

Health and Safety Bulletin

Date of first issue: 14th February 2020

Latest update 5th August 2020

Issue: Coronavirus Covid-19

Background

This guidance is intended for all CCBC staff to update on what health and safety safeguards are recommended in order to maintain a consistent approach across all service areas and buildings.

CCBC services that are not currently operating are increasingly preparing to reopen and resume in various forms. The Leadership Team continue to review what services areas could reopen and in what form as the current lockdown is eased by the Welsh Government.

The reopening of premises and resuming of services is subject to a risk assessment and safe system of work by service area managers to ensure the safety of staff and others. This assessment not only needs to consider the risks associated with the covid-19 virus, but also other risks, including, most notably, legionella where water systems have been out of use for a prolonged period.

Health and Safety Officers can support building and service Managers with developing their risk assessment on request. However, as a starting point, template risk assessments are available from the Covid-19 topic page of the health and safety portal of the intranet to assist, available at- <http://sc-aptdken1/KENTICO/Departments/HR/Health-Safety/Topics/Covid-19.aspx>

All services should have a covid-19 risk assessment or include covid-19 in their general service health and safety risk assessment.

It is essential that all staff follow official guidelines applicable to Wales on managing the health risks associated with their work activities. This varies from England, Scotland and Ireland.

The most up to date position for Wales may be found from the Welsh Government website:- <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

Currently the official position throughout Wales in relation to work is:-

- Stay at home if you or anyone you live with has symptoms (see overleaf)
- Work from home if you can
- Take all reasonable measures to ensure that a distance of at least 2 metres is maintained between persons on the premises (unless the persons are members of the same household or are a carer for the person being cared for; or aged under 11 years).
- Wash your hands regularly
- Be aware that you can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

What to do if you or someone you live with develop symptoms.

The national advice is to not leave home if you or someone you live with has:

- A high temperature - feeling hot to touch on chest or back (taking a temperature is not necessary)
- A new, continuous cough - coughing a lot for more than an hour, or more than 3 episodes in 24 hours, or noticeably worse for those already with a regular cough from other causes
- New loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

You and anyone in your household should self-isolate, in line with Government advice available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Staff should notify their line manager of their need to self-isolate, and book a test for coronavirus - <https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-test>

How can I stay safe in the workplace?

If you are unable to work from home, and are well, then you must adhere to the measures identified by risk assessments and follow the control measures and safe working arrangements which incorporate social distancing requirements in the workplace and the service provision. This should ensure that employees will be far less likely to be required to self-isolate should an individual that you worked with tests positive for covid-19 within the following 2 weeks.

In general, the requirements for all employees are as follows (unless deemed otherwise by a specific risk assessment):-

- Stay at least 2 metres away from other people wherever possible. This should entail continued working from home where possible, or in accordance with the building or resuming services risk assessment. Suitable risk-control measures to achieve this include staggering work days in the office with colleagues that usually sit beside or opposite you, use of lifts by one person at a time, and 'one way' movement systems around the workplace supported by appropriate directional and 2m distancing signage etc. Note - this no longer applies to children aged under 11 years.
- Wear a 3 layer face covering where 2m social distancing cannot be consistently maintained - Welsh Government guidance on using a face covering safely may be found on their website <https://gov.wales/face-coverings-frequently-asked-questions>
- Staff required to travel for work purposes should do so in separate vehicles where possible, unless the size of vehicle enables 2 metre separation (e.g. a bus), or subject to a specific risk assessment. Where more than 1 person travels in the same vehicle a window should be opened slightly to maintain good ventilation, but closed upon arrival at site. Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on working in vehicles may be found on the HSE's website https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/social-distancing/index.htm#using_vehicles
- Wash hands and wrists on arrival at any workplace, upon leaving and on arrival back home or going elsewhere. Handwashing is much more effective if done using soap and running water for at least 20 seconds on each occasion where facilities exist, and hands dried thoroughly to reduce the risk of skin dryness and dermatitis.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol designed to be rubbed into hands until dry if soap and running water are not available, or to supplement handwashing in higher risk settings. However, use of a sanitiser gel should not be considered as a substitute for handwashing with soap and water where facilities exist. Hand sanitiser provided must not be moved from its location – this is to ensure it is available to all and replenished when nearly empty and reduce the risk of arson.
- Avoid touching surfaces where possible. For example, use a foot to gently push open a door rather than by hand, or new innovations that enable doors to be pulled open using an arm rather than hand lever. Although some doors designated as fire doors must remain closed at all times except for access to prevent fire and smoke spread (unless connected to a device that causes them to self-close on activation of the fire alarm), all other doors may be held open.
- Avoid touching any area of the face, as much as possible, particularly around the eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Carry tissues and use them to catch coughs or sneezes, then throw the tissue into a bin – “Catch It, Bin It, Kill It”.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.
- If you feel unwell, stay at home and do not attend work.
- If you are displaying any covid-19 symptoms book a test for coronavirus – online at <https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-test>, or by calling 119 between the hours of 7am to 11pm. People with hearing or speech difficulties can call 18001 119. Call NHS Direct Wales on 08 45 46 47 (or 111 if available in your local area), or 999 for an ambulance if symptoms become unbearable.

What to do if you or someone at a workplace setting develops symptoms

The main symptoms typically suffered by those infected with Covid-19 are:-

- A high temperature - feeling hot to touch on chest or back (taking a temperature is not necessary)
- A new, continuous cough - coughing a lot for more than an hour, or more than 3 episodes in 24 hours, or noticeably worse for those already with a regular cough from other causes
- New loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

The unwell individual should immediately go home and the workstation and areas used by the symptomatic person should be cleaned in line with the government guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

Some work settings have been provided with masks for use only by staff having to remain in a designated isolation room with a vulnerable person (e.g. young child) and unable to maintain 2m social distancing while awaiting their collection by family member or ambulance service, or first aiders required to administer first aid to a person with symptoms of Covid-19. Such masks are in short supply and must only be used for this purpose. Where possible, support should be provided from a distance of 2m or more, and injured persons should be guided by the first aider to self-administer first aid where possible.

All well persons who were present in the same room should immediately wash their hands in line with the advice above, and occupy another room. Such persons (or parent/guardian thereof) may be contacted by the Welsh Government's "*Test, Trace, Protect*" service, and advised to self-isolate.

Face masks and personal protective equipment (PPE)

Public Health Wales do not recommend the use of facemasks except in clinical or care settings where healthcare workers provide direct care for patients with COVID-19.

Staff working in personal care settings that are required to work within 2 metres of a resident/service user should wear a fluid repellent surgical mask. Eye protection may also be required depending on the risk.

Masks should be worn for care sessions as opposed to shifts. This applies regardless of whether assisting someone with symptoms of Covid-19 infection or not. Healthcare workers should be provided with information on where and how to fit and replace them, and how to safely don and remove a face mask safely. Guidance is available from:-

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/information-for-healthcare-workers-in-wales/advice-on-ppe-guidance-implementation> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-use-for-non-aerosol-generating-procedures>

A short NHS training video clip regarding the safe and correct fitting of surgical masks is available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GncQ_ed-9w

Most CCBC employees are unlikely to be exposed to the same level of risk, and thus not required to wear a face mask for work. However, where an employee would usually be expected to wear respiratory protection as part of their normal job (e.g. dust exposure) then they must continue to do so.

A limited number of face masks have been issued to some CCBC settings for staff to wear in specific circumstances - as a precautionary measure if required to remain in an isolation room with a vulnerable individual with suspected symptoms; or to administer first aid to an individual who has suspected symptoms.

Guidance regarding appropriate PPE for various essential workers may be found from the Health and Safety Division's new Covid-19 topic intranet page: -

<http://sc-aptdken1/KENTICO/Departments/HR/Health-Safety/Topics/Covid-19.aspx>

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have issued a safety alert about the poor quality of face masks claiming to be meeting the KN95 standard. This alert may be found on the HSE website <https://www.hse.gov.uk/safetybulletins/use-of-face-masks-designated-kn95.htm>

Care must be taken to ensure face masks purchased meet the minimum safety standard and purchased from a reliable source,

Face coverings

Face coverings are very different from face masks, and are not considered as PPE, so wearing a face covering is optional and is not required by law, except on public transport or taxis (the law differs elsewhere in the UK). Wearing of face coverings is recommended in circumstances where it may be difficult to stay 2 metres apart from others.

Social distancing, regular handwashing (or use of hand sanitiser gel) and good respiratory hygiene (coughing/sneezing into a tissue that is then placed into the bin) remain the most effective controls.

Employees who choose to wear a face covering should ensure they use it properly and wash their hands before putting them on and taking them off to avoid potentially transferring the virus from a contaminated surface onto the face covering.

Temperature checking of staff and visitors

Temperature checking is complex in terms of legalities and unless this has been signed off by a Head of Service and had been approved by the Trade Unions it is advised against. Thermometers are not generally reliable.

Anyone who feels unwell and/or has potential covid-19 symptoms is required to stay at home and self-isolate and arrange to be tested for covid-19

Alcohol-based hand sanitiser – fire and eye irritation risk.

A separate Health and Safety Bulletin has been issued regarding the potential arson and rapid fire development risk associated with the storing of alcohol-based hand sanitiser. Building and Service Managers must ensure the required actions in the Bulletin are addressed and communicated to all employees.

Alcohol-based hand sanitiser can cause serious eye irritation if in direct contact with the eye. This could occur from a splash, but most likely from rubbing the eye area with a hand shortly after applying sanitiser liquid / gel.

Vulnerable persons should be supervised with applying hand sanitiser to ensure only a suitable quantity is applied, and it is rubbed into all areas of the hand until dry.

If sanitiser gets into the eye, the affected eye(s) should be rinsed with sterile or fresh water for several minutes. Contact lenses should be removed where possible if worn on the affected eye(s.) Medical attention should be sought if eye irritation persists after several minutes of flushing.

Homeworking – use of display screen equipment (DSE)

Staff using IT equipment in order to work from home should:-

- take regular breaks (at least every hour) to adjust position and reduce the risk of back and joint pain. Where possible, regularly adjust between sitting and standing (e.g. sit to type, stand to talk).
- If available, use an adjustable 'office' style chair on castors.
- Conduct a self-assessment of their workstation and use of DSE and inform their line manager of the outcome,
- Speak to their line manager to discuss and arrange transferring equipment from their office to home, as identified from their DSE workstation and use self-assessment. For example, staff may be permitted to take an office chair, mouse, screen, keyboard etc home

A short video from the Health and Safety Executive on how to minimise the risk may be found at <https://youtu.be/Af7q5j14muc>

A form to enable self-assessment of a computer workstation may be found on the intranet at <http://sc-aptdken1/KENTICO/Departments/HR/Health-Safety/Forms/DSE-Assessment-Form.aspx>

Mental health and wellbeing

New UK Government guidance for anyone struggling with their mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, with links for online support may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-to-support-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

Specific advice for parents and carers on looking after the mental health and wellbeing of children or young people during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak may also be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

Staff can access 'Care First's' resources for advice on coping with covid-19 related issues from their website www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk

Username: ccbc001

Password: ncil1234

To minimise staff isolation, maintain regular contact with colleagues.

New UK Government guidance for anyone struggling with their mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, with links for online support may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-to-support-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

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Social media posts and recirculating of misinformation

All employees are reminded of their obligations under the Council's Social Media Policy regarding any social media posts. Particular care should be given to the spreading of mis-information and posts that may cause unnecessary increased anxiety to recipients.

Further information and support

CCBC have a dedicated Covid-19 coronavirus topic page providing information, advice and support for employees at all levels that will be kept under regular review –

<http://sc-aptdken1/KENTICO/Departments/HR/Health-Safety/Topics/Covid-19.aspx>

This provides guidance, support and links to further resources on a range of issues, including:-

- Template risk assessments for reopening of premises suddenly closed, resuming of services due to the pandemic, and shared use of CCBC vehicles. These templates are designed to be modified to suit service area needs and individual premises, and may be used to supplement rather than replace existing risk assessments already in place.
- New signage and posters to communicate and reinforce covid-19 related safeguards.
- Guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE) for those not working within care homes, supported living or providing personal care (Social Services have separate guidance).
- National guidance regarding appropriate PPE for those providing personal care in a range of medical and non-medical settings
- Guidance for those temporarily working from home, and line managing staff working from home, including a useful video on minimising the risk associated with the temporary use of display screen equipment at home.
- Coping with anxiety and concerns associated with the pandemic – sources for advice and support.

Staff without access to the IT network to access the intranet may find the above information on a newly created page of the CCBC internet using their home PC or smartphone at:

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Covid-19/Care-first-coping-with-Covid-19/Health-and-safety>

Further information and health and safety advice regarding the reopening of CCBC premises, returning to work, agile working and other work-related queries can be obtained from Health and Safety Officers of CCBC's Health and Safety Division – Tel. 01443 86 4072,

or e-mail:- healthandsafety@caerphilly.gov.uk

We will endeavour to respond to e-mail enquiries as quickly as possible, but a delay may be inevitable during this challenging time and constantly developing situation to enable us to consider what official guidance is available.