

## **GUIDANCE ON WORKING SAFELY DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK**

### **Introduction**

This note has been prepared as a brief guide for members of the ALPS network to the health and safety arrangements required in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The information is believed to be correct as at late May 2020, but it is **likely to change**, often at short notice. This is because understanding of how the virus works is developing all the time.

ALPS may issue revised guidance at a later date, if this becomes appropriate. However, the latest information will be found at the gov.uk or HSE websites, using these links:

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

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>

### **The legal position**

It should be noted that the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**, which is still in force, applies to the management of COVID-19, as to all other risks. The Act requires employers to ensure the health and safety of their employees, and others affected by their work, “*so far as is reasonably practicable*”. For entirely understandable reasons, coronavirus/COVID-19 has become an emotive subject, leading to a desire for “guarantees” that people will be safe. It has never been possible to guarantee safety; and it never will be. Health and safety legislation does **not** require any guarantees. Rather, it creates a duty on employers to ensure that risks are reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

## **Advice from the Government**

Current advice for businesses is that coronavirus/Covid-19 can be effectively managed by taking practical actions based on 5 main steps:

### **1. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment**

Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the workplace is safe by carrying out a risk assessment, in line with HSE guidance:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm>

### **2. Help people to work from home**

Take all reasonable steps to help people work from home by:

- Discussing home working arrangements
- Providing support for learners who may lack confidence and/or experience
- Ensuring people have the right equipment, such as remote access to work systems (for example an intranet)
- Including homeworkers in communications
- Looking after their physical and mental wellbeing

**Although homeworking is the preferred option, occasional visits to the workplace are likely to be advisable**

### **3. Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures**

Increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning by:

- Giving guidance on how to wash hands effectively
- Providing hand sanitiser around the workplace
- Frequent cleaning of busy areas; and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly
- Enhanced cleaning for toilets

- Providing effective hand drying facilities – either paper towels or electrical dryers

#### **4. Maintain 2 metres social distancing, where possible**

Where possible, ensure that people are 2m apart by:

- Putting up signs to remind employees and visitors of social distancing guidance
- Avoiding sharing workstations
- Marking areas (e.g. with floor tape) to help people keep to a 2m distance
- Arranging one-way routes through the workplace, if this will help
- Seeing visitors by appointment only, if this is possible

#### **5. Where people cannot be 2 metres apart, reduce transmission risk**

Where it is not possible for people to be 2m apart, the transmission risk should be reduced by:

- Considering whether an activity needs to continue for the business to operate
- Keeping the time spent on such activities as short as possible
- Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working when possible
- Staggering arrival and departure times
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using fixed teams or partnering.

### **Guidance for specific sectors**

The government, in consultation with industry bodies, has produced more detailed guidance to help ensure workplaces are as safe as reasonably practicable. There are eight guides, each of which applies the principles above to different types of work. The guides can be viewed and downloaded at:

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

The eight sectors are:

1. Construction and other outdoor work
2. Factories, plants and warehouses
3. Laboratories and research facilities
4. Offices and contact centres
5. Other people's homes (including making deliveries)
6. Restaurants offering takeaway or delivery
7. Shops, stores and branches (such as banks)
8. Work in or from vehicles

### **Further advice and support**

This note has been prepared by the ALPS Health and Safety Consultant, who can be contacted by members for further clarification or advice. There is no charge for an initial discussion.

**Mark Dennis Dip2OSH, CMIOSH**  
**Chartered Safety and Health Practitioner**

E-mail [prioryhs@outlook.com](mailto:prioryhs@outlook.com)

Tel               **020 8542 3230**

Mobile:         **07956 892902**