



## Introduction

This Briefing Note applies to those working in or visiting home environments. These include, but are not limited to, home workers – such as repair services, fitters, meter readers, plumbers, cleaners, cooks, visiting childcare providers, and surveyors (this is not an exhaustive list).

Employers have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a hazard in the workplace and, as such, should be managed in the same way as other workplace hazards. This includes completing a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace and identifying control measures to manage that risk.



## Steps that will usually be needed when working in homes

1. No work should be carried out in a household which is isolating because one or more family members has symptoms or where an individual has been advised to shield - unless it is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household or to the public.
2. When working in a household where somebody is clinically vulnerable, but has not been asked to shield, for example, the home of someone over 70, prior arrangements should be made with vulnerable people to avoid any face-to-face contact, for example, when answering the door. You should be particularly strict about handwashing, coughing and sneezing hygiene, such as covering your nose and mouth and disposing of single-use tissues.
3. Staying updated with the latest guidance and considering how it can be applied to your work. This can include:
  - a) washing your hands more often than usual for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose
  - b) reducing the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue and throw the tissue in a bin immediately, then wash your hands
  - c) cleaning regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people
  - d) communicating with households prior to any visit to discuss how the work will be carried out to minimise risk for all parties
  - e) maintaining social distancing guidelines (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable) as far as possible.



## Social Distancing

### Coming to and leaving a home for work

1. Considering travelling to sites alone using your own transport, where insurance allows.
2. If workers have no option but to travel together, for example delivery teams, the following should be encouraged:

- a) arranging for journeys should be with the same individuals and limiting the number of people travelling per vehicle
- b) maintaining good ventilation, for example, keeping windows open and passengers facing away from one another to reduce risk of transmission
- c) cleaning vehicles regularly using gloves and standard cleaning products, with emphasis on handles and other areas where passengers may touch surfaces
- d) employers or agencies matching workers to households local to them, where possible, to minimise transportation
- e) washing hands on arrival and maintaining social distancing when entering the home

### **Moving around when working in a home**

1. Discussing with households ahead of a visit to ask that social distancing guidelines (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable) are maintained between workers and householders, if possible.
2. Asking that households leave all internal doors open to minimise contact with door handles.
3. Identifying busy areas across the household where people travel to, from or through, for example, stairs and corridors, and minimising movement within these areas.
4. Bringing your own food and drink to households and having breaks outside where possible.
5. Limiting the number of workers within a confined space to maintain social distancing.
6. Using a fixed pairing system if workers have to be in close proximity. For example, during 2-person assembly or maintenance.
7. Allocating the same workers to a household where jobs are repetitive. Employers and agencies should introduce fixed pairing to have the same individuals allocated to a household where jobs are repetitive in nature.

### **Interacting with householders**

1. If you are an employer or agency, providing your workers with information about how to operate safely in people's homes.
2. Communicating with households prior to arrival, and on arrival, to ensure the household understands the social distancing and hygiene measures that should be followed once work has commenced.

### **Cleaning the work area**



1. Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your usual cleaning products.
2. Arranging methods of safely disposing waste with the householder.
3. Removing all waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift and at the end of a job.
4. If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of coronavirus then you should refer to the specific guidance.
5. Maintaining good ventilation in the work environment. Read advice on air-conditioning and ventilation from the HSE.
6. Using non recycling bins to dispose of single use face coverings and PPE.



## Hygiene

1. Washing your hands more often than usual for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose.
2. Reducing the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve, not your hands. Throw the tissue in a bin immediately, then wash your hands.
3. Cleaning regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.
4. If handwashing facilities are not accessible, you should carry hand sanitiser.



## Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.

COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE.

Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

Unless you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, your risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited. However, if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then you must provide this PPE free of charge to workers who need it. Any PPE provided must fit properly.

### Face coverings

Face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk, including minimising time spent in contact, using fixed teams and partnering for close-up work, and increasing hand and surface washing. These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk in the workplace and government would therefore not expect to see employers relying on face coverings as risk management for the purpose of their health and safety assessments.

Face coverings are mandatory on public transport and in a number of indoor premises.

People are also encouraged to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces where there are people they do not normally meet. If you choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and before and after taking them off.

### Find further detail on when and where to wear face coverings.

Some people don't have to wear a face covering including for health, age or equality reasons. Employers should support their workers in using face coverings safely if they choose to wear one. This means telling workers:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and before and after removing it

- when wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands
- change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it
- continue to wash your hands regularly
- change and wash your face covering daily
- if the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste
- practise social distancing wherever possible

Please be mindful that the wearing of a face covering may inhibit communication with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound.

You can make face-coverings at home. Find guidance on how to wear and make a face-covering on GOV.UK.



At William Martin Compliance we have a nationwide team of experts who offer a comprehensive range of health and safety compliance services.

For all enquiries please contact us: [enquiries@wmcompliance.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@wmcompliance.co.uk)

or call our team on 0203 819 8829

[wmcompliance.co.uk](http://wmcompliance.co.uk)

[wmcompliance.co.uk](http://wmcompliance.co.uk)