to facilitate contact tracing.
- inform workers and others of the purpose of the log (i.e. to be used by Public Health in the event of an outbreak).
- maintain up-to-date information on all workers (full-time, part-time, contract and agency) in the workplace. Such information should include at a minimum the name, address and contact phone number of the individual worker. This information will be needed by the Department of Public Health in the event there is a case or outbreak.
- display information on signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and not working if displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if feeling unwell.

- provide information on how to receive illness benefits or other Government COVID-19 supports.
- provide up to date information on public health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie.
- provide public health advice and information in languages other than English as required. Consideration should also be given to providing a variety of information on TV monitors in prominent locations (canteens, access/egress points) to enhance uptake of key messages.
- provide instruction for workers to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during work.
- cooperate with the local Department of Public Health if a case of COVID-19 and/or an outbreak is confirmed in their workplace and implement any follow up actions required.
- maintain personal information collected in line with GDPR requirements

Workers will:
- make themselves aware of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- not go to work if they are displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if feeling unwell.
- immediately self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test.
- stay at home, if identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19, and not go to work. In such instances, they must also restrict their movements for 14 days.
- report to managers immediately if any symptoms develop during work.
- cooperate with any public health personnel and their employer for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their workplace

C. Develop, Update, Consult, Communicate and Implement Workplace Changes or Policies

Employers will continue to:

- review and revise existing sick leave policies and amend as appropriate and in line with normal procedures. In so doing, employers will consult with and communicate to workers, in line with normal procedures, any changes that are introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- make available the necessary public health advice from the HSE and other sources as appropriate to their workers. The LWR(s) appointed should be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID-19 in the workplace.

- provide information on how to receive illness benefits or other Government COVID-19 supports.

- agree through negotiation with workers/Trades Unions any temporary restructuring of work patterns that may be required to implement the COVID-19 prevention measures in the workplace. In so doing, any existing sectoral agreements must be taken into account.

- ensure that conditions, including the employment of staff via agency contracts, support the prevention and spread of COVID-19.

- minimise rotation of staff across multiple settings and workplaces, particularly in relation to staff employed under agency contracts.

Note: for some workplaces, there may be an occupational health service provided. However, this is unlikely to be available in the majority of workplaces. In situations where the employer has put in place an occupational health service, the service can be used to address any worker concerns and communicate the messages about good hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing. An organisation's occupational health service may also provide training and advice on the measures recommended in this Protocol to reduce the spread as well as advice on case or outbreak management and on fitness to return to work.

Note: Downloading and using the HSE COVID-19 tracker app is also an important measure that can be adopted. Employers should provide advice on the tracker and encourage workers

to download. Workers should download as it can be used for contact tracing purposes in and out of the workplace.

D. Implement the COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures

The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene and follow respiratory etiquette.

D1. Hand Hygiene

Regular hand washing with soap and water is effective for the removal of COVID-19.

Employers must:

- ensure that appropriate hygiene facilities and materials are in place to accommodate workers adhering to hand hygiene measures.
- make available advice and training on how to perform hand hygiene effectively.
- display posters on how to wash hands in appropriate locations throughout the workplace.
- provide hand sanitisers (alcohol or non-alcohol based) where washing facilities cannot be accessed. In choosing an alcohol-based sanitiser, a minimum of 60% alcohol is required. **Note:** alcohol-based hand sanitisers are highly flammable and must not be stored or used near heat or a naked flame. Refer to the Appendix for advice on choosing a hand sanitiser.

Workers must:

- be familiar with and follow hand hygiene guidance and advice.
- wash their hands with soap and water or with hand sanitiser (alcohol (minimum of 60%) and or non-alcohol based) for at least 20 seconds and in particular:
    - after coughing and sneezing,
    - before and after eating,
    - before and after preparing food,
    - before and after removing their face covering,

- o if in contact with someone who is displaying any COVID-19 symptoms,
- o before and after being on public transport,
- o before and after being in a crowd,
- o when arriving and leaving the workplace/other sites,
- o when entering and exiting vehicles,
- o before having a cigarette or vaping,
- o when hands are dirty. If visibly dirty, wash hands with soap and water, and
- o after toilet use.
- avoid touching their eyes, mouth, or nose.
- have access to facilities to support hand hygiene (for example hand sanitiser/hand wipes/hand washing facilities).
- not share objects that touch their mouth, for example, bottles or cups.
- use own pens for signing in/out.

D2. Respiratory Hygiene

In addition to hand hygiene, good respiratory hygiene and etiquette is also necessary.

Employers must:
- provide tissues as well as bins/bags for their disposal.
- empty bins at regular intervals.
- provide advice on good respiratory practice including the safe use, storage and disposal of face masks/coverings and the safe cleaning of face coverings.

Workers must:
- adopt good respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
- be familiar with and follow respiratory hygiene guidance.
- follow good practice on the safe use, storage, disposal and cleaning of face masks/coverings.

D3. Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is one of the most important measures in reducing the spread of COVID-19. The current recommended distance to be maintained between people to minimise risk of transmission is 2 metres.

Employers must:

- provide for physical distancing across all work activities. This may be achieved in a number of ways:
  - implement a no hand shaking policy.
  - where office work is essential, free office capacity must be used as much as is reasonably practicable and work organised in such a way that multiple occupancy of office premises is avoided and physical distances maintained. **Note:** Government advice under the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 continues to recommend that working from home continues as much as possible.
  - organise workers into teams or pods who consistently work and take breaks together. The teams should be as small as is reasonably practicable in the context of the work to be done, Refer to the Appendix for general advice on the use of teams/pods.
  - organise breaks in such a way as to facilitate maintenance of physical distancing during breaks.
  - reorganise and rearrange working and break areas. For example, placing tables and chairs far enough apart in canteens.
  - consider closing canteen facilities if public health measures including social distancing cannot be facilitated. If closing, provide information on alternative delivery options. **Note**: by providing canteen facilities in the workplace in a controlled manner, this can reduce the need for workers to congregate in other less well-controlled locations outside the workplace (i.e., cars and shops).
  - stagger canteen use and extend serving times.
  - implement a queue management system with correct distance markings to avoid queues at food counters, tray return points and checkouts.
  - put in place card payment methods where practicable.
  - allocate specific times for collections, appointments and deliveries.

- o conduct meetings as much as possible using online remote means. Where face-to-face meetings are necessary, these must be arranged in line with the Government advice that is in place at the time of holding the meeting. Furthermore, the length of the meeting and the numbers attending should be kept to a minimum and participants must maintain physical distancing at all times. Proper ventilation, for example open windows, should also be in place. Attendance in a meeting room for a prolonged period may result in attendees being considered close contacts should an outbreak occur.
- o provide one-way systems for access/egress routes in the workplace/canteen where practicable.
- o adapt existing sign-in/sign-out measures and systems, for example, biometrics/turnstiles.
- o ensure that workers sharing collective accommodation at a place of work are grouped in fixed teams or pods that are as small as is reasonably practicable and consist of individuals who also work together. As far as is reasonably practicable:
    - each team or pod should, where reasonably practicable, be provided with their own communal facilities (washrooms, kitchens and communal rooms) in order to avoid the additional burden of shift-wise use and the necessity to clean between occupancy by different teams. If this is not possible, employers should implement phased use and an enhanced cleaning regime.
    - accommodation must be regularly cleaned and ventilated either manually (by opening windows and doors) or mechanically.
    - sleeping accommodation should normally be occupied singly.
    - additional rooms must be provided for early isolation of infected persons.
- o prevent gatherings of workers in the workplace at the beginning and end of working hours, such as, at time recording terminals and in changing rooms, washrooms, locker rooms and showers.
- o implement physical distancing during any outdoor work activity. For outdoor work activities, facilities for frequent hand hygiene should be provided and should be located close to where workers are working. Outdoor toilet facilities, if reasonably practicable, should also be considered.

In settings where 2-metre worker separation cannot be ensured by organisational means, alternative protective measures should be put in place, for example:

- o Maintain a distance of at least 1 metre or as much distance as is reasonably practicable.
- o Minimise any direct worker contact and provide hand washing facilities, and other hand hygiene aids, such as hand sanitisers, wipes etc. that are readily accessible so workers can perform hand hygiene as soon as the work task is complete.
- o Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards between workers.
- o Provide PPE as appropriate (see section below).
- o Provide face coverings in line with public health advice.

Note: Wearing of masks is not a substitute for the IPC measures outlined above but they may be used in addition to these measures especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult. If masks are worn, they should be clean and they should not be shared or handled by other colleagues. Refer to the Appendix for further general advice regarding face coverings.

Note: Screens do not need to be floor to ceiling but should be of an adequate height (e.g., cover a person in a standing position) and width to block the pathway from the nose and mouth to the face and workspace of the other persons. Screens may be fixed or mobile depending on requirements including emergency access. Screens should be regularly cleaned with detergent and water. Further advice on screens is given by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (NCCEH).

D4. Pre-Return to Work Measures

Before returning to work for the first time after a workplace closure, the following steps should be put in place and completed by both employers and workers.

Employers must:

- establish and issue a pre-return to work form for workers to complete in advance of returning to work. This form should seek confirmation that the worker, to the best of their knowledge:
  - has no symptoms of COVID-19.
  - is not awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.
  - is not self-isolating or restricting their movements.
  - has not returned from travel abroad.

    Note: From 9 November, Ireland is implementing the new EU "traffic lights" approach to travel, which applies to countries in the EU/EEA (+UK). The advice for travel to these countries remains "exercise a high degree of caution." The general advice for any other overseas travel remains "avoid non-essential travel" or some cases, "do not travel." Travel within the island of Ireland can continue as normal, subject to domestic public health restrictions on gov.ie. Workers who have travelled abroad – only in certain defined circumstances – may be able to return to work after their arrival back in Ireland. Details on the defined circumstances are available at gov.ie.

- include the following questions on the form. If a worker answers **Yes** to any of them, they are required to follow the medical advice they receive or seek medical advice before returning to work:
  - Do you have symptoms of cough, fever/high temperature, difficulty breathing, loss or change in your sense of smell or taste now or in the past 14 days? Yes/No
  - Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days? Yes/No
  - Are you awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test? Yes/No
  - In the past 14 days, have you been in contact with a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19? Yes/No
  - Have you been advised to self-isolate at this time? Yes/No

- o Have you been advised to restrict your movements at this time? Yes/No
- o Have you been advised to cocoon at this time? Yes/No. **Note**: if you're at very high risk (extremely vulnerable) from COVID-19 you may be advised to cocoon.

- provide an induction training for all workers on their return to work. This training should at a minimum include the latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health. The HSA has a free online course *Return to Work Safely Induction*, which employers can use. Specific items to be covered include:
  - o what a worker should do if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 at home or at work.
  - o details of the IPC measures at the workplace to address the risk from COVID-19.
  - o an outline of the COVID-19 response plan.
  - o identification of points of contact for the employer and the Lead Worker Representative.
  - o any other sector specific advice that is relevant.
- put in place the necessary controls identified in the risk assessment to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- implement temperature testing as advised by Public Health. Currently there is no public health requirement to undertake temperature testing/screening in the workplace. However, in certain sectors and workplaces, Public Health have advised the employer to put in place temperature check, for example on entry to the facility or during shift work, and in such sectors, the employer will implement this requirement as it is advised by Public Health.
- implement any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing requirements as advised by Public Health.

Workers must:
- complete and submit the pre-return to work form before they return to work.
- inform their employer if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to allow their safe return to work. For example, if they are in the very high-risk category.
- stay at home if displaying any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or feeling unwell.

- self-isolate or restrict their movements at home in line with their family doctor and/or public health advice.
- contact their family doctor promptly if they have any COVID-19 symptoms.
- undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their workplace as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health and implemented by their employer.
- restrict their movements if they:
  - are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 (even if a test or tests performed within the 14-day period of restricted movements comes back as "not-detected") .
  - live with someone who has symptoms of the virus.
  - have travelled outside of Ireland, unless they fall into certain defined categories (refer to **Note** above on travel and keep up to date with advice on travelling outside Ireland and returning to Ireland.
- self-isolate for the advised period and not return to work until symptom free and free from fever for the last 5 days of the period if they have had a positive test for COVID-19.
- participate in any induction training provided by the employer on their return to the workplace.
- cooperate with their employer in relation to prevention measures including physical distancing, hand hygiene and wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where required.
- complete any temperature testing implemented by their employer on foot of public health advice.

Completed forms should only be retained for as long as necessary by the employer and in line with the advice from the Data Protection Commission.

Employers can provide the pre-Return to Work Form in a range of ways: paper copy, electronic copy, through apps or other online facilities. In using electronic or online formats, the same questions should be asked and the same approach regarding keeping these forms will apply.

While the form itself does not need to be resubmitted, employers may request workers to reconfirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain the same following an extended

period of absence from a workplace (e.g., following annual leave) or where the worker may only access the workplace infrequently.

D5. Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 in the Workplace

The key message remains that a worker should not attend work if they are displaying any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or are feeling unwell.

However, while a worker should not attend work if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19, the following outlines the steps employers should put in place to deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

Employers must:

- include a defined response structure that identifies the team(s) responsible for responding to a suspected case in the COVID-19 response plan.
- appoint a case manager/designated contact person(s) for dealing with suspected cases.
- identify a designated isolation area in advance. The designated area and the route to the designated area should be easily accessible and as far as is reasonable and practicable should be accessible by people with disabilities.
- take into account the possibility of one or more persons displaying the signs of COVID-19 and have additional isolation areas available or another contingency plan for dealing with same.
- ensure the designated area has the ability to isolate the person behind a closed door. Where a closed-door area is not possible, the employer must provide for an area away from other workers.
- provide as is reasonably practicable:
  - Ventilation, i.e. via a window.
  - Tissues, hand sanitiser, disinfectant and/or wipes.
  - PPE, gloves, masks.
  - Waste bags/bins.

If a worker displays symptoms of COVID-19 during work, the case manager/designated contact person and the response team must:

- isolate the worker and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times.

- provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms. The worker should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises.

- assess whether the unwell individual can immediately be directed to go home to call their family doctor and continue treatment and self-isolation at home.

- facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their family doctor. The worker should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.

- arrange transport home or to hospital for medical assessment if required. Public transport of any kind should not be used.

- carry out an assessment of the incident, which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.

- arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved (refer to section below on Cleaning).

- provide advice and assistance if contacted by the Department of Public Health or HSE in relation to contact tracing.

Note: if the employer has in place a designated occupational health service, this service may be used by the employer to respond and support measures dealing with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 as set out above.

Further information on close contacts, casual contacts and testing is available from the HSE website.

D6. At Risk Workers

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. For some people and workers, the risks are higher. There are two levels of higher risk – very high risk (extremely vulnerable) and high risk.

There is different public health advice for each of these groups and employers should follow and adopt this advice. If you are at very high risk (extremely vulnerable) from COVID-19 you may be advised to cocoon.

If a worker in the very high risk or high-risk categories cannot work from home and must be in the workplace, employers must make sure that they are supported to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from others at the workplace. However, employers should enable such workers to work from home where possible.

D7. Working from home

All staff should continue to work from home to the greatest extent possible. The employer should develop and consult on any working from home policy in conjunction with workers and/or Trades Unions. Guidance on Working from Home is available from the HSA. The Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 sets out when only essential workers or other designated workers should go to work.

D8. Business Travel

- Business trips and face-to-face interactions should be reduced to the absolute minimum and, as far as is reasonably practicable, online or other alternatives should be made available (e.g., telephone or video conferencing).
- For necessary work-related trips, the use of the same vehicles by multiple workers is not encouraged. The number of workers who share a vehicle – at the same time or one after the other – should be kept to a minimum as far is as reasonably practicable, for example by assigning a vehicle to a fixed team or pod.
- Workers should be provided with hand sanitisers and cleaning equipment for their work vehicle, with cleaning taking place before and after each shift.

- Workers should be encouraged to travel alone to/from and for work. If using their personal cars for work, they should be accompanied by a maximum of one passenger who shall be seated in adherence with physical distancing guidance. Where workers need to share a work vehicle, or where travelling to work with others in a vehicle, a face covering or mask should be worn in line with public health advice.
- Businesses should refer to the latest Government advice in relation to essential overseas travel for employees. Advice on travel will change as the levels within the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 increase or decrease nationally or regionally.

Note: From 9 November, Ireland is implementing the new EU "traffic lights" approach to travel, which applies to countries in the EU/EEA (+UK). The advice for travel to these countries remains is "exercise a high degree of caution." The general advice for any other overseas travel remains "avoid non-essential travel" or some cases, "do not travel." Travel within the island of Ireland can continue as normal, subject to domestic public health restrictions on gov.ie.

Travellers from abroad with an essential function or need as set out in paragraph 19 of the EU Council Recommendation, including passengers travelling for the purposes of an imperative business reason, are not requested to restrict their movements while carrying out that essential function.

Irish residents, who have travelled and carried out an essential function in another region, but who have otherwise restricted their movement while in that region, are not requested to restrict their movements on return.

D9. Contractors and Visitors

- Workers, contractors or visitors visiting workplaces where there are restrictions arising from the risk of COVID-19 should follow the onsite IPC measures and take into account public health advice around preventing the spread of COVID-19. A system for recording visits to the site(s) by workers/others as well as visits by workers to other workplaces should be put in place by employers and completed by workers as required (contact log).

- Induction training for contractors and visitors to the workplace should be provided. The Health and Safety free online course *Return to Work Safely Induction* can also be used. The employer should also provide specific advice related to the workplace in addition to this general induction.
- Refer to **Note** in Business Travel section above regarding requirements for travel.

D10. Cleaning

Cleaning of work areas must be conducted at regular intervals. Further information on cleaning in non-healthcare settings is available from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

Employers must:
- implement thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. If disinfection of an area is required, it must be performed in addition to cleaning, never as a substitute for cleaning.
- ensure contact/touch surfaces such as table tops, work equipment, door handles and handrails are visibly clean at all times and are cleaned at least twice daily.
- implement modified cleaning intervals for rooms and work areas. This applies especially for washroom facilities, lockers and communal spaces. Cleaning should be performed at least twice per day and whenever facilities are visibly dirty.
- provide workers with essential cleaning materials to keep their own workspace clean (for example wipes/disinfection products, paper towels and waste bins/bags).
- provide workers with hand sanitisers and cleaning equipment for their work vehicle, with cleaning taking place before and after each shift.
- increase number of waste collection points and ensure these are emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.
- modify use of hot desks to ensure that these are made available to identified staff and have appropriate cleaning materials in place for workers to clean the area before and after using.

Note: Personal waste, for example, used tissues, wipes and cleaning material, should be disposed of in a plastic rubbish refuse bag. When the bag is full, it should be tied and placed

into a second refuse bag and tied again. Once the bag has been tied securely, it should be left in a safe location for three days (72 hours) before putting out for collection. Other waste can be put out for collection without delay. For further advice, refer to Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) or contact your relevant Local Authority as necessary.

D11. Use of PPE – Personal Protective Equipment

While correctly using PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other preventative measures as outlined above. Examples of PPE include gloves, goggles and respiratory protection. Use of PPE may already be required in many workplaces to address occupational health and safety risks, for example, exposure to hazardous chemicals.

In the context of COVID-19 risk, employers should check the HPSC website regularly for updates regarding use of recommended PPE.

- All IPC measures and hygiene compliance as set out above should be applied and maintained in all circumstances.
- PPE must be selected based on the hazard and risk to the worker.
- Employers must provide PPE and protective clothing to workers in accordance with identified COVID-19 exposure risks and in line with public health advice.
- Workers should be trained in the proper use, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE.
- Gloves are generally not required for IPC purposes. Where gloves are necessary, they must not be considered a substitute for hand hygiene and hands must be cleaned whenever gloves are removed. Gloves should not create an additional occupational hazard (such as gloves getting caught in rotating parts). Limitations on wearing time and workers' individual susceptibilities (allergies, etc.) must also be considered.
- For particular PPE, such as respirators, these must be properly fitted and periodically refitted, as appropriate.
- PPE needs to be consistently and properly worn when required. In addition, it must be regularly inspected, cleaned, maintained and replaced as necessary. Hands should be sanitised before donning and after doffing PPE
- Further information on PPE is available from the HSA.
- Advice for manufacturers and importers who wish to introduce PPE onto the market in response to the current COVID-19 emergency is available from the HSA.

Note: Face Shields designed and authorised as PPE against respiratory droplets should not be mistaken or used as a substitute for impact protection PPE in the workplace, for example, where standard CE marked Face Visor/Face protection PPE is required for work activities such as welding, grinding or to protect against chemical splashes.

D12. Customer Facing Roles

Many of the measures noted above for workers can and should equally be applied for work activity that involves direct customer or client contacts.

Employers must:

- eliminate physical interaction between workers and customers as much as is reasonably practicable through revised working arrangements, for example through provision of online or phone orders, contactless delivery or managed entry.
- provide hand sanitisers at entry/exit points.
- install physical barriers and clear markings to ensure that contact between workers and customers is kept to a minimum and to ensure that queues do not form between customers as they wait to be served.
- implement a cleaning regime to ensure that contact points for workers and customers are kept visibly cleaned at all times.
- display the advice on the COVID-19 measures in visible locations to ensure that customers are also adhering to what is required.
- implement and adopt public health regulations in relation to use of face coverings in shops, shopping centres and other indoor settings.
- provide masks to workers who need to interact with customers/others where a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

4. Worker Role – Workplace and Community Settings

Workers should follow the public health advice and guidance as it relates to workplace and community settings.

Workplace Settings

In the workplace, the worker should follow the requirements set out in this Protocol and with any specific direction from the employer. Workers should also communicate and engage with the Lead Worker Representative as appropriate.

They should also adopt physical distancing and good hygiene practices, such as frequent hand washing, respiratory etiquette to protect themselves and their work colleagues against infection and should seek medical advice if unwell. If a worker has any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 of if feeling unwell, they should not attend work.

Community Settings

Outside of work, workers should be encouraged to travel alone if using their cars to get to and from work. If this is not possible, workers travelling to/from work together should travel as a team/pod and use face coverings.

Those travelling on public transport to and from work must wear face coverings and follow physical distancing guidelines. In addition, workers who may share accommodation outside of work should be advised to adhere to public health and Government advice.

Workers should avoid congregating in particular settings outside of work. For example, congregating in shops when buying lunch. Similarly, congregating in particular social settings in and out of the home is also something that workers should avoid as such settings (household gatherings, parties) are known areas where COVID-19 transmission is very high.

Outside of work, workers should practice the same IPC measures, physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory etiquette and adhere to the specific requirements of the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 as announced by Government.

If travelling for personal reasons, [follow the travel and public health advice for domestic, EU and international destinations](#) at gov.ie.

5. Occupational Health and Safety Measures and Recommendations

All existing occupational health and safety provisions continue to apply to all workplaces and further information and advice is available on the HSA website including additional occupational health and safety information on the specific COVID-19 webpages.

Where the IPC measures implemented requires changes to work activities, the employer is required to review and update their occupational health and safety risk assessments and safety statement.

As employers implement the above measures in the workplace to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for workers, specific occupational health and safety measures may also need to be considered and implemented.

Employers should first take into account the most up-to-date official public health advice and guidance from the Department of Health and the HPSC on how to mitigate the health risk including measures advised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for work related travel.

Where a risk of exposure to COVID-19 is identified in the COVID-19 response plan, an occupational health and safety risk assessment should also be completed. All of the public health and occupational health and safety measures should be developed in consultation with workers and/or Trades Unions and ultimately communicated to workers and others at the workplace.

Employers should also communicate with safety representatives selected or appointed under the occupational health and safety legislation and consult with workers on safety measures to be implemented in the workplace. Further information on the role of Safety Representative is available on the HSA website.

The employer can also use a competent person responsible for managing health and safety (internally or externally) as required to ensure the effective implementation of changes to work activities and the implementation of IPC measures in the workplace.

A. Reporting Requirements if a worker contracts COVID-19

COVID-19 is reportable under the Infectious Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2020 by a medical practitioner who becomes aware of or suspects an instance of such disease. Such a report should be sent to the Medical Officer of Health/Director of Public Health at the local Public Health Department.

There is no requirement for an employer to notify the HSA if a worker contracts COVID-19. Diseases or occupational illnesses are not reportable under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Reporting of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 370 of 2016).

The Biological Agents Regulations (S.I. No. 572 of 2013) and associated Code of Practice are being updated to take account of the addition of the virus, SARS-CoV-2, as a risk group III biological agent to Annex III of the Directive (Commission Directive 2000/54/EC). This Regulation lays down the minimum requirements for protection of workers from risks related to exposure to biological agents at work. Further advice on the new requirements related to SARS-CoV-2 under the Biological Agents Regulations are available from the HSA.

B. First Aid

In the event that first aid is required in the workplace, it may not be possible to maintain a distance of 2 metres. Workers with a specific role in acting as first responders should be provided with updated training on infection prevention and control principles including performance of hand hygiene and appropriate use of personal protective equipment when delivering first aid.

Further advice on first aid is available from the Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC), who have provided advice in relation to return to work and first aid (Update on FAR Responder Recertification).

Advice is also available on the [HSA website](#).

C. Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Employers should put in place support for workers who may be suffering from anxiety or stress. Workers, when they return to work or as they continue to work, may go through traumatic events such as the serious illness or death of a relative or friend, or be experiencing financial difficulties or problems with their personal relationships.

- Workers who are returning to the workplace after a period of isolation or working from home are also likely to have concerns about the risk of infection or changes to their job due to the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Employers should provide workers with information on publicly available sources of support and advice and information about the prevention and control measures taken in the workplace to reduce the risk of infection.

- Employers should ensure workers are made aware of and have access to any business provided Employee Assistance Programmes or Occupational Health service.

- The HSA has a range of supports, resources and advice such as:
    - [dealing with stress as a result of the changes in a worker's personal and/or working life during COVID-19](#).
    - a free online risk assessment tool for addressing work related stress: [WorkPositive](#).
- The Government's "*In This Together Campaign"* also provides information on minding one's mental health as well as tips on staying active and connected and may be useful for use by employers and workers.

D. Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

Ventilation refers to the movement of outdoor air into a building, and the circulation of that air within the building or room. This can be achieved through natural means (e.g. opening a window) or mechanical means (e.g. a central heating, ventilation and air conditioning).

- Natural ventilation through the introduction of fresh air into the workplace e.g. opening doors and windows. Cross-ventilation is a good option for window ventilation as it facilitates the quick exchange of room air for fresh air through widely opened windows opposite to each other where possible. Propping open internal doors may increase air movement and ventilation rate. (**Note**: fire doors should not be propped open unless fitted with approved automatic closers so that they function as fire doors in the event of an alarm or fire).

- Mechanical ventilation through the use of HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) systems. These provide comfortable environmental conditions (temperature and humidity) and clean air in indoor settings such as buildings and vehicles. Switching off air conditioning is not required to manage the risk of COVID-19. However, as many air conditioning units just heat, cool and recirculate the air, it is important to check ventilation systems to ensure that there is an adequate supply of fresh air (from a clean source) and that recirculation of untreated air is avoided. Where workplaces have Local Exhaust Ventilation, the make-up air should ideally come from outdoor air rather than from adjacent rooms.

Further information on ventilation is available at:
- HPSC
- WHO -
- ECDC
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, S.I. No. 299 of 2007
- Federal Environment Agency, Indoor Air Hygiene Commission (IRK)
- CIBSE Ventilation Guidance

E. Legionella

For some places of work such as hotels, leisure facilities, offices, dental clinics and hairdressers, the employer needs to put in place control measures to avoid the potential for Legionnaires' disease. Further advice on the [prevention of Legionnaires'](#) disease is available from HSA.

6. Advice for Employers and Workers

- **The Health and Safety Authority Workplace Contact Unit** can be contacted at
    - **Tel**: 1890 289 389 and **Email** - wcu@hsa.ie
    - An online complaint form is also available and this should be used where possible.

- **The Health Service Executive**, HSElive.
    - **Tel**: 1850 241850

- **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment** COVID-19 Business Support Call Centre - for information on the Government supports available to businesses impacted by COVID-19.
    - **Tel**: 01 631 2002 and **Email**: infobusinesssupport@enterprise.gov.ie

- **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Information and Customer Service:**
    - **Tel:** 059 9178 990

- **National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)**
    - **Tel:** 01 807 3800 and **Email:** COVID-19-support@nsai.ie

7. Information on Public Health and Occupational Health and Safety

- Health and Safety Authority (HSA)

- Health Service Executive (HSE)

- Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC)

- European Commission: COVID-19: Back to the workplace - Adapting workplaces and protecting workers

- EU OSHA: COVID-19: back to the workplace in safe and healthy conditions

- World Health Organization (WHO): Coronavirus

- World Health Organisation (WHO) Getting Your Workplace Ready guide

- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC): COVID-19 pandemic

- International Labour Organisation (ILO): In the face of a pandemic: Ensuring Safety and Health at Work

- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: Controlling COVID-19 in the Workplace

8. Information on Business Continuity and Supports

- Information on a wide range of Government supports for COVID-19 impacted businesses can be found on Gov.ie. This includes information on financial supports, sectoral specific supports, and training.

- Business Continuity Guides and resources are available from the NSAI. See NSAI Business Guides and Technical Resources.

- Key supports and resources available to help businesses impacted by COVID-19 can be found on the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment website.

9. Appendix – Further Public Health Advice and Information

MANAGEMENT OF A CASE OR CASES (OUTBREAK) IN THE WORKPLACE

An outbreak of COVID-19 is when two or more cases of the disease are linked by time, place or person. The management of an outbreak is managed by the local Departments of Public Health to enable the outbreak to be brought under control as quickly as possible. It also requires close engagement and cooperation between the employer, the LWR, the staff, representatives and in particular with the worker(s) affected. Outbreaks in a single workplace, which are not managed and brought under control quickly, can rapidly spread to other workplaces and/or the wider community. Continuous and effective communication between all parties is essential.

While the Departments of Public Health are responsible for managing an outbreak, employers and/or workers may, for example, need to:

- co-operate with their local Department of Public Health if there is a case or number of cases in their workplace.
- continue to strictly follow all IPC measures and the steps advised in response to an individual case of COVID-19 during an outbreak.
- assign a designated manager/HR staff member to liaise with staff on COVID-19 issues and liaise directly with the local Department of Public Health for advice and support during an outbreak.
- communicate and liaise with staff, Lead Worker Representative and others as required.
- encourage workers to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app. This can assist Public Health in relation to for example completing risk assessments and contact tracing.

Additional advice on dealing with a suspected case or managing an outbreak are available from the HPSC website.

CHOOSING A HAND SANITISER

Hand sanitising gels are biocides and fall under the Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) – Regulation (EU) 528/2012. The Pesticide Registration and Control Division (PRCD) of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is the competent authority for biocides in Ireland. Only biocidal products listed on the DAFM biocide product register are legal to market and use in Ireland. Employers should ensure that all sanitisers and disinfectants they have in the workplace carry a PCS 9xxxx, PCS 1xxxxx, IE/BPA 7xxxx or an EU-000xxx-xx registration number on the label. Each product registered by DAFM will carry a unique registration number specific to that particular product. If the product label does not contain any of these number formats, the employer should not purchase or use the product. To confirm the biocide can be used on the Irish market, the employer can check the registers of products online at Biocidal Product Registers. Further information from DAFM on Sanitisers and Disinfectants is available by contacting them at biocide-enforcement@agriculture.gov.ie or at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine website.

Hand sanitisers for use against COVID-19 must contain a minimum of 60% alcohol. Non-alcohol based hand sanitiser may also be used. However, in choosing a hand sanitiser, it is important to ensure that it is effective against Coronavirus.

USE OF IDENTIFIED TEAMS OR PODS

As noted above, workers should be organised into pods or groups, where possible. Pod members should work together, take their breaks together, change together and as far as possible even travel to work together, etc. If one person then becomes a suspected or confirmed case only members of their pod are contacts and the pod can be excluded together. This will allow the appropriate skill mix to always be available and facilitate the smoother running of the workplace preventing key workers being excluded together.

Workers travelling in pods should wear face masks/face coverings and wash their hands before and after travelling together. Where possible, the canteen should be split into zones and specific zones then assigned to specific pods in the production area. Break times and subsequent cleaning should be staggered along zone/pod lines too.

FACE COVERINGS – FACE MASK - VISORS

The wearing of face coverings or masks is not a substitute for other measures outlined above (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory contacts, minimising contacts) but they may be used in addition to these protective measures, especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult. Surgical masks are not currently recommended for use outside of health care settings.

A face covering is a material you wear that covers the nose and mouth. Wearing a face covering reduces the spread of COVID-19 in the community. It helps to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets from people infected with COVID-19. This helps to stop people who do not know they have the virus from spreading it to others. If a face covering or mask is worn, it should be clean and they should not be shared or handled by other colleagues. Further information on the handling and care of cloth face coverings can be found here.

Visors are not the best option for protecting yourself and others from COVID-19. Visors may stop some spread of droplets from your nose or mouth. This is better than not wearing any face covering. Visors should only be worn if you have an illness or impairment that makes wearing a face covering difficult or if you are dealing with people with particular needs (e.g., hard of hearing). Where visors are used, they should cover the entire face (above the eyes to below the chin and wrap around from ear to ear) and be correctly applied. Reusable visors should be cleaned after each use and then stored in a clean place until needed.

By law (S.I. No. 296 of 2020), you have to wear a face covering on public transport, and in the following locations. **Note**: this Regulation is now in place until 9 June 2021 (The Health Act 1947 (Section 31A – Temporary Restrictions) (Covid-19) (Face Coverings in Certain Premises and Businesses) (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 2020 (S.I. No. 511 of 2020)).

- shops, including pharmacies
- shopping centres
- libraries
- cinemas and cinema complexes
- theatres
- concert halls

- bingo halls
- museums
- nail salons
- hair salons and barbers
- tattoo and piercing parlours
- travel agents and tour operators
- laundries and dry cleaners
- bookmakers

It is generally recommended that in public settings, cloth face coverings should be worn especially where the wearer is at a high level (standing) than those potentially exposed at a lower level (sitting).

The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) advise that face coverings made to the SWiFT 19 or CEN/CWA 17553 specifications should be the preferred option for masks and coverings used by consumers in public settings such as public transport, supermarkets and shops, and other enclosed areas where it may be difficult to maintain social distancing guidelines.

Office locations are not currently listed as locations where faces coverings must be worn. However, consideration may be given to wearing face coverings in places or situations where it may be difficult to achieve or maintain 2m physical/social distancing. This might include:

- When entering and exiting buildings
- Public access areas in buildings, including receptions/foyers
- When moving throughout buildings to toilets, photocopiers, on stairwells etc.
- Canteens and kitchen areas (prior to and after eating) or when using facilities such as boilers, toasters.

Employers and workers should keep up to date with the latest public health advice and regulations in relation to use of face coverings. The HPSC have published general advice around the efficacy of visors compared with masks in the prevention of transmission of COVID-19 in non healthcare settings.

SECTORAL SPECIFIC ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The Return to Work Safely Protocol, published in May 2020, formed the basis for many of the specific sectoral guidance documents further developed by individual sectors in conjunction with Public Health. Sectors are now required to review their existing advice and guidance to ensure it is line with the updated Work Safely Protocol.

In addition to specific advice prepared by sectors, The HSE Departments of Public Health and the HPSC may also provide specific advice to sectors in response to outbreaks or other evidence and data. In such cases, the employers and workers in the particular sector should adopt the specific public health advice provided.

A non-exhaustive list of sectors where specific public health advice has been provided is given below and employers and workers should keep up to-date as this guidance advice is subject to change:

- Healthcare
- Social care
- Retail
- Meat Processing
- Food Processing
- Construction
- Childcare
- Education
- Bars
- Restaurants
- Funeral directors

See HSPC Guidance on COVID-19 in Ireland.

10. Glossary

Asymptomatic – infected but not having symptoms of illness.

Congregated setting – place where groups of people gather where contact with infected people can happen.

HPSC - Health Protection and Surveillance Centre.

HSE - Health Service Executive.

IPC measures - Infection, Prevention and Control measures.

LEEF – Labour Employer Economic Forum.

LWR - Lead Worker Representative.

NPHET – National Public Health Emergency Team.

Occupational health and safety risk assessment - a term used to describe the overall process or method where you identify hazards and risk factors that have the potential to cause harm to employees and others at the workplace. Refer to [HSA website](#).

Outbreak - An outbreak of COVID-19 is when two or more cases of the disease are linked by time, place or person.

OSH - Occupational Health and Safety.

PPE - Personal Protective Equipment **-** means any device or appliance designed to be worn or held by an individual for protection against one or more health and safety hazards. Respiratory Protective Equipment Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) is a particular type of Personal Protective Equipment, used to protect the individual wearer against inhalation of hazardous substances in the workplace air.

Risk assessment - Risk assessment is a term used to describe the overall process or method where you identify hazards and risk factors that have the potential to cause harm.

Safety Statement - a written document that represents the employer's commitment to the health and safety of their employees in line with workplace health and safety laws and standards. Refer to [HSA website](#).

SARS-CoV-2 - is the virus which causes COVID-19.

Symptomatic – infected and having symptoms of illness.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Department of Health
Health and Safety Authority
Health Service Executive

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland