Hands, Space, Face and AIR, AIR, AIR!

Are all the routes of Covid-19 transmission being controlled?

CONTINUE TO WORK REMOTELY IF POSSIBLE

INCREASE VENTILATION IN ALL AREAS

- Ensure an audit has been carried out in all rooms and spaces to review ventilation
- Improve ventilation to a minimum of CIBSE standards
- Any room not ventilated sufficiently by natural or mechanical ventilation must be closed unless there is single use
- Use CO_2 monitors as a proxy measure of air quality

All risk assessments must be reviewed before anyone returns to a workplace that has been shut for any length of time, periodically to ensure they are still valid and also when new information becomes available which may impact on the risk assessment – change in community rate, new more transmissible variants start to circulate, change in work activity or number of people allowed to mix.

PPE vs Face Coverings

Where PPE is necessary to control a residual risk of infection, it must be at a precautionary standard

FFP2 is the minimum acceptable standard of PPE (surgical masks or visors are not PPE), FFP3 for those in high risk areas or working in close contact with others and PPE must be provided and maintained free by the employer

Face coverings are not PPE but the Govt have made them compulsory in many indoor settings. They should be at WHO/ BSI standard

INDIVIDUAL RISK ASSESSMENTS

Individual Risk Assessments must be available for anyone with additional individual risks. As a minimum – young people, pregnant and child bearing aged women, people with underlying health risks or disabilities or whose jobs put them at greater risk

Covid-19

Controlling risks in the workplace

Covid-19 is a serious infectious disease, which has killed more than 150,000 people in the UK and left hundreds of thousands left with long term mental and physical ill health and disabilities.

If you are being asked to return to the office for the first time since the pandemic began or have been working throughout the pandemic in the workplace, then it is important that your employer assesses the risks in the workplace.

If your employer refuses to control the transmission risks then if possible, exhaust internal procedures first, and report it to the Health and Safety Enforcement authorities – Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities.
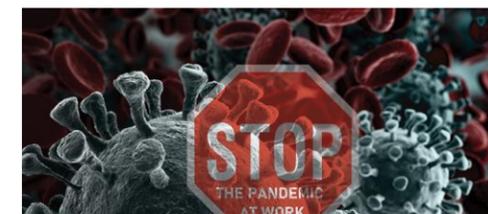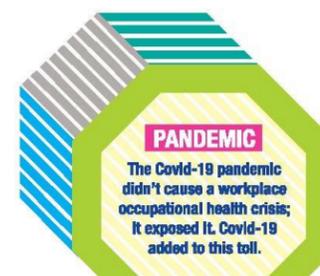
HAZARDS CAMPAIGN

GMHC
70 Alexandra Road
Manchester
M16 7WD
mail@gmhazards.org.uk

07734 317158

https://gmhazards.org.uk/

PANDEMIC
The Covid-19 pandemic didn't cause a workplace occupational health crisis; it exposed it. Covid-19 added to this toll.

STOP THE PANDEMIC AT WORK

HAZARDS CAMPAIGN

What we know about Covid-19 (all variants up to date)

Even with high levels of vaccination, or testing being done, the virus is still circulating in the community. It is still deadly for many and leaves many more with long term ill health and disabilities. Many people are not eligible for the vaccine yet and others may never be able to have it because of health conditions.

People who are **vaccinated** are still a risk of catching and spreading the virus, just as people who are asymptomatic, or have hardly any symptoms when they are infected. People of any age can be infectious with a high viral load, even children.

If the **virus continues to circulate and mutate**, there is a danger of more deadly and more transmissible variants emerging. This means that workplaces (including public transport, shops, schools etc) must control the transmission risks from their work activities. And test, trace and isolate with support is essential to restrict community transmission.

Transmission of Covid-19 occurs mainly by aerosols, but also by large droplet spread, direct and indirect contact on surfaces. This means that when someone is infectious and breaths out, the virus circulates in the air(more than 2 metres), or when they cough or sneeze then large droplets are emitted from their mouth or nose, or via their hands when they touch their own mouth, nose or eyes, or spray on someone else or a surface and others touch it.

Controlling the **transmission of Covid-19**, will stop others being infected. In a workplace or working environment employers have a legal duty to control all risks by 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments.

This means controlling the risk of transmission by using a **control hierarchy** approach, which is a legal duty on employers to implement. See below for the appropriate laws.

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences (RIDDOR)
- Personal protective equipment at Work Regulations 1998
- Safety Reps and Safety Committees Regulations 1977

Risk Assessments must be carried out by a 'competent' person and must be 'suitable and sufficient'

What should happen in workplaces?

Employers have a legal duty to assess and control all risks (**suitable and sufficient risk assessment carried out by a 'competent' person**) to peoples mental or physical health by work activities – in a workplace or by the work activity in another place. They do this by:

1.   Identifying the risks

2.   Deciding who may be harmed and how

3.   Assessing how the risks can be removed or reduced to a negligible risk by controlling it using a control hierarchical approach

4.   Using the Control Hierarchy approach to Risk of Transmission of the Virus – see above

5.   Recording and communicating the controls that have been put in place

Links to more information:

www.hse.gov.uk

www.hazardscampaign.org.uk

www.gmhazards.org.uk

www.hazards.org

hazard.org/infections/venting

A control hierarchy approach

Risk Assessments must be reviewed periodically or when something changes. If there is risk of transmission because of the work activity, does the work activity need to continue? If not then stop doing it! – this will eliminate the risk of transmission. If the work activity needs to continue then,

1. Can it be done in a different way to remove the risk? This could be by remote working or using online facilities, meetings, teaching etc. – this will remove the risk of transmission. If this cannot be done then, introduce mitigation using a combination of controls including:
2. Engineering controls – increase/introduce ventilation to remove or dilute the virus from the air. This must be controlled properly and calculated using measurements, monitors and recorded. In some environments like buses it could be by providing sealed units for the drivers. Also introduce,
3. Administrative controls – less people in the space for less time, one way systems around buildings, 2 metre minimum physical distancing, increased cleaning, improved hygiene, use of source control masks for school children and public and finally
4. PPE – at a precautionary level (FFP2 minimum and FFP3 for close contact or high risk areas)

Assess all activities and not just Covid related

A risk assessment must be carried out for all work activities, controls put in place using the control hierarchy approach and recorded and communicated to all staff.

What Safety reps can do in the workplace

Trade Union Safety Reps have additional rights and functions through the Safety Reps and Safety Committee Regulations. This means that employers must consult them on health and safety issues. Safety reps have the right to carry out inspections, investigations, receive information from the employer and the enforcement inspectors. They have the right to be consulted on health and safety issues, including Risk Assessments, sickness and absence information.