

BUSINESS INFORMATION AND ADVICE ON COVID 19

As businesses return to the workplace and customers return to town centres there are increased health and safety responsibilities and legal obligations for business operators in the wake of the COVID 19 crisis.

Now more than ever is the time to safeguard your business by taking all reasonable steps to prevent exposure to the invisible threat of virus and its devastating consequences/impact.

[The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2020](#) and its subsequent amendments specify essential businesses which may remain open and non-essential businesses which must be closed. This is enforced by PSNI and Council. Regulations are reviewed every 3 weeks and updated to reflect which businesses may be open and which activities are permitted. We all must await announcements from the Northern Ireland Executive to determine when and what type of businesses may reopen.

The Northern Ireland Executive has published its 5 Stage Plan [Coronavirus Executive Approach To Decision-Making](#) for easing the COVID-19 lockdown and progression will depend on key health criteria being met.

Further information on [Coronavirus:Business closures and restrictions](#) is available on NI Business info website together with [latest business advice, support and guidance.](#)

As this situation is evolving rapidly, it is essential for employers and employees to keep themselves informed of the work related risks posed by COVID-19.

Current Public Health advice is available from

[The Public Health Agency](#)

[Department of Health](#)

[NI Direct](#)

A practical guide to making workplaces safer entitled '[COVID-19: Working Through This Together](#)' gives a useful overview of the principles and steps for employers and employees to keep themselves and their workplaces safe.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has guidance on [Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak](#) on its website including [a short guide](#) and [talking with your workers.](#)

Government guidance on '[Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)' has been published in consultation with industry to ensure workplaces are as safe as possible. You may need to refer to more than one guide to fit your business model.

[5 steps to working safely](#)

[Shops and branches](#)

Health and Safety legislation still applies but your documentation should be reviewed and updated accordingly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health and Safety Policy

Employers must take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their workers and anyone else affected by their business (including members of the public and contractors). This includes the risk from COVID-19. Employees must adhere to their employer's controls - to protect themselves and others. For further information on Health and Safety policies and a completed example visit the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) website at <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/health-and-safety-policy>

Risk Assessments

Risk Assessments must be suitable and sufficient to address health and safety hazards including the risk from COVID-19. For further information on Risk Assessments, templates and completed examples visit <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/>. A template risk assessment for COVID-19 is available at <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/example-covid-19-risk-assessment-template>

Welfare Facilities

Workplaces must have adequate sanitary and washing facilities and a sufficient number of wash hand basins. The HSE's Approved Code of Practice provides further information <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/l24-workplace-health-safety-and-welfare-gb-acop-approved-use-ni>

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Where PPE is identified by your risk assessment as an additional control, it must be suitable and appropriate. The latest government advice is available from the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19: personal protective equipment \(PPE\) hub](#) and from HSENI <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

Reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences (RIDDOR)

Employers must now report cases of COVID-19 within the workforce where there is reasonable evidence that someone diagnosed with COVID-19 was likely to have been exposed due to their work activities. Further information on RIDDOR reporting is available at <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/report-incident>

Resources

Public Health Agency [A4 Social distancing poster](#)

Department of Health [A4 Wash Your Hands poster](#)