

Covid-19 Returning to work

Face coverings

Wearing a face covering is optional in most circumstances and is generally not required in workplaces. They are not an effective way to manage the risks from coronavirus and you should not rely on them.

The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected and have not developed symptoms.

Face coverings are not classed as PPE. They:

are not manufactured to a recognised standard and not CE marked

do not provide a proven level of protection for work risks such as dust and spray

If people choose to wear face coverings in work you should support them.

You should manage the risk of COVID infection by:

social distancing or, where that is not possible, reducing the number of people in the work area

assigning and keeping people to shift teams

increasing hand and surface washing.

General ventilation

Employers must, by law, ensure an adequate supply of fresh air in the workplace and this has not changed.

Good ventilation can help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus, so focus on improving general ventilation, preferably through fresh air or mechanical systems.

Where possible, consider ways to maintain and increase the supply of fresh air, for example, by opening windows and doors (unless fire doors).

Also consider if you can improve the circulation of outside air and prevent pockets of stagnant air in occupied spaces.

You can do this by using ceiling fans or desk fans for example, provided good ventilation is maintained.

The risk of transmission through the use of ceiling and desk fans is extremely low providing there is good ventilation in the area it is being used, preferably provided by fresh air.

Protect vulnerable workers

As an employer, you have a legal duty to protect workers from harm. You should make sure you consider the risk to workers who are particularly vulnerable to coronavirus and put controls in place to reduce that risk.

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the government has defined some people as clinically extremely vulnerable (shielded).

Shielded workers are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus. They cannot return to workplaces before at least 31 July 2020 in Scotland, from 1 August 2020 in England and from 16 August 2020 in Wales when shielding is paused.

You can find guidance on shielding and protecting workers, explaining who is clinically extremely vulnerable, from [Public Health England](#), [Health Protection Scotland](#) and [Public Health Wales](#)

Supporting shielded workers returning to work

You should talk to shielded workers about their working arrangements and take every possible step to enable your workers to work from home. When shielding is paused, where it is not possible for workers to work from home, you must regularly review your risk assessment, and do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect those workers from harm.

If workers are in the shielded categories, explain what will be done to protect them, for example doing tasks where stringent [social distancing guidelines](#) can be followed.

This also applies to workers living with someone in the shielded group.

You can find more advice on [shielding and protecting vulnerable people](#) on [GOV.UK](#)

Air conditioning

The risk of air conditioning spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace is extremely low as long as there is an adequate supply of fresh air and ventilation. You can continue using most types of air conditioning system as normal. But, if you use a centralised ventilations system that removes and circulates air to different rooms, it is recommended that you turn off recirculation and use a fresh air supply. You do not need to adjust air conditioning systems that mix some of the extracted air with fresh air and return it to the room as this increases the fresh air ventilation rate. Also, you do not need to adjust systems in individual rooms or portable units as these operate on 100% recirculation. You should still however maintain a good supply of fresh air ventilation in the room. If you're unsure, ask the advice of your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineer



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NEWS

Ian has now gained the IOSH Teaching Qualification which means we can apply for a licence to deliver all IOSH Courses both classroom based and via e learning.

This is a lengthy process but we hope to have these up and running in 2021

Team FHS are still here, still working, still keeping you safe. Any questions or queries, please get in touch

