

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

17 August 2020

Reviewed 6 January 2021

7th floor, West One, Forth Banks, NE1 3PA



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Introduction

We undertook this risk assessment to assess business activities during the current COVID-19 outbreak, taking into account guidance from the Government and the requirements of health and safety law.

Employers have legal duties under health and safety law to:

- protect the health, as well as safety, of their employees;
- protect others who may be exposed to health risks as a result of the employer's activities, including members of the public, clients and contractors;
- manage the health and safety risks from workplaces under the employer's control, which includes the means of access to the workplace and any plant such as lifts and air conditioning systems. The extent of the duty depends on the level of control.

Employers are required to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to manage these risks, and if challenged the onus is on the employer to demonstrate that they took all reasonably practicable manage the risks.

The best way to demonstrate compliance with the law is usually to follow government and industry-led guidance wherever possible.

The Government has prepared guidance written by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) with input from firms, unions, industry bodies and the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and in consultation with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Details of the local PHE office for notification purposes are set out below:

PHE North East
Professor Peter Kelly, Centre Director
Floor 2 Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE1 4WH

Telephone:
0300 303 8596 option 1

The risks from COVID-19 in the workplace

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.

Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

The main route of transmission is from cough and sneeze droplets. These droplets fall on people in the vicinity and can be directly inhaled or picked up on the hands and transferred when someone touches their face.

How long any respiratory virus survives will depend on a number of factors; for example:

- what surface the virus is on
- whether it is exposed to sunlight
- differences in temperature and humidity
- exposure to cleaning products

Under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 24 hours, and even more so by 48 hours.

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. The UK government has issued guidance for employers outlining the steps it expects employers to take to manage the risks from COVID-19 in the workplace.

General information

Date of assessment

We undertook this assessment on 17 August 2020. This assessment was reviewed on 6 January 2021.

Name of assessor(s)

This assessment was undertaken by Steven Webster, Office Manager (s.webster@hempsons.co.uk).

Scope of assessment

Hempsons offices, 7th floor, West One, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3PA

Description of site, task or activity being assessed

Access to and from 7th floor, the main working floor, reception, meeting rooms, kitchens and toilets, on the 7th floor only

Equipment and substances used

The work involves use of desk IT equipment, photocopies and kitchen equipment.

People affected by the hazards in this assessment

All staff, contractors, members of the public, entering the 7th floor area.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment and recommendations

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Do you need to do anything else to control this risk? | Action by who? | Action by when? | Done |
|--|------------------------------|--|---|------------------------|-----------------|------|
| Fire safety and electrical systems not functioning following period out of use | Employees/ others | Regular checks on fire safety and electrical systems | The landlord's contractors have been in occupation throughout lockdown and all regulatory and PPM checks and works have been carried out. | CHP Management Limited | Continuous | YES |
| Statutory Inspections not completed during lockdown (lifts, gas, electricity, fire equipment etc.) | Employees/ others | Statutory inspections (e.g. via insurers) | The landlord's contractors have been in occupation throughout lockdown and all regulatory and PPM checks and works have been carried out. | CHP Management Limited | Continuous. | YES |
| Damage/ vandalism to building /workplace whilst empty | Employees/ others | Security measures | security provided by landlord. Alert security of any changes to occupation and if you become aware of any damage. | CHP Management Limited | Continuous | YES |

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Do you need to do anything else to control this risk? | Action by who? | Action by when? | Done |
|---|------------------------------|--|---|-------------------|---|------|
| Insurance invalid | Employees/ others | Statutory and voluntary insurance | West One has not been unoccupied for a long period of time, except for weekends. Security on site 24/7. | AON | N/A | Done |
| Public & employer's Liability Insurance requirements adhered to | Employees/ others | Statutory and voluntary insurance | Only requirement is that current Government guidelines be adhered to. | IO | Confirmation received from AON insurance 15/07/2020 | YES |
| Waste management | Employees/ others | Waste removal/recycling | Shredding services have continued throughout lockdown on a monthly basis | Restore Datashred | Monthly | YES |
| Waste management | Employees/ others | Waste removal/recycling | Waste from Hempsons removed by Maxim Facilities (NE) Limited | Maxim Facilities | Weekly | YES |
| Defibrillators/EVAC chairs not serviceable | Employees/ others | Service contracts | Make sure servicing and staff training is current and that sufficient operators are available. | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Vehicle parking/movement | Employees/ others | Authorised parking areas, traffic routes | Change to reflect any amendments (e.g. social distancing). Provide additional storage for bicycles if required. | N/A | N/A | N/A |

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Do you need to do anything else to control this risk? | Action by who? | Action by when? | Done |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|----------------|-----------------|------|
| Post and delivery management biosecurity | Employees/ others | Arrangements to handle incoming and outgoing post and parcels | <p>All post electronically scanned and saved daily. Outgoing post taken to post office by Office Manager Team following cleaning regime of cleaning/sanitising hands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming into the office • Collecting the DX • Collecting the post • Going in and out of the lift • Before handling the post • After handling the post • Before handling/opening any deliveries • After handling/opening any deliveries • Any communal doors <p>Envelopes, boxes, delivery packages, are all placed in the same bin for collection to limit the number of times they are handled</p> | Steven Webster | Continuous | YES |
| Keeping vulnerable employees safe and well (from a building/facilities perspective) | Employees/ others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEEPS for emergency evacuation • Facilities for disabled staff | <p>Higher Risk groups discouraged from entering the building, unless necessary.</p> <p>Office induction checklist to be completed by all staff coming into</p> | Hempsons | 17 August 2020 | YES |

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Do you need to do anything else to control this risk? | Action by who? | Action by when? | Done |
|--|------------------------------|---|---|----------------|-----------------|------|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access for wheelchairs etc • Disabled visitors • Young Workers • Pregnant women • higher-risk groups including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ older males, ○ people with a high body mass index (BMI), ○ people with health conditions such as diabetes, and • people from some Black, Asian or minority ethnicity (BAME) backgrounds | <p>the building to ensure they are aware of the Covid Secure protocols.</p> <p>Review of all arrangements accessing and exiting the office and ensuring all those in the office can observe the 2m social distancing and other Government guidelines.</p> | | | |
| Keeping visitors and contractors safe and well (from a building/facilities perspective) and protecting employees | Employees/ others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor information and management • Control of contractors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of all arrangements accessing and exiting the office and ensuring all those in the office can observe the 2m social distancing and other Government guidelines | Hempsons | 17 August 2020 | YES |

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Do you need to do anything else to control this risk? | Action by who? | Action by when? | Done |
|--|------------------------------|---|---|--|---|------|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visits by non-essential visitors will be restricted. All drop in visitors will be required to wear a face covering, those with appointments it is not mandatory | | | |
| Access and security of employees | Employees/ others | Access control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR to notify OM of any leavers. Everyone has individual key fobs | N/A | Continuous | YES |
| Controlling common areas to avoid infection | Employees/ others | Managing shared areas through cleaning and housekeeping processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social distancing in reception area/meeting rooms/kitchen Reception and public-facing employees – safeguarding staff Cleaning/sanitiser for access control points Additional cleaning for high use areas (e.g. lifts, stairs, toilets, areas, showers) | CHP Management Limited (for common areas) | Confirmation received from the landlord that all measures have been put in place. This will be kept under review. | YES |
| Managing equipment to reduce risk of infection | Employees/ others | Security of laptops, company property etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrangements for individual workstation cleaning and sanitising | supplies of hand sanitiser and wipes are available for use | 17 August 2020 | YES |
| Signs do not consider new work arrangements | Employees/ others | Guidance and instructions for health and safety | Relevant signage in place (e.g. social distancing, hand washing). | OM | 17 August 2020 | YES |

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|--|------------------------------|--|--|---|-----------------------------|------|
| Emergency and accident/incident management | Employees/ others | Fire drills, fire wardens, accident and incident reporting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that individuals' training and certification is up to date • Ensure first aider training reflects necessary precautions (i.e. based on current guidance) • Amend accident and incident reporting regarding reporting virus cases • Arrangements for isolation of symptomatic individuals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hempsons | 17 August 2020 | YES |
| Return to work post lockdown – existing and new employees, transferees, employees from other locations | Employees/ others | Induction and specific location requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of mini induction for returnees describing all new arrangements • Revise induction contents and delivery • Site-specific requirements (social distancing, PPE, sanitisers etc.) • Arrangements for common areas (lifts, kitchens, rest areas, corridors etc). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OM to give mini induction on arrival and provide checklist) | Continuous | YES |
| Return to work post lockdown – existing and new employees, transferees, | Employees/ others | Induction and specific location requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social distancing (Staying Covid-19 Secure Statement) • Agile working. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hempsons • New statement/ policies accessible | No set date for return yet, | |

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|--|------------------------------|---|---|---|--|------|
| employees from other locations | | | | | | |
| Return to work post lockdown – existing and new employees, transferees, employees from other locations | Employees/ others | Induction and specific location requirements | Arrangements for common areas (lifts, , toilets,, corridors etc.). Induction to be carried out to ensure returnees are aware of new procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hempsons • Landlord will deal with building common areas | Continuous | YES |
| Communications to employees and building users are not clear. Guidance is not accurate | Employees/ others | H&S Communications policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure advice and guidance is based on and follows current Government requirements. • Ensure communications clearly describe expectations and feedback routes for issues. | Hempsons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication from the Managing Partner / OM | |
| Key/essential workers | Employees/ others | Roles during e.g. business continuity processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify staff with key roles; work patterns may need to be alternated to avoid mass infection of key individuals • Allocate roles for business continuity • Arrangements for isolation of symptomatic individuals. • Procedure for symptomatic or Positive cases defined in | Business Continuity Committee | Key skeleton staff in place in the office throughout lockdown. | YES |

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|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|----------------|--|------|
| | | | FADOC023 Covid-19 in the Workplace document | | | |
| Employees do not understand arrangements to prevent infection | Employees/ others | Arrangements to protect health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure effective physical means to prevent virus transmission are considered/introduced and effectively communicated, including: • Workstation safety –spacing requirements, equipment provision, cleaning requirements etc. • Social distancing guidelines observed • Personal hygiene reinforced • kitchen areas managed (e.g. numbers using limited, staggered breaks) • Storage of coats and bags to avoid cross contamination • Use of PPE (where applicable) • Hand washing facilities and sanitisers provided and refilled • Meeting safety (face to face and online) • Shift patterns to be reviewed | IO / Hempsons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email to all staff with office reopening information to be circulated • Signage throughout the building | |

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Do you need to do anything else to control this risk? | Action by who? | Action by when? | Done |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|---|---|------|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency action plans • Reporting illness • Testing/tracing • Accident and incident reporting • Staff made aware of maximum number permitted on site, this could change | | | |
| Employees' new work patterns not appropriate/ followed by individuals | Employees/ others | Arrangements to protect health/ working methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home working procedures reviewed • Agile working considered • Meeting safety (face to face and online) • Shift patterns to be reviewed as necessary • Staggered start times to be determined by dept heads? • Non-essential travel avoided. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IO / Hempsons • Review of homeworking policies | Following Government guidelines only essential staff allowed on site. | YES |
| Potential for infection during business travel and commuting | Employees/ others | Health and safety policies and procedures when travelling for and to work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review travel policies • Encourage alternative modes of travel (cycles, walking, taxis etc.) • Suspend all non-essential travel | IO / Hempsons | Following current Government guidelines | YES |

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | What are you already doing? | Do you need to do anything else to control this risk? | Action by who? | Action by when? | Done |
|---|------------------------------|--|---|----------------|--------------------------------------|------|
| Employee develops symptoms at Work or has received a notification by NHS Test & Trace | Employees/ others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information statement available on The Hub. • Following Government guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep employees up to date with information. • Employees to let HR know immediately if they have Coronavirus symptoms • Employees to let HR know immediately if they have been contacted by NHS Test & Trace • Procedure for symptomatic or Positive cases defined in FADOC023 Covid-19 in the Workplace document | All employees | Immediately information is available | YES |

Recommendations

| Hazard or activity | Action | Likelihood | Severity | Priority | Allocated to | Due date | Date completed | Is the hazard now acceptable? |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------|----------|----------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Travel into the office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following Government Guidelines: Work from home when you can Only use public transport for essential travel | 3 | 3 | 9 High | Staff/contractors | Every day | Every day | Yes |
| Access to the office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand sanitising stations Guidance posters Induction on first re-entry to the office | 2 | 2 | 4 Medium | Staff/visitors/contractors | Every day | Every day | Yes |
| Use of Workstations in the office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of hand sanitisers in the office Wipes to wipe down workstation at start and end of day | 2 | 2 | 4 Medium | Staff | Every day | Every day | Yes |
| Use of copiers in the office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of hand sanitisers in the office Wipes to wipe down copiers after each use by user | 2 | 2 | 4 Medium | Staff | Every day | Every day | Yes |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|---|---|-------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Use of kitchen areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person at each station at a time • Wait in the marked waiting area for someone to complete their use of an area • Use hand washing guidelines • Wipe any touchpoints with wipes | 2 | 2 | 4 Medium | Staff/contractors | Every day | Every day | Yes |
| Use of toilets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person at a time • Wait in the marked waiting area for someone to exit • Use hand washing guidelines • Wipe any touchpoints with wipes | 2 | 2 | 4 Medium | Staff/contractors/clients & visitors | Every day | Every day | Yes |

Appendix 2: Methodology

We compared the current controls in place for the risks we assessed with the relevant health and safety legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

Our criteria – good practice

We used guidance and standards published to help responsible people with managing risks posed by COVID-19 in the workplace:

Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres. Guidance for employers, employees and the self-employed. Published on 11 May 2020 – (www.gov.uk).

Our approach

We identified hazards and were possible the existing control measures in place. Where we identified risks that were not already adequately controlled, we have made recommendations in order to reduce risk to an acceptable level.

Assessing risks

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published guidance on how to assess risks, including a simple technique for estimating risks to help employers make decisions about priorities and safety precautions. It is based on estimating the severity of harm that could be caused by a hazard and the likelihood that any harm will occur. It uses a three-point scale for each factor.

We estimate risk levels by multiplying the ratings for the severity and likelihood together, resulting in a risk level between 1 (very low) and 9 (very high). This technique is suitable for assessing the risks encountered in most workplaces and we have therefore used it as part of our risk assessment.

| Likelihood ratings | | |
|--------------------|--------|--|
| 1 | Low | Where harm is highly unlikely to occur |
| 2 | Medium | Where harm is unlikely to occur |
| 3 | High | Where harm is likely to occur |

| Severity ratings | | |
|------------------|----------|--|
| 1 | Slight | Minor injury or illness |
| 2 | Moderate | Injury or illness resulting in short-term absence from work |
| 3 | Extreme | Death or major injury resulting in long-term absence from work |

The risk level is calculated by multiplying the ratings for the likelihood and the severity together, resulting in the risk level shown in the table below.

| Likelihood | High (3) | 3 | 6 | 9 |
|------------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Medium (2) | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| | Low (1) | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | Slight (1) | Moderate (2) | Extreme (3) |
| | | Severity | | |

The definitions for each risk level are shown in the table below.

| Risk level | Definition |
|------------|--|
| High | The building or area should not be occupied, or the task should not proceed, until action has been taken to reduce the risk. Considerable resources may need to be allocated to reduce the risk. |
| Medium | Some actions are required to reduce the risk. Risk reduction measures should be implemented within a defined period. |
| Low | No further actions are required. |

Recommendations arising from this assessment are prioritised using the rating system below to indicate the seriousness and urgency of the recommendations. They have been prioritised them as follows.

1. **High priority** indicates areas where there are breaches of health and safety legislation and/or where people are at risk. Action should be taken as soon as possible to achieve compliance, or immediately if people are at risk.
2. **Medium priority** indicates areas where there may not be compliance with health and safety legislation or good practice but there were no immediate risks. Action should be taken as soon as is reasonably practicable.
3. **Low priority** indicates areas where the action is not essential but would be desirable to satisfy good practice.

Contact



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