

Unite Guide Coronavirus COVID-19 Officers & Representatives

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This guide is for officers and reps and represents the current situation at time of writing, and will be updated on a regular basis.

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Information about the virus

A coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common across the world. Typical symptoms of coronavirus include fever and a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China.

Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease. The current evidence is that most cases appear to be mild. Those who have died in Wuhan appear to have had pre-existing health conditions. The UK is now one of the first countries outside China to have a prototype specific laboratory test for this new disease.

How does it spread?

The main way the virus spreads is by contamination when someone carrying the virus coughs or sneezes. Viruses can also spread through particles known as aerosols, released from the lungs. These can travel further and can remain in the air or on surfaces for several hours.

The [NHS website](#) has more information about how coronavirus is spread and answers [common questions about the virus](#).

Risk level

As of 11 March, the World Health Organisation has defined the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic. The UK Chief Medical Officers are continuing to assess the situation in the UK on a regular basis which is fast evolving. [Government daily updates:](#) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>

What is a 'pandemic'?

A pandemic is an outbreak that affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, leading to a large proportion of them becoming ill. Pandemics occur when a virus with very different features emerges. Because it is new, people have little or no immunity. Normally there are around two or three such pandemics every century. The most recent was in 2009 with the H1N1 virus, commonly referred to as 'swine flu'.

Health and Safety Requirements

There is a primary duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA) together with associated legislation for employers to protect the health safety and welfare of their workforce and others affected by their operations. The duty applies in common law to take reasonable care for the health and safety of the workforce.

Specific legislation applying to infectious micro-organisms/biological agents, of which COVID 19 is a group, is the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)

Risk Assessments for COV-19 under COSHH

The Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens ACDP has an approved list of biological agents. The Approved List provides the approved classification of biological agents as referred to in COSHH. COVID-19 is a new virus, however previous coronaviruses such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), a previously unlisted virus, have now been listed and classified. [The Approved List of biological agents - HSE](#)

COSHH Assessment in Practice

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/infection.pdf>

- **Assess the risks to health:** We know that this varies. Current findings from researchers at China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention on more than 72,000 COVID-19 cases shows a fatality rate of 2.3%. However, most cases were mild, but the disease hits the elderly and vulnerable the hardest, such as those with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory conditions based on [clinical findings](#).
 - **Assess who are most at risk of exposure:** Depends on the type of work being performed and exposure risk, including potential for interaction with infectious people and contamination of the work environment. Different jobs will carry a higher risk of being exposed to the virus such as front line staff in health, at airports, education, prisons and frequent travellers. The government has issued advice for different front line sectors can be found here for both non-clinical settings and for health professionals: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance#guidance-for-non-clinical-settings>

In most circumstances the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 24 hours.

- **Prevent or adequately control exposure and decide what precautions are needed:**
There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. **The best way to prevent infection is to reduce the risk of being exposed to the virus.**

Measures for protecting workers from exposure depend on the risk of exposure. For example, health care workers exposed to confirmed cases will need PPE such as face masks designed for protection against virus, full face visor, gloves and so on. **Employers should adapt infection control strategies based on results of the risk assessment.**

Therefore depending on the risks identified as above appropriate combinations of engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE) should be deployed to prevent worker exposures. **It is very important that worker receive appropriate training on all aspects of control measures identified from the assessment.**

For all workers, regardless of specific exposure risks, the recommendations remain:

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol. [Hand washing guidance](#)
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.**
- **Try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell**
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces**
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze. See [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it](#)**
- **Put used tissues in the bin straight away**

Action for Officers and Reps: Ensure employers are providing facilities for washing, soap and hand sanitisers when needed. Also appropriate training, instructions and signage.

Identify and Isolate Suspected Cases

- In all workplaces where exposure to the COVID-19 may occur, prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a critical first step in protecting workers, visitors, and others at the worksite.
- Immediately isolate people suspected of having COVID-19. For example, move potentially infectious people to isolation rooms and close the doors. On an aircraft, move potentially infectious people to seats away from passengers and crew, if possible and without compromising aviation safety. In other worksites, move potentially infectious people to a location away from workers, customers, and other visitors.
- Take steps to limit spread of the person's infectious respiratory secretions including by providing them a facemask and asking them to wear it, if they can tolerate that.
- **Note: A surgical mask on a patient or other sick person should not be confused with PPE for a worker. The mask acts to contain potentially infectious respiratory secretions at the source (i.e., the person's nose and mouth).**

- If possible, isolate people suspected of having COVID-19 separately from those with confirmed cases of the virus to prevent further transmission, including in screening, triage, or healthcare facilities.
- Restrict the number of personnel entering isolation areas, including the room of a patient with suspected/confirmed COVID-19.
- Protect workers in close contact* with the sick person by using additional engineering and administrative control, safe work practices and PPE.

***Close contact is defined as being about six (6) feet (approximately two (2) metres) from an infected person, or within the room or care area of an infected patient or first line responders for a prolonged period.** Close contact also includes instances where there is direct contact with infectious secretions. Close contact generally does not include brief interactions.

- Ensure that control measures are used and maintained properly and that safety procedures are followed.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Where a risk assessment has identified using PPE, use and dispose of all PPE according to the instructions and training provided by your employer or organisation. An outline of appropriate PPE is as follows:

- Disposable gloves and fluid repellent
- Surgical face mask or where identified by the assessment respirators, for example: Half masks (reusable) with P3 filter or FFP3 (disposable) or full face mask P3 filter
- Eye protection such as face visor or goggles
- Disposable plastic apron and should be worn
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before putting on and after taking off PPE.

Guidance from the World Health Organisation (WHO) on the [Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Respiratory Protection HSE: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/respiratory-protective-equipment/>

Union representatives need to be consulted on every part of the process, including when guidance is being put together. This is a legal requirement in regards union Health and Safety Representatives under the Safety Representatives Safety Committees Regulations 77.

ACTION FOR REPS AND OFFICERS: Ask for a current up to date risk assessment and all procedures for protection of workers. In the changing climate we are in, with the virus spreading, this should be reviewed regularly. Ensure consultation is taking place including production of guidance and around risk assessments Challenge if this is not taking place.

Should people wear face masks to protect themselves from infection?

Face masks play a very important role in clinical settings, such as hospitals but there's very little evidence of widespread benefit from their use outside of these clinical settings. **(Not to be confused as part of Identified PPE as above)** Facemasks must be worn correctly, changed frequently, removed properly and disposed of safely in order to be effective.

Where selected as part of protective measures, the standard of face masks / Respiratory Protective equipment (RPE) must have appropriate filter and be face fitted. The HSE guidance on RPE recommends that for biological hazards, to use the highest efficiency filter possible to control exposure down to the highest level. That can be achieved by using either FFP3 disposable mask (min) or a full/half mask with P3 filter. CE certification is required.

HSE guide RPE selection and face fitting: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg53.htm>

FFP3 is a minimum standard. The best way to protect ourselves from infections, including the COVID 19 virus is to follow hygiene protocols described elsewhere in this guide. For example wash our hands frequently with soap and water or use a sanitiser gel, as well as always carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes, then putting the tissue in a bin.

[When and how to use masks - World Health Organization](#)

TRAVEL

Returning to the UK from affected areas

As of the 13 March 2020 guidance around returning from specified countries and areas, and information on the actions that these individuals should follow on returning to the UK and if they develop symptoms has been withdrawn. As this is fast moving please see further updates in the link here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Travel to affected areas

Employers should be undertaking risk assessments in order to establish whether international travel is necessary in a given situation. Also organisations should manage and offer appropriate support to any employees stranded abroad, whether that is through cancelled flights, restriction's in that country, or medical reasons.

See Gov advice on travel: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Travel Restrictions

Exceptional travel advisory notice

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) advises British people against all non-essential travel worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented international border closures and other restrictions. All countries may restrict travel without notice.

The FCO was already advising against all but essential travel or all travel to some areas or countries due to risks that do not relate to COVID-19. This advice remains in place. Check [FCO travel advice pages](#) for the latest information

For more information: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

People with confirmed or possible Coronavirus (COVID – 19) Infection Circumstances for Self-Isolation/Staying at home.

Following the Prime Minister's recent statement, the Government has issued new guidance:
COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

This guidance is intended for:

- People with symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus, and do not require hospital treatment, who must remain at home until they are well
- Those living in households with someone who shows symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus

The main messages are:

- If you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for **7 days** from when your symptoms started. (See [ending isolation](#) section for more information)
- If you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for **14 days**. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill
- It is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community
- For anyone in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14-day isolation period. (See [ending isolation](#) section for more information)

- If you can, move any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) out of your home, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period
- if you cannot move vulnerable people out of your home, stay away from them as much as possible
- if you have coronavirus symptoms:
 - Do **not** go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital
 - You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home
 - Testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home
- Plan ahead and ask others for help to ensure that you can successfully stay at home and consider what can be done for vulnerable people in the household
- Ask your employer, friends and family to help you to get the things you need to stay at home
- Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or use hand sanitiser
- If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the [NHS 111 online](#) coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999

England and Wales call 111

Scotland: call your GP or NHS 24 on 111 out of hours

Northern Ireland call 0300 200 7885

Republic of Ireland: GP, phone 112 or 999

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild infection.

Measures Announced by Government 16 March 2020

- Ensure that those who contact with a member of their household who had symptoms of the virus should stay home for 14 days.
- Non-essential contact with others would be curtailed.
- People to start working from home as soon as possible
- Social venues such as clubs, restaurant and pubs should no longer be visited. This was especially important for those who were pregnant, older and vulnerable.

- By this weekend 20 March 2020. Those who had were most vulnerable should be “shielded” for up to 12 weeks.
- Londoners should avoid non-essential social gatherings and called for those who could to work from home.
- Sporting events mass gatherings would no longer receive the support of emergency services.

See following links for latest update

PM Statement 16 March

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-16-march-2020>

UK Government Response Contains various pieces of government guidance from travel to requirements vulnerable people:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Specialised industry guidance

The government has published new and updated guidance 16 March 2020 to provide affected sectors with the latest advice on managing the threat from COVID-19. The Public Health England (PHE) guidance provides important information for specific sectors, including schools and transport, on what precautions to take, what to do if someone develops symptoms and how to limit the spread of the virus.

The guidance will assist staff, employers and members of the public after the government last week shifted into the ‘delay’ phase of its [action plan](#) to slow the spread of the virus, reduce pressures on the NHS and protect the most vulnerable.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-updated-covid-19-industry-guidance>

Social distancing and protecting older and vulnerable people

Government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

Background and scope of guidance

It advises on social distancing measures we should all be taking to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures.

The group includes:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health conditions some examples are:
 - chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases
 - chronic heart disease
 - chronic kidney disease
 - chronic liver disease
 - chronic neurological conditions
 - diabetes
 - problems with your spleen for e.g. sickle cell
 - weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as [HIV and AIDS](#), or medicines such as [steroid tablets](#) or [chemotherapy](#)
- those who are pregnant

Social distancing examples:

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce the social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Such as:

- Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
- Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to [employer guidance](#) for more information
- Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

See Government guide for full information

ACTION FOR REPS AND OFFICERS It is advised to negotiate firm policies on self- isolation that include clear instructions employees should refrain from work in line with GOV/PHE advice. Ensure there are management procedures in place to protect vulnerable people in line with government guidance and the Equality Act 2010

Sick Pay

This is an important matter that will be worrying many of our members particularly around self-isolation. It is a vital negotiating issue for Officers and Reps.

Employees and Self-Employed People Statutory Sick pay and benefits

To make sure people in work can take the necessary time off to stay at home if they are suffering from coronavirus or to prevent its spread, changes have been made to Statutory Sick Pay. Universal Credit has also been changed to support self-employed claimants.

The changes include:

- People who cannot work due to coronavirus and are eligible for Statutory Sick Pay will get it from day one, rather than from the fourth day of their illness. Government intend to legislate so this measure applies retrospectively from 13 March 2020
- Statutory Sick Pay will be payable to people who are staying at home on government advice, not just those who are infected, from 13 March 2020 after regulations were laid on 12 March 2020 – employers are urged to use their discretion about what evidence, if any, they ask for
- If employees need to provide evidence to their employer that they need to stay at home due to coronavirus, they will be able to get it from the NHS 111 Online instead of having to get a fit note from their doctor – this is currently under development and will be made available soon
- Self-employed claimants on Universal Credit who are required to stay at home or are ill as a result of coronavirus will not have a Minimum Income Floor (an assumed level of income) applied for a period of time while affected.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-support-for-employees-benefit-claimants-and-businesses>

Statutory Sick Pay will be made available from day one when self-isolating, instead of day four. The details were published on the 4th March by the Department of Works and Pensions and the Prime Minister. [Sick pay from day one for those affected by coronavirus - Gov.uk](#)

This move will form part of emergency legislation measures from the Government. The change is certain to be a temporary measure in response to the outbreak and will lapse when it is no longer required. However a good time to push for this to become a permanent feature.

Groups that are not entitled to Statutory Sick Pay

There will be workers who will not be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay, usually those most vulnerable, on zero hours contracts and self-employed. The options open to those groups are not satisfactory, and that has always been the case a situation trade unions are fighting to change. The range of support currently in place for those who do not receive Statutory Sick Pay, includes Universal Credit and contributory Employment and Support Allowance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/face-to-face-health-assessments-for-benefits-suspended-amid-coronavirus-outbreak>

Contractual / Sick Pay if someone has to go into self- isolation

When addressing the House of Commons on 26.02.20, the secretary of state for health Matt Hancock MP said ***“Self-isolation on medical advice is considered sickness for employment purposes.”***

Public Health England is advising people to self-isolate in the circumstances set out in the section previous in this guide “Close Contact with an Infected Person and Returning Travellers Circumstances for to Self – Isolation”, however this constitutes guidance.

Considering the statement from government and the advice from PHE guidance on self-isolations seems quite straight forward. However, circumstances differ depending on whether the individual has symptoms and or is asymptomatic.

Self- Isolation with Symptoms

In the case of an employee who self-isolates because they have developed the symptoms of COVID-19, then they will be entitled to whatever sick pay is payable under their contract of employment (although this will not always result in the maintenance of normal pay during the full period of absence).

Self-Isolation without symptoms

It is by no means clear that an asymptomatic employee who self-isolates will have a contractual entitlement to receive sick pay. This will depend on how the employee’s contract of employment defines the right to sick pay.

Under many contracts of employment, an employee has no contractual right to sick pay unless they are incapable of work. Statutory Sick Pay is also payable only in respect of a period of ‘incapacity for work’.

Acas has produced guidance on this matter <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

This states:

“There’s no legal (‘statutory’) right to pay if someone is not sick but cannot work because ... they have been told by a medical expert to self-isolate”.

However, employers have a duty to protect the health safety and welfare of all employees and others affected by their business and a common law duty of care. It would then follow employers would be wise to treat self-isolation as sick leave because there will otherwise be a risk that employees will come to work in order to get paid, in which case they could spread the virus if they have it. ACAS recommends this as “good practice” in their guide.

An employer instructs the person to remain home

It is suggested that where an employer instructs an employee who would otherwise be capable of work to self-isolate for a specified period, the employee will be entitled to receive their normal pay for the duration of the self-isolation, because their absence from work then becomes a form of suspension.

The government could address this problem by introducing a statutory right to normal pay during any period of self-isolation recommended by PHE. However, robust policies need to be adopted by employers to firm up this situation, in order to protect the workers and public health.

ACTION FOR REPS AND OFFICERS

National and Local Agreements are key to secure adequate pay for our members during this pandemic. Negotiating COVID 19 associated elements into sick pay provision is essential. In general, negotiate firm policies and clear instructions from employers that sick pay will be paid in full when self-isolating in line with PHE recommendation.

Employee needs time off work to look after someone

Employees are entitled to time off work to help someone who depends on them (a 'dependant') in an unexpected event or emergency. This would apply to situations to do with coronavirus. For example, if they have children they need to look after or arrange childcare for because their school has closed, help their child or another dependant if they're sick, or need to go into isolation or hospital.

There's no statutory right to pay for this time off, but some employers might offer pay depending on the contract or workplace policy. The amount of time off an employee takes to look after someone must be reasonable for the situation.

Time off because your child's school is closed and the child has to self-isolate

Some schools have closed and the situation may get worse. Employees are able to take time off to help their dependents under the Employment Rights Act. This includes unexpected disruption to arrangements for care, where the dependent is ill, and an incident at school. However, there is no statutory right to pay in such circumstances.

Employees that do not want to go to work because they are worried about COVID-19

Some people might feel they do not want to go to work if they're afraid of catching coronavirus. An employer should listen to any concerns staff may have. If there are genuine concerns, the employer must try to resolve them to protect the health and safety of their staff. For example, if possible, the employer could offer flexible working. If an employee still does not want to go in, they may be able to arrange with their employer to take the time off as holiday or unpaid leave. The employer does not have to agree to this.

Vulnerable people

The WHO advises that people over 60 or those with underlying conditions such as respiratory diseases, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and those with compromised immunity have a higher risk of developing severe reaction to the virus, including possible death. Pregnant women will have a particular cause for concern.

Given the duty on the employer to provide a safe working environment and the recommendations from WHO on those groups, employers should be implanting clear advice around this matter.

Equality Act 2010

Disability

If an employee has a disability within the meaning of the Act and that disability results in a higher risk of developing severe COVID-19, such as those with a compromised immune system, reasonable adjustments will need to be implemented. This could be accommodated for example by working from home, paid leave and so on.

Discrimination

Since the outbreak reached the UK there have been reports of targeting people of south Asian origin, particularly from China and surrounding areas. Within a workplace environment, employers are liable for harassment and discrimination by their employees to fellow workers. They will need to take reasonable steps to prevent the workforce being exposed to such abuse and discrimination, and have equalities policies in place, appropriate training and ensure such behaviour is prevented.

ACTION FOR REPS and OFFICERS

Ensure equalities policies are in place. Consider negotiating paid leave for those who have dependents and need to take time off. Ensure employers are issuing current information and have regular briefings with staff.

Business Support Budget 11 March 2020

The recent Budget included key features are to provide support for public services, individuals and businesses to ensure the impact of COVID-19 is minimised.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19>

- A new Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, delivered by the British Business Bank, will enable businesses with a turnover of no more than £41 million to apply for a loan of up to £1.2 million, with the government covering up to 80% of any losses with no fees.
- For businesses with fewer than 250 employees, the cost of providing 14 days of statutory sick pay per employee will be refunded by the government in full.
- Businesses and self-employed individuals in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities receive support with their tax affairs.
- There will be a £3,000 cash grant to 700,000 of our smallest businesses, delivered by Local Authorities, and worth a total of £2 billion.
- Temporarily increasing the business rates retail discount in England to 100% for 2020-21 for properties below £51,000 rateable value. Nearly half of all business properties will not pay a penny of business rates.

Further useful Information

What to do if an employee or a member of the public becomes unwell and believe they have been exposed to COVID-19

The unwell person should be removed to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people. If possible find a room or area where they can be isolated behind a closed door, such as a staff office. If it is possible to open a window, do so for ventilation.

The individual who is unwell should call NHS 111 from their mobile for advice, if an emergency and they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk call 999. Please advise staff that current advice on having symptoms even if mild is to stay home for 7 days.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting for medical assistance, they should use a separate bathroom if available.

A member of staff or the public with suspected COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace

For contacts of a suspected case in the workplace, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for COVID19 are awaited. In particular, there is no need to close the workplace or send other staff home at this point. Most possible cases turn out to be negative. Therefore, until the outcome of test results is known there is no action that the workplace needs to take.

A member of staff or the public with confirmed COVID-19 has recently been in your workplace

The management team of the office or workplace will be contacted by the PHE local Health Protection Team to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and give advice on any actions or precautions that should be taken.

A risk assessment of each setting will be undertaken by the Health Protection Team with the lead responsible person. Advice on the management of staff and members of the public will be based on this assessment.

The Health Protection Team will also be in contact with the case directly to give advice on isolation and identifying other contacts and will be in touch with any contacts of the case to provide them with appropriate advice.

Advice on cleaning of communal areas such as offices or toilets will be given by [the Health Protection Team](#).

Individuals in the workplace have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19

If a confirmed case is identified in your workplace, the local Health Protection Team will provide the relevant staff with advice. These staff include:

- Any employee in close face-to-face or touching contact
- Talking with or being coughed on for any length of time while the employee was symptomatic
- Anyone who has cleaned up any bodily fluids
- Close friendship groups or workgroups
- Any employee living in the same household as a confirmed case

Contacts are not considered cases and if they are well they are very unlikely to have spread the infection to others.

Staff who have not had close contact with the original confirmed case do not need to take any precautions and can continue to attend work.

Handling post, packages or food from affected areas

Continue to follow existing risk assessments and safe systems of work, there is no perceived increase in risk for handling post or freight from specified areas.

Cleaning offices and public spaces where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

Coronavirus symptoms are similar to a flu-like illness and include cough, fever, or shortness of breath. Once symptomatic, all surfaces that the person has come into contact with must be cleaned including:

- all surfaces and objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids
- all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones

Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time in (such as corridors) but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected.

If a person becomes ill in a shared space, these should be cleaned using disposable cloths and household detergents, according to current recommended workplace legislation and practice.

Rubbish disposal, including tissues

All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, and masks if used, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It should be put in a safe place and marked for storage until the result is available. If the individual tests negative, this can be put in the normal waste.

Should the individual test positive, you will be instructed what to do with the waste.

ACTION FOR OFFICERS and REPS all the guidance in the further information section is based on recommendations from health authorities including the PHE. It is important that employers have in place written procedures for dealing with all the contingencies covered. That includes reasonable persons for liaising with the health protection team. Trained personnel in place who may have to act as first line responders and are provided with the relevant protection including PPE.

Officers and reps are advised to liaise with employers to ensure they have these processes in place. **Employers have a legal duty to consult with our health and safety representatives on all of these matters.** The Government links below contain information which is updated on a regular basis

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>

<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>