Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for micro and small businesses

This short guidance provides practical advice for micro (less than 10 employees) and small (less than 50 employees) companies as they plan to re-open their businesses once it is safe to do so. It sets out the Scottish Government's expectations on the steps businesses will take before and after reopening. It does not constitute legal advice, and businesses may wish to seek their own advice to ensure compliance with all legal duties.

This Guidance is based on the principles set out in COVID-19: A Framework for Decision-Making and our long-established commitment to fair work, which was set in the context of the current crisis in a joint statement with the STUC.

This guidance is for businesses where there is no sector-specific guidance published, so if your business is in a sector for which specific guidance has been published then you should follow that.

<u>**Before re-opening, you should do the following**</u>**:**

1. **Assess the risks to yourself, your employees, your suppliers and your customers.**
   - **All employers are by law required to carry out risk assessments. Given the current risk to public health from Covid-19, self-employed persons should also carry out a risk assessment.**
   - **We expect employees to be fully engaged in that process, including through trade union or workforce representatives.** Protecting the health of employees is fundamental to establishing shared confidence around the safety of returning to places of work.
   - Ensure you/your health and safety professionals and representatives have the skills, training and knowledge to understand the risks associated with COVID-19. If you do not have access to these skills in-house you should explore external support options to put in place appropriate measures, for example through trade associations, health and safety consultancies, trade union health and safety representatives or through Chambers of Commerce.
   - You must think about where you work, where your customers are and assess each risk you identify. Each business is unique so will have different risks depending on where you work and what you do.
   - Your risks will be different if work in an office or in other locations, for example in customer's homes, outside or in other places of businesses. You must also identify risks associated with handling machinery, equipment or other items where possible contamination may occur.
   - Think about the level of interaction between you and your employees, your employees with each other and you/your employees and your customers, suppliers or clients and ensure each risk is identified and assessed.
   - Some members of your workforce may be disproportionately at risk, or impacted upon by Covid-19, (including Minority Ethnic staff, those with disability or underlying health conditions, staff aged over 70, or staff who are pregnant) these groups should not be discriminated against and may need extra support to return to work. Discussing individual risk assessments with these employees would help you determine the correct steps to a safe return.

- Safe travel to work arrangements to be considered as part of a risk assessment, with any relevant adjustments adopted.
- **Information on how to carry out a risk assessment is on the [Healthy Working Lives](#) website**. It includes a template for your risk assessment and sample assessments for different types of situations including communal areas and working in other people's homes.
- Seek advice. For workplaces without union representation, union health and safety representatives will be available upon request to support the development of workplace risk assessments. For more information contact safety@stuc.org.uk.
- Health and safety experts and advisors from the business community are also available on a voluntary basis to support the development of workplace risk assessments at businesssupport@scottishchambers.org.uk.

2. **Consult with your employees before you reopen.**
   - You should discuss how you can safely reopen with your employees, trades unions or employee representatives as appropriate. It is important everyone understands the measures being taken to establish the safe working environment as this is likely to have a significant impact on workforce confidence.
   - Your discussions should include arrangements for working from home, adopting new or alternative working patterns; arrangements for staff who are shielding, are ill or have caring responsibilities.
   - You should take every possible step to facilitate employees working from home where this is appropriate. This may include providing suitable IT and equipment to allow staff to do this.
   - Workers who are shielding or who live with someone who is shielding, should not be compelled to attend work and companies should make arrangements to ensure those staff are not disadvantaged due to obeying medical advice.
   - Travel to work and childcare considerations for individual employees should be taken into account.
   - **Guidance on how to engage your workforce** along with suggested topics for discussion is in the [Healthy Working Lives](#) website.

3. **Put in place infection and control measures.**
   To prevent transmission of COVID-19 it is essential that physical distancing continues to be practiced along with other good hygiene practice amongst employees, customers and all those on business premises. You can find guidance on what to consider in the workplace on the [Healthy Working Lives](#) website. Employers must :
   - Ensure a distance of two metres between everyone; between you and your customers; between customers and employees.
   - Arrange the work activity to be done in a different way so that 2m distance can be maintained.
   - Limit the number of employees or customers on your premises to ensure that spaces are not crowded.
   - Apply changes to the workplace to minimise contact such as barriers, markings or changing where equipment or seating is placed.

- Consider changes in working practice, such as staggering start/finish and break times and reducing the number of people each person has contact with by working in fixed or set teams or through pairing up or partnering if appropriate.
- Assess if there are particular risks in communal areas, such as canteens or break areas, toilets, receptions etc. and put in place appropriate protective measures.
- Consider whether an activity needs to continue for the business to operate.
- Put in place good hygiene practices for all employees, customers and visitors to your premises. Ensure adequate facilities are available for hand hygiene, including handwashing facilities or alcohol based hand rub at key areas (e.g. entry and exit points).
- If it is not possible to put these preventative measures in place **you must take equivalent preventative measures to provide protection** which may include using Personal Protective Equipment.

4. Once your businesses is open, keep checking and reviewing.
- Regularly review your risk assessment to make sure that all actions you have put in place are working well.
- Continue to engage with your employees and make appropriate adjustments.
- Get feedback on how you are doing from your customers and suppliers.
- Check that what you're doing is in line with the [latest public health guidance.](#)
- If an employee becomes ill at work with Covid symptoms you should follow the [Test and Protect guidance.](#)

Further information.

- The [Health & Safety Executive](#) provides more information on managing risk, risk assessments and other workplace health and safety issues.

- There is guidance for employers through the [Equalities and Human Rights Commission.](#)

- **For information for businesses, including packages of support**, go to [FindBusinessSupport.gov.scot.](#) You can also find additional help and advice for businesses through the [Federation of Small Businesses](#) and the [Scottish Chambers of Commerce.](#)

- All the Scottish Government's **guidance on Coronavirus** can be found on https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/ including [Coronavirus (COVID-19): business and physical distancing guidance (covers risk assessment and workforce).](#)

- You can also find information on working safely during COVID-19 in different workplaces through the UK Government guidance and UK Government guidance on COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings