19 July 2021

Advice for Norfolk businesses

From 19 July, we will be moving to Step 4 of the government's roadmap, meaning changes in regulations and more businesses re-opening. Covid remains, however, a significant risk to people's health.

The Government has published the guidance for businesses on how to work safely from Step 4 Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance from Step 4 - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Please read and follow this guidance, including anything specific to your sector.

This briefing is intended to highlight the public health perspective on the continued management of Covid-19 in the workplace. Protecting employees as far as possible not only looks after their health and wellbeing, but also makes economic sense for your business by reducing the risk of enforced closures or managing staff absence.

Consumer Confidence
Help people choose
to use your business

Polls indicate that most would prefer to continue with precautions such as wearing masks in indoor spaces, keeping distance where possible and hand sanitizing after Step 4. This could influence purchases decisions; letting people know that you also think these things are important shows that you value the wellbeing of your employees and customers, which will be good for business.

Most Norfolk District / Borough Councils operate Covid confidence / safety schemes. These schemes aim to recognise the work that businesses put into protecting people and provide reassurance the public. Check your local council's business pages for how to sign up to your local scheme.

Businesses who demonstrate continued Covid prevention measures will attract custom from people who are concerned about Covid (and are unlikely to put off those who are unconcerned).

Precaution measures
Make common sense your policy

The key precautions of keeping hands clean, wearing face coverings in public indoor spaces, keeping a reasonable distance from those from other households and being in well ventilated spaces remain important for managing the spread of Covid (and other viruses). These don't need to be covered by law for you to adopt them as company policies or just good working practices. As a business, you are generally entitled to set your own rules of entry, as long as they are not discriminatory (you must always act within the Equality Act, 2010). You should make your conditions of entry clear to customers ahead of or at point of arrival.

Remember that to encourage more people to engage, make the measures:

- **Convenient** (e.g. having hand sanitizers on tables or at entrances)
- **Social** (show that most people are doing it) - if your staff are showing a great example, your customers are more likely to do the same
- **A good thing** – remind people why you think these actions are a good idea (e.g. to keep your staff safe) and use posters / websites / chalk boards to get the messages out
- **Current** – keep your messages up to date. If wearing of face coverings indoors is now your policy, make sure people know (and your posters don't look like leftovers from 2020)

Be mindful of staff who may be at risk of Covid and also which staff may have been unable to have their vaccines. You could ensure these factors are discussed with employees to ensure they are as safe as possible in the workplace.

www.norfolk.gov.uk/businesstoolkit

Vaccinations
Increase protection to the whole community

This has quickly become the best defence we have against Covid causing serious illness and hospitalisations. All adults are now eligible for the vaccine; you can encourage uptake by:

- Allowing vaccinations in work time. Depending on your business and size of workforce you may be eligible for the vaccinators to come to you. See xxx for details

- Hold a (voluntary) vaccination register for your employees to log their status. This may be helpful in the future if isolation (or any other) guidance changes for those who are vaccinated, so having a register will help you to understand what this looks like for your business.

- See the government guidance on the NHS Covid Pass Restaurants, pubs, bars, nightclubs and takeaway services - Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance from Step 4 - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Test, Trace, Isolate
Breaking the chain

Norfolk has a great test, trace and isolate system, where we do rapid contact tracing locally, and offer support to isolate for those who need it.

As case numbers increase, the higher the risk there is for someone to be infected Regular testing is something that when done correctly, can help to identify those who are infected but have no symptoms, so this is something we'd like to continue doing in Norfolk.

You can do your part to encourage regular testing by:

- Encouraging all staff to do LFT test twice a week. If your business can support it, then sign up to Norfolk's Workplace Testing scheme.

  This is working well for hundreds of businesses across the county, so make yours one of them. If you can't accommodate workplace testing, encourage your employees to test at home. Remember that all results (even negative) need to be registered on the gov.uk portal.

For our local system to continue working effectively, we need the information that is gathered by the NHS Test and Trace app. After Step 4, this will no longer be mandatory, but if people don't use the check in, we can't trace them and stop the transmission. Please do your part to keep the Norfolk system working as well as it currently does by:

- Continuing to display the NHS app QR codes
- Continuing to ask customers to use it
- Ask customers to provide contact details if they cannot use the app

And
Other things you can do

- Watch the epidemic and take note of the case numbers – you can then adapt accordingly. If you see locally that numbers are going up, tighten your measures in the workplace. If you see evidence of new variants becoming widespread look for information from trusted sources as to what this may mean for risk to your workforce. Check Norfolk data here.

- Make sure that you know what to do if you have customers / staff testing positive – you can find details in the Re-opening Safely toolkit for businesses www.norfolk.gov.uk/businesstoolkit

- Use Norfolk's Outbreak Management Centre for support. They can either help directly or find you the support you need for all things Covid-related. Contact them at phnorfolkomc@norfolk.gov.uk or **01603 223219**. Even if you have a very unusual bespoke issue related to Covid, they may be able to help find a bespoke solution

- Have a dedicated business lead (or several if your business is large enough) for Covid management. They can make sure all the right measures are in place (and make sure all information is in languages accessible to your workforce).

- Keep updating your risk assessments in relation to Covid management. Your local Environmental Health department or Trading Standards can offer support where needed. Use the workplace guidance to assist you in implementing effective controls - the new government guidance on Step 4 includes information on managing risk.