

Coronavirus COVID-19

Following the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) new legislation and guidance was issued to control the spread of the virus and to inform how people and businesses should operate. The council will implement this legislation and guidance to ensure that during the outbreak, we will only operate where it is safe to do so, ensuring that work is undertaken safely and the risks are controlled.

Guidance released by government (COVID secure), will be used to help put in safe system of work to protect employees, members of the public, contractors or any other person who may be affected by our work. The measures may include social distancing measures, remote working, staggering shifts, weekend working and using alternative work bases, cleaning/hygiene and training.

The detailed guidance is available on GOV.UK and includes specific work settings which currently includes;

- construction and other outdoor work
- factories, plants and warehouses
- homes
- offices and contact centres
- restaurants offering takeaway or delivery
- shops and branches
- vehicles

Those guides relevant to services provided by the Council have been considered in the development of safe working practices going forward. Any additional guides will be incorporated into safe working practices.

In addition, Corporate Guidance Notes (CGN) will be issued to provide additional information on the hazards, risks and controls in relation to COVID-19 that will need to be considered when undertaking specific activities.

Work is likely to be organised differently from how it was pre-lockdown and therefore as a council we will explain the changes that are being made in order to work safely. We will review, to make sure change are working and will listen to the views of employees on how revised arrangements will work.

Risk assessments will be undertaken, shared, implemented and reviewed regularly to ensure that they take account of the most up to date information and guidance that has been issued by government, trade or industry bodies in a fast moving environment, recognising the key role played by the Council and it's staff in responding to and recovering from the outbreak.

The risk assessments will;

- identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus;
- think about who could be at risk;
- decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed;
- act to remove the activity or situation, or if this isn't possible, control the risk.

The principles behind the risk assessments include:

(a) Considering how work can be undertaken safely, balancing the needs of employees with the Council's critical role in supporting the community of west Norfolk to respond to and recover from the COVID19 outbreak:

Looking at where and how work is carried out, considering if there are jobs and tasks that can be changed to reduce risk

Identifying everyone who can effectively undertake their role from home, either wholly or partly, and enable tasks that can be completed from home to be undertaken from home – providing equipment needed for employees to work safely and effectively at home (for example laptops, mobile phones, video conferencing equipment)

Keeping in regular contact with people working from home, making sure that their wellbeing is discussed and helping them to feel they are still part of the workforce;

Where it is not possible to work from home, the guidance on social distancing and hygiene (handwashing with soap and water often, for at least 20 seconds) will be followed;

Using only the minimum number of people needed to carry out work tasks safely.

(b) Protecting people who are at higher risk

Planning for clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding) workers who must not work outside the home;

Planning for people working at home who have someone shielding in their household;

Helping workers at increased risk to work from home, either in their current role or an alternative role;

Where people at increased risk cannot work from home, offering them the safest available roles;

Planning for people who need to self-isolate.

Identifying and responding to the potential for increased risk for BAME employees.

(c) Getting into and leaving work

Making sure that when people have to travel into work, people can travel alone in their own transport (or walk, or cycle if it is safe to do so) to maintain social distancing

Ensuring flexible working or and/staggering arrival and departure times so people can keep to the social distancing rules by not using entry/exit points at the same time;

Providing handwashing facilities (running water, soap and paper towels) or hand sanitisers at entry/exit points, to allow people to cleanse their hands as they arrive and leave.

(d) Work areas which will also include, non-office, temporary and mobile work locations

Organising work areas so that people can be kept the social distance apart, where possible:

Physically arranging work areas to keep people the social distance apart;

Marking areas using floor paint or tape to help people keep the social distance;

Providing signage to remind people to keep a social distance;

Avoid people working face-to-face, for example working side-by-side.

Where it is not possible to keep a physical social distance, measures will be taken such as assigning one person per work area, reducing the number of people in the work area or keeping people to shifts teams, to limit social interaction;

Using screens or other barriers to create a physical barrier between people.

(e) Cleaning

Prevent transmission by regularly cleaning the work area, equipment and vehicles, for example cleaning at the end of each use if equipment is shared between people or between shift changeovers at the end of each day

Providing hand sanitisers and cleaning material to also help individuals to maintain clean hands and work areas

(f) Travel

Ensuring that only essential travel is made whether that is around a building, to sites or properties

Reducing the amount that people that rotate between jobs and equipment.

Limiting the number of people who use lifts and work vehicles.

Mark areas using floor paint or tape to help people keep a social distance.

Introducing temporary pedestrian walkways where appropriate to allow people to maintain social distancing when moving around. Physically moving in common areas tables/chairs so they are socially distanced;

Staggering breaktimes so that people are not using common areas at the same time

Encouraging using outside areas for breaks where there are suitable locations

(g) Good hygiene

Providing running water, soap and paper towels; providing hand sanitiser in addition to washing facilities;

Using signs and posters to increase awareness of good handwashing technique and reminders about avoiding touching your face and to cough/sneeze into your arm;

Setting clear guidance for the cleaning of toilets, showers and changing facilities to make sure they are kept clean;

(h) Information and guidance

Providing people (including employees and others) with information on procedures, guidance or ways of working that have been introduced;

Sharing this information with them before they start work;

Sharing this information with others who are not employees (for example visitors, customers or contractors), where required by signs or notices;

Ensuring people who don't have English as their first language and others who may struggle with written and verbal communication are accommodated

Holding conversations with employees to listening to and acting on their concerns

(I) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE will be provided to those where risk assessments identify a need

Information will be provided on how that the PPE should be used.

The results of the risk assessments will be published on our website. A notice will be displayed in each workplace to show that we have followed the guidance at GOV.UK.