COVID -19: Guidance for Tourism & Hospitality Businesses

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Department for the
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Contents

SECTION 1: SCOPE, RISK ASSESSMENT AND USING THE GUIDANCE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Whilst Northern Ireland has relaxed legal Covid restrictions, it is important to recognise that the virus remains present and there are still risks, particularly to those who remain unvaccinated. Whilst current evidence suggests that the latest variant results in a milder form of the diseases for most people, nonetheless increasing and widespread community transmission could pose potential challenges for businesses in terms of potential impact on staff absence, as well as damage to customer confidence. It therefore remains prudent that businesses take practical steps to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

This guidance document is designed to help tourism and hospitality businesses in their decision-making on how to limit the spread of coronavirus. It is an extensive reference guide and should be read in conjunction with sectoral specific guidance listed within and considered and applied in line with official guidance.

This document has been prepared by the Department for the Economy and Tourism NI. It has been informed by the NI Tourism Recovery Working Group and consultation with Public Health Agency (PHA), the Health and Safety Executive NI (HSENI), key Executive Departments and District Councils.

This version is up to date as of 01/03/2022. You can check for updates at: www.tourismni.com.

1.2 WHAT BUSINESSES THIS GUIDANCE COVERS

Objective: To clarify what types of business are covered in this guidance document.

This document is designed for all businesses across the tourism and hospitality sector in Northern Ireland. This guidance is relevant for you if you are involved in any of the following, however the list is not exhaustive:

- Hospitality businesses serving food and drink (e.g. cafes, restaurants, bars)
- Businesses primarily offering accommodation with or without food service (e.g. hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, self-catering, hostels and caravan parks)
- Businesses that are primarily visitor attractions, both indoor and outdoor (e.g. museums, galleries, visitor experiences and parks)
- Events (e.g. wedding and other event businesses, conference centres, business meeting businesses, theatres, performing arts businesses or any other event)
- Businesses without a physical premises, such as activity providers.

1.3 HOW TO USE THIS GUIDANCE

Objective: To provide an overview to business owners or managers on how to use the guidance

This document sets out guidance focussed on the ongoing risks posed by COVID-19 and how to ensure that the businesses to which it applies work as safely as possible by putting controls in place to either eliminate those risks entirely or, at the very least, reduce them.
Each business should use this guidance to determine the practical steps it can take depending on the nature of their business, including the size and type of the business; and how it is organised, operated, and managed.

The following gives a guide for businesses as to what each section of the document deals with and assist businesses in determining which parts they should refer.

Section	Business Type
1: Scope, risk assessment and using this guidance	All businesses.
2: Reducing transmission risks	All businesses.
3: Customer and/or visitor safety	Businesses need to decide which headings within the section apply to them based on their premises and what they offer. For example, if the business does not provide overnight guest accommodation, then this heading will not apply.
4: Staff safety	Any businesses that employ staff, whether part time or full time, and whether paid or voluntary.
5: General cleaning and hygiene	All businesses.
6: Workforce management	Any businesses that employ staff.
7: Overarching safety and security arrangements	This section is relevant for any businesses that envisage queueing at their premises and/or normally provide door security.
8: This section provides the links to specific industry sectoral guidance	As appropriate.

It is vital to stress that a site-by-site approach is essential and the risk assessment for each premises will be unique. Therefore, this guidance should be used to translate to whatever areas are relevant to your business and any measures that are taken should fit appropriately with any operational needs.

This guidance does not supersede or replace any legal obligations relating, for example, to health and safety, wider public health requirements, noise issues, employment matters or duties under equalities legislation. It is important that as a business or an employer you continue to comply with your existing statutory obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics.

When considering how to apply this guidance, do not forget to consider agency workers, contractors and other people, as well as your employees.

In many instances in the tourism and hospitality sector, premises are let out to third party contractors and operators for specific usage. In such cases, whilst the premises remain under the direct control of the owner, the actual event or function is under the control of the event planner/organiser, and they too have a role to play.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the relevant guidance linked within the document.

1.4   COVID 19 RISK ASSESSMENT AND CONTROLS EXPLAINED

Objective: to explain why and how to carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment and implement effective controls.

Employers have a duty to ensure that the business is as safe as possible for everyone - staff, customers, and other visitors. In the context of COVID-19, it is strongly recommended that a Risk Assessment is carried out and then thought through and all possible controls to reduce the risk as far as is possible are implemented.

There is a useful template that you can use to base your risk assessment around at.
www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/example-covid-19-risk-assessment-template

As can be seen from this template, eliminating, or reducing risk(s) is all about effective controls. As with any infectious disease, there is a hierarchy of controls as set out by the World Health Organisation. For businesses, controls can be grouped under three broad categories, which reflect the ways in which the disease is transmitted and reduce the risk of such transmission.

These are as follows:

A: Controls that reduce the risk of direct transmission. Examples include:

- Ensuring adequate ventilation throughout the premises.
- Reducing person to person contact
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with
- Social distancing where possible
- Use of face coverings.
- Use of physical barriers to reduce droplet spread, for example screens.
- Reconfiguring work areas and/or customer seating to ensure no face-to-face orientation.

B: Controls that reduce the risk of indirect transmission. Examples include:

- Regular and effective handwashing.
- Adequate cleaning and disinfection of all areas.
- Use of PPE (gloves or other barriers).

Finally, there are some controls that reduce the risk of both direct and indirect transmission because these controls either reduce the number of people present at the venue, or make sure possible carriers do not visit.

C: Controls that reduce the risk of both direct and indirect transmission. Examples include:

- Workers and customers who test positive staying at home and not visiting the venue.
- Employees who can work from home doing so.
- Use of Covid Status Certification to control who enters premises or events. (Note. this was previously a legal requirement. It is no longer so).
- Controlling the number of people present at the business at any one time (staff and/or customers)

Throughout the remaining sections of this document, further details of controls broadly outlined above are provided in relation to all the aspects of businesses to which this guidance is designed to apply. Those who are completing the COVID-19 Risk Assessment should use this document to assist them in identifying all the reasonable controls that are appropriate for their venue.

1.5   STAFF ENGAGEMENT IN RISK ASSESSMENT AND CONTROLS

Objective: To ensure that employers comply with their obligations to consult staff and also ensure that staff provide input to COVID-19 controls.

Employers have a duty to consult their staff on health and safety. In a small venue, you might choose to consult your workers directly. Larger businesses may consult through a health and safety representative chosen by your employees or selected by a trade union. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the work and how you will manage risks from COVID-19.

The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to reduce those risks. Involving them in making decisions about what controls to implement shows that you take their health and safety seriously. You must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there is not one, a representative chosen by workers. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative is.

At its most effective, full involvement of your workers creates a culture where relationships between employers and workers are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, workers should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer.

Employers and workers should always come together to resolve issues. If concerns still cannot be resolved, see below for further steps employees can take.

1.6   HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN IF YOU ARE AN EMPLOYEE:

- First, speak to your employer
- Contact your employee representative, if your workplace has one, and/or contact your trade union if you have one
- If agreement on a resolution cannot be reached, employees and/or their recognised trade unions or other representatives should contact their local Council or use the HSENI online form (if HSENI is the enforcing authority).
  https://www.secure.hseni.gov.uk/forms/complaint.aspx
  For most premises to which this guidance applies HSENI are not the enforcing authority. If in doubt check with your local council: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/local-councils-in-northern-ireland

1.7   SHARING THE RESULTS OF YOUR RISK ASSESSMENT

Objective: To ensure that staff and customers have confidence in a businesses' COVID-19 controls.

Businesses may wish to demonstrate to their workers and customers that they have properly assessed their risk and taken appropriate measures to mitigate this. You could do this by displaying a notification in a prominent place in your business and on your website if you have one. This is useful to assist customer confidence.

1.8   OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Objective: To ensure that businesses consider all aspects of their activities, follow best practice, and consider any additional implications of COVID-19 controls.

In your risk assessment, you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. This would include people who are unvaccinated. The recommendations in the rest of this document are ones you should consider as you go through this process.

You could also consider any advice that has been produced specifically for your sector, for example by trade associations or trade unions. For example, guidance produced by Hospitality Ulster and the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) has further information on many parts of the visitor economy that may help with this process.

You should consider the security implications of any changes you intend to make to your operations and practices in response to COVID-19, as any revisions may present new or altered security risks or issues with accessibility, which may need mitigation.

SECTION 2: KEY CONTROLS THAT REDUCE THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION

Objective: To explain why the key controls described remain effective in reducing the risk of transmission of the virus.

2.1   USE OF FACE COVERINGS

Objective: To explain why the use of face coverings remains an effective control to reduce the risk of transmission

Aerosol and/or droplet infection is the main way in which COVID-19 is spread. Evidence shows that wearing a face covering can significantly reduce the risk of infection to other people in close proximity to the wearer, should the wearer of the face covering have the virus. In other words, face coverings protect other people rather than the wearer. They do so by reducing the projection of droplets or aerosols.

2.2   SOCIAL DISTANCING

Objective: To explain why social distancing remains an effective control to reduce the risk of transmission.

Apart from eliminating any positive cases, social distancing remains one of the most significant and effective controls that can be put in place by businesses to reduce the risk of transmission.

Aerosol and/or droplet infection is considered to be the main way in which the infection is transmitted, and droplets are generated when people talk (cough, breathe, etc.). Certain behaviours, e.g. singing and/or shouting or strenuous exercise significantly increases both the number of droplets as well as the distance they can be projected.

2.3   CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

Objective: To explain the risks of infection through cross contamination and the importance of effective cleaning and hygiene practices to minimise the risk of transmission through contaminated surfaces, objects, or clothing.

Definitions: Cleaning means the removal of dirt.

Disinfection means the destruction of microorganisms, including virus and in this case Coronavirus.

COVID -19 is mainly spread through direct contact with an asymptomatic carrier or infected persons (droplet infection). It can also be spread through cross contamination from surfaces that have become contaminated. Cross contamination means the transference of the virus from where it is still active on a surface to a person's mouth, nose, or eyes (mucous membrane).

Surfaces and belongings can be contaminated with COVID-19 when people who are infectious cough or sneeze or touch them. Transmission of COVID-19 can occur when someone else then touches the contaminated surface or item. The person may become infected if they touch their nose, eyes or mouth with a contaminated hand or object.

Increased frequency of cleaning of general room surfaces reduces the presence of the virus and the risk of contact. Cleaning and disinfection play a key role in reducing the risk of this second transmission mode. There are a variety of products that can be used on surfaces to disinfect them. Some products can provide both cleaning and disinfection together. Sodium hypochlorite (bleach / chlorine) may be used at a recommended concentration of 0.1% or 1,000ppm (1 part of 5% strength household bleach to 49 parts of water). Alcohol at 70-90% can also be used for surface disinfection.

As would be the case with normal cleaning procedures, surfaces must be cleaned with water and soap or a detergent first to remove dirt, followed by disinfection. It is important to follow clearly all

instructions provided for the use of cleaning chemicals including, if stipulated, contact times (some chemicals will require to be left on surfaces for a period of time prior to washing or wiping clean). The infection risk from a COVID-19 contaminated environment decreases over time.

2.4   VENTILATION

Objective: To understand the importance of good ventilation in reducing potential viral load in indoor spaces and therefore reducing risk of transmission.

There is good evidence to suggest that poor ventilation in confined indoor spaces is associated with increased transmission of respiratory infections. Conversely good ventilation significantly reduces the risk of transmission of the virus. That is why outside areas are much lower risk than indoor.

It is important to clarify exactly what is meant by ventilation. Ventilation refers to air changes. Air change can only be achieved by opening windows and/or doors or through mechanical ventilation systems that draw fresh outdoor air into the space and extract old air. Fans or other devices used on their own, without any source of fresh outside air simply move the same air around the room. This should be avoided.

It is really important to have good ventilation in order to reduce any potential concentration of virus in the air that may be present in the indoor space due to the presence of an asymptomatic carrier or alternatively a positive case that is as yet undiagnosed.

There are some simple ways to identify poorly ventilated areas:

- Look for areas where there is no mechanical ventilation or no natural ventilation, such as non-opening windows and vents, etc. (unless doors are opened very frequently).
- Check that mechanical systems provide outdoor air, temperature control or both. If a system (e.g. a local air conditioner) is recirculating only and does not have an outdoor air supply, or a separate source of outdoor air, the area is likely to be poorly ventilated.
- Identify areas that feel stuffy or smell badly.
- Use carbon dioxide (CO_2) monitors to identify the CO_2 levels to help decide if ventilation is poor. CO_2 monitors are most effective for areas that are regularly attended by the same group of people. They are less effective in areas with low numbers of people.

Natural ventilation can be provided through open windows, or through other means such as vents. However, fire doors should not be propped open. It is important not to completely close windows and doors when the area is occupied as this can result in very low levels of ventilation.

Lower temperatures and windy weather conditions will increase the natural ventilation through openings. This means you don't need to open windows and doors as wide, so partially opening them can still provide adequate ventilation while maintaining a comfortable workplace temperature. Opening higher-level windows is likely to generate fewer draughts.

Airing rooms as frequently as you can helps improve ventilation. This involves opening all doors and windows wide to maximise the ventilation in the room. It may be easier to do this when the room is unoccupied or between uses.

There is useful further information on ventilation on the Health and Safety Executive Website at https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm#balancing.

2.5   CLEANING AFTER A KNOWN CASE OF COVID-19

The principles set down at the link below should be followed if cleaning after a known case of coronavirus: www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings#left-area

SECTION 3: USING EFFECTIVE CONTROLS FOR CUSTOMER AND/OR VISITOR SAFETY

Objective: to assist business owners select and implement appropriate controls to ensure as far as possible customers and visitors safety and minimise the risk of transmission.

3.1   BOOKING AND PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

Objective: To ensure that, as far as possible, customers and visitors are aware of the requirements in place when they arrive at the premises

You are strongly recommended to:

- Advise customers not to travel if they are unwell or experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Have clear communications for customers on what they should do if they become unwell during their visit.
- Provide clear guidance on any controls that are still relevant to your premises to people before arrival, for example on your website and in pre-arrival emails. These might include the use of face coverings in certain areas, social distancing measures, or proof of vaccination or negative testing.
- Consider the particular needs of those with protected characteristics, such as people with visual impairments.
- Inform guests about preventative measures being taken and other services they may require, for example, medical and pharmacy services available in the area.

3.2   HYGIENE

Objective: To ensure that effective hand hygiene facilities are provided to reduce the risk of indirect transmission.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Provide hand sanitiser or alternatively regular handwashing facilities at entrances, exits, counters, rest rooms, changing areas and any areas where customers access.
- Provide signage encouraging regular hand sanitising/washing to reduce the risk of transmission.

3.3   FACE COVERINGS

Objective: To ensure that business owners consider where and when to use face coverings to reduce the risk of transmission.

As outlined in Section 2, face coverings remain an effective control to reduce the risk of transmission in indoor settings where social distancing is either not possible or not in effect.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Where staff come within close proximity of customers or visitors consider use of face coverings to reduce the risk of transmission from an asymptomatic member of staff and to assist with customer confidence.

- Business owners may wish to consider retaining requesting customers to use face coverings when, for example, not seated and moving around the premises. This may be particularly relevant if social distancing cannot be maintained. However, whether or not to do this will

come down to a decision by each individual business and taking into consideration their clientele (in particular whether they have vulnerable clientele) and customer confidence.

3.4   SOCIAL DISTANCING

Objective: To ensure that business owners consider where and when to implement social distancing controls to reduce the risk of transmission

Social distancing is no longer a mandatory legal requirement. However, it remains an effective control to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus and it is strongly recommended that businesses still implement controls to encourage social distancing by customers. This is particularly the case for larger premises and events. Examples of where and when these controls could be implemented are provided below:

All businesses

- Whilst queuing inside or outside the premises (see section 3.5).

In service settings (Food and drink)

- On entry and whilst walking to their table (in service settings).
- When leaving the table for any purpose e.g. to use rest room facilities or pay a bill.
- On leaving the table to exit the premises.
- Whilst accessing buffet or carvery service (if applicable).

In accommodation settings (excluding self-catering scenarios)

- In any communal areas
- At reception desks

In visitor attractions

- At all times when inside the venue

In event businesses (including meeting businesses)

According to individual business requirements

3.5   MANAGING QUEUES AND MOVEMENT WITHIN THE VENUE

Objective: To ensure that, as far as possible, queues are avoided and, where they are unavoidable, to manage them to ensure adequate social distancing and, if appropriate, infection controls.

There are a number of ways in which queues might form. They include outside the business, on arrival, at rest room facilities, at food outlets within the venue, at payment stations, or even at smoking shelters depending on their size. Businesses should think through all scenarios where queues might form and consider controls to ensure that where they do, they are managed as safely as possible with a focus on social distancing and good hand hygiene.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Businesses should try to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to manage any queues anywhere either outside or inside the venue. This will include clear signage, floor markings and if appropriate depending on size, supervision. Alternatively, if social distancing is not possible, businesses could consider the use of face coverings in such queues.

- Ensure that any changes to entries, exit and queue management take into account reasonable adjustments for those who need them, including disabled customers. For example, maintaining pedestrian and parking access for disabled customers

- Look at how people walk through the business and how you could adjust this to reduce congestion and contact between customers, for example, queue management or one-way flow, where possible.

- Use outside spaces for queueing where available and safe. For example, using some car parks and existing outdoor services areas.

- Use a booking system to manage customer numbers in terms of arrival and departure.

- Introduce set times for sittings.

- Manage customers to prevent queues forming both inside and outside the venue. For example, using social distancing markings, having customers queue at a safe distance for toilets and bringing payment machines to customers.

- Work with your local authority or neighbours to provide additional parking or facilities such as bike-racks, where possible, to help customers avoid using public transport.

3.6   VENTILATION

Objective: To use ventilation to further reduce the risk of transmission.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Ensure good ventilation indoors. This includes restroom and toilet facilities.
- Ensure all outdoor areas, with particular regard to covered areas, have sufficient ventilation.
- Check whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.

3.7   OVERNIGHT TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

Objective: To minimise the risk of indirect transmission in tourist accommodation.

This section is applicable for any business that provides overnight accommodation. That would include, for example, hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, self-catering accommodation, hostels, etc. Premises with public areas that are accessible to guests as well as the accommodation space itself need to read the relevant sections elsewhere in this guide. This will vary dependant on the type of premises. This section deals only with the actual overnight accommodation (bedroom).

Given that the main risk present in the guest accommodation itself is indirect transmission then the key controls come down to cleaning and hygiene.

It is strongly recommended that:

- The guest bedroom and bathroom, as with any other part of a venue, must be regularly cleaned. In practice this will mean during normal housekeeping pay particular attention to the cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces, including hand contact surfaces.
- Housekeeping staff should wash their hands before entering and upon leaving each guest bedroom and ensure that they do not touch their face.
- Housekeeping staff have access to face coverings in the eventuality that they come within proximity of guests. Adequate social distancing is maintained.

3.8 SPA AND/OR GYM FACILITIES INCLUDING CHANGING ROOMS AND SHOWERS

Objective: To minimise the risk of transmission in changing rooms and showers.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Spa, gym, changing facilities and showers in changing rooms, as with any other part of a venue, are regularly cleaned.
- Where shower and changing facilities are provided, setting clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean and clear of personal items and that social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Introduce enhanced cleaning of all facilities throughout the day and at the end of the day.

SECTION 4: USING EFFECTIVE CONTROLS FOR STAFF SAFETY

To minimise transmission, it is important that people work as safely as possible. Workers who can work from home should continue to do so. Anyone else who cannot work from home should go to their place of work. Extra consideration should be given to those people at higher risk

4.1 AVOIDING RISK WHERE POSSIBLE

Objective: That work that can be done from home should be done from home.

Keeping workers away from the workplace where possible achieves 2 things. Firstly, it reduces the risk that they may pass on the virus as an asymptomatic carrier. Secondly it negates the loss of capacity a business may suffer through self-isolation requirements as the person can still work. There is a recognition that for many workers in the visitor economy working from home may not be possible. However there are benefits' to doing so where that is a possibility.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Consider who is essential to be on the premises; for example, administrative staff who do not need to be on-site should work from home if at all possible.
- Plan for the minimum number of people needed on site to operate safely and effectively.
- Monitor the wellbeing of people who are working from home and help them stay connected to the rest of the workforce, through using online meeting tools, especially if the majority of their colleagues are on-site.
- Keep in touch with any off-site workers on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health, and personal security.
- Provide equipment for people to work from home safely and effectively, for example, remote access to work systems.

4.2 PROTECTING STAFF AT HIGHER RISK

Objective: To protect clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.

As for any workplace risk you must take into account specific duties to those with protected characteristics, including, for example, expectant mothers who are, as always, entitled to suspension on full pay if suitable roles cannot be found. Particular attention should also be paid to people who live with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals. Further information can be found at: https://www.equalityni.org/Covid19

- Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals were previously advised to shield; however this was paused on 31 July 2020. The pause is indefinite, but it remains possible that the government will need to reactivate the guidance if the risk increases in the future.
- Employers have a 'duty of care' for staff, customers, and anyone else who visits the workplace. In practice, this means taking all steps they reasonably can to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of their staff.
- Further information can be found at: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-pausing-shielding-extremely-vulnerable-people.
- If vulnerable individuals cannot work from home, they should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to maintain social distancing. If they have to spend time in close proximity to others, you should carefully assess whether this involves an acceptable level of risk and whether the activity should continue. If so, further controls should be implemented to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.

4.3 STAFF WHO NEED TO SELF-ISOLATE

Objective: To make sure individuals who are advised to stay at home under existing government guidance do not physically come to work.

Controls that should be considered:

- Enabling workers to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate.
- See guidance for employees and employers relating to statutory sick pay due to COVID-19.

4.4   HAND HYGIENE AT WORK

Objective: Making sure that staff, customers, and visitors follow good hand hygiene practices at all critical points during their visit, including entry and exit.

Hand hygiene is important to ensure that the risk of transferring the virus from contaminated surfaces, in particular hand contact surfaces, is minimised. Soap and water are effective where that is possible. Where water supply is available, hand sanitisers with at least 70% alcohol are the most practical solutions.

It is strongly recommended that:

- All staff are made aware of the requirements for good hand hygiene.
- Businesses should provide hand sanitation facilities throughout their premises and in particular at restroom or toilet facility queuing areas; at smoking shelter areas; at service points (for staff use); and at all exits from the premises. Where there are additional outside areas, these facilities should also be made available for visitors using these areas.
- Where possible, consider wedging doors open (not fire doors) to reduce the need to open them.
- Customer tables should be cleaned in between uses.

4.5   USE OF FACE COVERINGS BY STAFF WHILST AT WORK

As explained in Section 2 face coverings can significantly reduce the risks to persons the wearer may come into close contact with. For staff in the workplace this could include both other staff members, customers, and visitors.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Staff remain aware of the effectiveness of face coverings in controlling transmission of COVD 19.
- Any staff in any customer facing roles wears a face covering unless behind a partition

4.6   SOCIAL DISTANCING WHILST IN THE WORKPLACE

Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible.

Although no longer legally required, social distancing remains an effective control to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. The importance of social distancing is set out in section 2.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Staff should maintain adequate social distancing in the workplace wherever possible.
- Keep the activity time involved as short as possible.
- Use back-to-back or side-to-side working rather than face-to-face where possible.
- Reduce the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).

Social distancing applies to all parts of a premises where business is contracted, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens, WCs,

storerooms, and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing.

4.7 WHEN ARRIVING AT AND LEAVING THE PREMISES

Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible on arrival and departure, and to enable handwashing upon arrival.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Stagger arrival and departure times for staff and visitors to reduce crowding into and out of the venue, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics.
- Provide additional parking or facilities such as bike-racks to help people walk, run, or cycle to work where possible. Limiting passengers in corporate vehicles, for example, work minibuses. This could include leaving seats empty.
- Where possible, have a designated staff entrance and exit.
- Reduce congestion, for example, by having several entry points.
- Use markings and introducing one-way flow at entry and exit points throughout the building, taking into account premises structure, style of operation and customer profile.
- Provide alternatives to touch-based entry systems and security devices, such as automatic door kits or swipe card entry systems.

4.8 WHEN AT WORKPLACE STATIONS AND BACK OF HOUSE

Objective: To maintain adequate social distancing between individuals when they are at their workstations.
For people who work in one place, for example a receptionist, it is strongly recommended that working areas should allow them to maintain adequate social distancing from one another as well as the public. Working areas should be assigned to an individual as much as possible. If they need to be shared, they should be shared by the smallest possible number of people.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Layouts and processes are reviewed to allow staff to work with adequate social distancing.
- Use of face coverings and/or screens will reduce droplet transmission.
- Use floor tape or paint to mark areas on the floor to help staff maintain social distancing.
- Minimise contacts around transactions, for example, considering using contactless payments and encouraging online booking and pre-payment where appropriate.
- If using cash, provide hand sanitiser at the point of transaction.
- Stagger break times to reduce pressure on break rooms or places to eat.
- Use safe outside areas for breaks.
- Create additional space by using other parts of the building.
- Use social distance marking for other common areas such as toilets, showers, lockers and changing rooms and in any other areas where queues typically form.

4.9 FOOD PREPARATION AREAS

Objective: To maintain social distancing and reduce contact where possible in kitchens and other food preparation areas.

The Food Standards Agency has provided guidance to promote best practice in food businesses to help them stay compliant with food hygiene and safety requirements and best respond to the impacts of COVID-19: www.food.gov.uk/here-to-help-food-businesses.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Allow kitchen access to as few people as possible for the running of the venue.
- Reconfigure workstations to avoid face-to-face working.
- Reduce the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).
- Use of face coverings by staff.
- Provide floor marking to signal social distancing.
- Use 'one way' traffic flows to minimise contact.
- Ensure only one person at a time enters areas like walk-in pantries, fridges, and freezers.
- Minimise contact at 'handover' points with other staff, such as serving staff and delivery drivers.

4.10   WHEN SELLING FOOD AND/OR DRINK

Objective: to minimise interactions with guests when selling food and drink. Refer to broader guidance on food preparation and service.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Minimise contact between kitchen workers and front of house workers, for example, use a designated order and food service handover area.
- Use front of house staff to serve customers purchasing food and drink, minimising the time they spend in the kitchen.
- Create a physical barrier such as a screen, between front of house workers and guests where possible.
- Encourage contactless orders and payments where possible.
- Encourage guests to order room service over the telephone.
- Have clear communications for customers on what they should do if they become unwell during their visit.
- Have clear procedures established regarding delivery and clearance of room service.

4.11   WORKPLACE MEETINGS

Objective: To reduce the risk of transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain adequate social distancing in meetings.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Use remote working tools to avoid in person meetings where possible.
- Only necessary participants should attend meetings and should maintain social distancing throughout.
- Hold meetings in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
- For areas where regular meetings take place, use floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

4.12   WHEN MOVING AROUND BUILDINGS AND SITES

Objective: To maintain adequate social distancing as far as possible while people travel through the workplace and across sites.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Reduce movement by discouraging non-essential trips within businesses and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios, telephones or other electronic devices when sending orders from service areas to kitchens, where permitted, and cleaning them between use.

- Reduce job and location rotation, for example, assigning workers to specific floors or keeping temporary personnel dedicated to one venue.
- Introduce as much one-way flow as possible through buildings with signage that that clearly indicates the direction of flow.
- Reduce maximum occupancy for lifts, providing hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts and encouraging use of stairs wherever possible.
- Make sure that people with disabilities are able to access lifts.
- Manage use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts, and staircases to maintain social distancing. For example, asking guests and staff to walk on the left to give priority to those ascending stairs, or indicating 'passing points' where the walkway is widest.

4.13 EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Objective: To treat everyone in your workplace equally.

Employers and service providers have duties and obligations under equality laws.

- In applying this guidance, employers should be mindful of the particular needs of different groups of workers or individuals.
- ***You must not discriminate unlawfully against or harass anyone on the grounds of age; sex; race; disability; religious or similar philosophical belief; political opinion; sexual orientation; pregnancy or maternity; marital status; or gender reassignment.***
- ***Employers also have particular responsibilities towards disabled workers and those who are new or expectant mothers.***

Further information can be found at: https://www.equalityni.org/Employers-Service-Providers

Controls that should be considered:

- Understand and take into account the particular circumstances of those with different protected characteristics.
- Involve workers whose protected characteristics might either expose them to a different degree of risk or might make any steps you are thinking about inappropriate or challenging for them.
- Consider whether you need to put in place any particular measures or adjustments to take account of your duties under the equalities legislation.
- Make reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage and assessing the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.
- Understand and respond to the concerns of those who consider themselves at increased risk.

Make sure that the steps you take do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others, for example those with caring responsibilities or those with religious commitments.

SECTION 5: GENERAL CLEANING AND HYGIENE

5.1 CLEANING THE BUSINESS BEFORE REOPENING

Objective: To make sure that any site, premises, or location that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart.

Any site or premises that has been closed for an extended period of time should be thoroughly cleaned before reopening to customers and visitors. However, in addition to that there are other issue to consider as detailed below.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Check whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.
- Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings, or you are unsure, advice should be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.
- Assess whether you will check and clean your water system in-house or call in an external expert. You should consider risk, cost, time, and complexity of the site and whether there are any legionella risks from showerheads, hot water storage systems or air conditioning unit. Further information can be found at: www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm

5.2 KEEPING THE BUSINESS CLEAN: INDOOR AND OUTDOOR COMMUNAL AREAS

Objective: To minimise the risk of indirect transmission in public communal areas.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Frequent cleaning of objects, equipment and surfaces that are touched regularly, including door handles, light switches, self-service food areas or equipment necessary for the activity.
- If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then you refer to the specific guidance.

5.3 STAFF CHANGING ROOMS, TOILETS AND SHOWERS

Objective: To minimise the risk of transmission in changing rooms, toilets, and showers.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Where shower and changing facilities are provided, setting clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean and clear of personal items and that social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Introduce enhanced cleaning of all facilities during the day and at the end of the day.
- In staff changing areas providing lockers or other storage for come to work clothing and suitable receptacles for staff uniforms after shifts and prior to washing.

5.4 LAUNDRY

Objective: To minimise the risk of transmission through contaminated laundry

Laundry includes staff uniforms, bedding from accommodation, towels, robes, napkins, and tablecloths etc.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Dirty laundry should be collected and transported in a suitable container so as to minimise its contact with any persons or other surfaces.
- All laundry should be washed at a minimum of 40 degrees.

5.5   BACK OF HOUSE AREAS

Objective: To minimise the risk of indirect transmission in back of house areas

Examples of back of house areas would include stores, offices, meeting rooms, staff changing rooms, waste storage areas etc.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Back of house areas as with any other part of a venue, must be regularly cleaned. This will require frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, including door handles, light switches etc.
- Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, including door handles, light switches etc.
- Consider can any doors be left open safely (without fire safety risks) to prevent the need to touch them.
- Ensure adequate frequency to remove waste.

SECTION 6: WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

6.1   SHIFT PATTERNS AND WORKING GROUPS

Objective: To change the way work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each worker has.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Where workers are split into teams or shift groups, all reasonable steps should be taken to maintain the same teams or groups so that, where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same people.
- Identify areas where people have to directly pass things to each other and find ways to remove direct contact such as by using drop-off points or transfer zones.
- Consider where congestion caused by people flow and 'pinch points' can be improved. Using one-way systems, staggered shifts and assigned staff mealtimes are possible ways to minimise the risk of transmission.

6.2   WORK RELATED TRAVEL

Objective: To avoid unnecessary work travel and keep people safe when they do need to travel between locations.

You are strongly recommended to:

- Minimise non-essential travel - consider remote options first.
- Ensure that delivery drivers maintain good hygiene and wash their hands regularly.
- Ensure work vehicles and spaces are well-ventilated.
- Put in place procedures to minimise person-to-person contact during deliveries
- Minimise contact during payments and exchange of documentation, for example by using electronic payment methods and electronically signed and exchanged documents.

6.3   COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING

Objective: To make sure all workers understand COVID-19 related safety procedures.

Whilst most workers are now familiar with Covid Controls, it will be important to ensure that training and awareness is maintained of whatever controls and procedures are being implemented. Communications will play an important role in ensuring employees, contractors and customers understand safety measures.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Staff are provided with any training necessary to fulfil their obligations in relation to the prevention of transmission of coronavirus.
- Provide clear, consistent, and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.
- Engage with workers and worker representatives through existing communication routes to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.
- Use simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language.
- Provide guidance to staff as to how they should regularly communicate guidance to customers to ensure consistent messaging and responses.

SECTION 7: OVERARCHING SAFETY AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

Adapting to COVID-19 measures has inevitably resulted in changes to operating policies, processes, and procedures in all businesses. Any changes should always be considered alongside security implications.

If you have a security department or manager, they should be consulted to ensure good security is maintained as far as possible and that there are no unintended security consequences as a result of changes. This should be achieved by conducting a security risk assessment.

Specific examples of where security implications may arise include queueing, search, and screening (where this has been directed by a wider government policy on security), maintaining vigilance for potential threats, and access controls. There may be others that your organisation will need to consider.

7.1   QUEUE SECURITY

Objective: To maintain security when implementing social distancing in queues outside the venue.

Whilst dense crowding is unlikely if social distancing is operating correctly, the revised layout of spaces may present new security risks, particularly where multiple queues are created.

It is strongly recommended that:

- Operators should as far as possible organise queuing within existing protected areas and not remove any security features or useful street furniture items without considering protective security in the round.
- If queuing is only possible outside of protected areas, then use the following controls to avoid removing or altering existing features. Routing queues behind permanent physical structures (e.g. street furniture, bollards, trolley parks and bike racks); closing off vehicle access to shared spaces; adjusting servicing and delivery times; reducing the opportunities for vehicles (including potentially hostile vehicles) to interact with pedestrians; erecting robust barriers; introducing a reduced speed limit or traffic calming measures.
- Operators should be careful to avoid sharing credible, detailed information that could risk the safety of staff and customers. In particular, this should not be included in detailed risk assessments published on public websites. Be mindful of messaging, both at the site and particularly on-line, which covers detailed information about queue locations and times, the number of people expected, and suggesting removal of security features such as street furniture, bollards etc.

SECTION 8: WHERE TO OBTAIN FURTHER GUIDANCE

This list is not extensive. All links are working as of 1st March 2022, however these may change over time, and more advice will become available.

Guidance referenced below from a trade body or association may include best practice documents, templates, and more detailed sector-specific advice on certain environments.

Government Guidance

- NI Direct: Coronavirus (COVID-19): www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19

- FSA Reopening Checklist for food businesses during COVID-19: www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/reopening-checklist-for-food-businesses-during-covid-19

- Cleaning effectively in your business: https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/cleaning-effectively-in-your-business

- Department for Communities - Culture and Heritage Destination Businesses Guidance: https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-culture-heritage-destinations-phased-return-guide.pdf

Sectoral Guidance

- The Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF) provides a range of updates and guidance: www.nihf.co.uk/

- Hospitality Ulster provides a range of updates and guidance: https://hospitalityulster.org/

- The Meeting Industry Association AIM SECURE accreditation programme: https://www.mia-uk.org/AIM

- Meetings Industry Association – Roadmap to reopening and operating safely: https://www.mia-uk.org/

- The Purple Guide produced by the Events Industry Forum: www.thepurpleguide.co.uk/

- Working safely during COVID-19 in the Outdoor Event Industry, which will be published on the Events Industry Forum website: www.eventsindustryforum.co.uk

- The AEO's e-guide: www.aev.org.uk/e-guide

- Guidance relating to outdoor events has been prepared by the Events Industry Forum: www.eventsindustryforum.co.uk/

This publication is also available on our website at: www.tourismni.com. More information will be published on this website as it becomes available. Information is available in alternative formats or languages on request.

If you have any enquires about this publication, please contact Tourism NI: info@tourismni.com