# Blank Letterhead TemplateCovid-19 Frequently Asked Questions

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## Government Guidance & NWSSP

At NWSSP we will follow Welsh Government [Covid-19 Guidelines](https://gov.wales/coronavirus) and will communicate changes to guidance in a timely manner.

Guidance changes regularly so we suggest you refer back to our Covid-19 pages frequently.

Our guidance and FAQs are also based on the All Wales NHS FAQs

We now have a dedicated Workforce Covid Email address that should now be used – NWSSP.Covid@Wales.nhs.uk

## Wales Alert Level Status:

ALERT LEVEL 4

This is the highest level within Wales and equivalent to England’s Tier 5 restrictions.

Further information can be found [here.](https://gov.wales/alert-level-4)

Under Alert Level 4 you must:

* Follow social distancing rules with people you don’t live with or who are not in your support bubble.
* Wear a face covering (if you are able to) in all indoor public places.
* Stay at home.
* Not create an extended household (single adults or single parents may join with one other household to form an exclusive support bubble).
* Meet only the people you live with or your support bubble indoors.
* Meet only your household or support bubble in private gardens.
* Meet only your household or support bubble outdoors.
* Work from home if you can.
* Not travel without reasonable excuse.
* Not travel internationally without reasonable excuse.

## Covid-19 General Queries

**What is the difference between being symptomatic and asymptomatic?**

Those **symptomatic** experience at least one of the common symptoms, below, and should book a test within the first 5 days of the symptom(s) startingThe most [common symptoms](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/) are:

* a high temperature: this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
* a new, continuous cough: this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
* a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste: this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Those **asymptomatic** have the infection but do not display any of the common symptoms. Those asymptomatic may never get symptoms, so they may be unaware they have the infection.

**What is the difference between self-isolation and social distancing?**

***Social distancing*** is controlling the spread of infection of coronavirus by staying more than 2 metre away from other people

***Self-isolation*** applies to people who either have symptoms of coronavirus or live with others who are experiencing symptoms and must isolate from others to control the spread of infection.

**What is Shielding**?

Shielding is a measure to protect people who fall into an “extremely vulnerable” category. Shielding was for personal protection, it was individual choice to decide whether to follow the measures. For those staff who choose to attend the workplace despite having an underlying medical condition do so at their own risk.

Everyone within NWSSP should complete the [ESR All Wales Covid-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/page/79094) and those who may fall into the high risk or extremely vulnerable categories should discuss what adjustments could be put in place for additional protection.

**Current Shielding Advice**

The advice to those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable changed as of December 23rd 2020. It is advised that you should no longer attend work or school outside the home.

There are 2 ways you may be identified as clinically extremely vulnerable:

## You have one or more of conditions listed under ‘***What do we mean by 'extremely vulnerable'?***, or

1. Your clinician or GP has added you to the Shielded Patient List because, based on their clinical judgement, they deem to you be at higher risk of serious illness if you catch the virus.

The Welsh Government is currently in the process of sending letters out to those registered as extremely vulnerable.

If you do not fall into any of these categories, and have not been contacted to inform you that you are on the Shielding Patient List, it is advised you follow the general [staying alert and safe](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know) guidance for the rest of the population.

***What do I do if I have not received a letter from the Chief Medical Officer, but think I should be Shielding or my GP says I should be Shielding?***

If you think there are clinical reasons why you should be added to the Shielding Patient List, you should discuss this with your GP or hospital clinician. They are able to add people to the list if it is clinically appropriate to do so.

***I believe I am classed as ‘extremely vulnerable’ and am awaiting a letter from the Chief Medical Officer, but would like to continue attending work, what can I do?***

The guidance from the Welsh Government is equally applicable to those working in the Health Sector as to those in the general public.  The advice therefore is that you should no longer attend work outside of the home. However, should you wish to continue working and you are unable to do so from home a robust risk assessment must be undertaken and discussions be held with your line manager regarding health and safety measures in place and/or further measures to be put in place to mitigate any risks. It is then for you to determine how the shielding advice applies to your own particular circumstance.

***A member of my household has been recognised as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable - do I need to shield to protect them?***

The advice provided in relation to this is that *‘Members of your household who are not clinically extremely vulnerable should continue to attend work if they are unable to work from home’*

If you are unable to work from home, it is advised that you speak to your line manager about what support we can provide you whilst in the workplace to protect your shielding relative e.g. PPE, alternative duties and so on.

In summary, if you are:

* In the extremely vulnerable categories and shielding you should stay at home and shield
* Not in the extremely vulnerable categories you should (a) work from home if you can, or (b) attend work if you can’t.

Safety measures and advice are in place and must be complied with at all times.

**What are my responsibilities as an employee?**

We ask that all employees of NWSSP follow government guidelines in line with [**Alert Level 4**](https://gov.wales/alert-level-4) as well as local guidance provided by NWSSP.

All employees are required to complete the All Wales Workforce Risk Assessment Tool which opens discussion between individuals and their managers on how we can best support them based on their individual circumstance.

**Will I face disciplinary action if I ignore the Government advice?**

We will look at these situations on a case by case basis but potentially yes, disciplinary action may go ahead if your actions are deemed misconduct. Please refer to the Disciplinary Policy and Standards of Behaviour Framework which outlines responsibilities as an employee.

In all cases an Initial Assessment of Facts should be completed to fully understand the individual situation and for an informed decision to be made.

**I have symptoms, what should I do?**

If you are experiencing any one of the common symptoms **do not come to work**.

Check the scenario flow chart  [Individual experiencing symptoms](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/529821)

The most [common symptoms](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/) are:

* a high temperature: this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
* a new, continuous cough: this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
* a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste: this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

You may want to use the [NHS Symptom Checker](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/) for further information. You should stay home, self-isolating, for at least 10 days, in line with the [Test, Trace and Protect strategy.](https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-coronavirus) A Contact Tracer will be in touch with you to establish who you have had contact / been in close proximity too.

You should arrange a test within the first 5 days of symptoms starting. You can do this by either contacting Workforce or via the [Government Online booking system](https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-covid-19-test).

**What is Contact Tracing under Test, Trace and Protect?**

When either yourself or a colleague receives a positive COVID result, you will be called by a Contact Tracer on behalf of the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service.

The Contact Tracer will ask for information such as the places you have visited, and your recent contacts including anyone you may or may not live or work with and with whom you have been in close proximity on any occasion during a period beginning up to two days before you started experiencing symptoms. You will be asked for their names, dates of birth, addresses, telephone numbers (including mobile) and email addresses.

Under the Test, Trace and Protect strategy a contact means:

* if you have been within 1 metre of them or have had a face-to-face-conversation, had skin-to-skin physical contact, have coughed been on, or been in other forms of contact within 1 metre or 1 minute or longer
* if you have been within 2 metres of them for more than 15 minutes
* if you have travelled in a vehicle with - or been seated near them on public transport.

The contact tracer will take into consideration any additional circumstances, such as contacts who work in health and social care professional roles and the correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), any protective screens used in the workplace, and adherence to the 2m distancing rule which, if correctly followed, will not be regarded as a contact for these purposes.

***A staff Member has tested positive for COVID-19 and I think I have been in contact with them but I have not been contacted by a Contact Tracer – do I need to self-isolate?***

If you have been advised that a colleague has tested positive for Covid-19, with your line manager and using the definitions of ‘close contact’ above, you should undertake a thorough risk assessment to assess whether or not self-isolation (prior to contact from Track and Trace) is necessary – your discussion and agreement should be recorded on the risk assessment form.

If self-isolation is agreed to be the most appropriate action, you should self-isolate for 10 days ***from the date of the last contact*** with the staff member who tested positive (for example, if your last contact with the positive staff member was at any time on the 15th of the month, your isolation period ends at 23:59 hours on the 25thof that month).

*Should you become symptomatic at all during this time, you will need to arrange for test to be undertaken and to self-isolate for 10 days from the date on which you became symptomatic.*

Should you be contacted by a Contact Tracer you need to speak to your manager immediately and an assessment be undertaken as to the nature of the contact and the safety measures in place. If it is agreed the risk is low, you may continue working as normal.

Whilst at NWSSP we have had staff members who have tested positive for COVID-19, none of these cases have been transmitted through the workplace, which is a great testament to the steps you, yourselves, have taken to protect yourselves and your colleagues, and those of the organisation in ensuring the appropriate health, safety and hygiene measures are in place to stop the contracting and spread of this disease.

**Someone in my house has symptoms, what should I do?**

If someone in your household is experiencing symptoms **do not come to work**.

Follow the flowchart [Household member experiencing symptom](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/529820)

The most common symptoms are:

* a high temperature: this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
* a new, continuous cough: this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
* a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste: this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

You may want to use the [NHS Symptom Checker](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/) for further information. You should stay home, self-isolating, for at least 10 days, in line with the [Test, Trace and Protect strategy.](https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-coronavirus)

**I am symptomatic, can I be tested?**

In line with the [Test, Trace and Protect strategy](https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-coronavirus) if anyone in Wales experiences symptoms they should organise a test within 5 days of symptoms starting. Testing is being prioritised for critical workers.

You should arrange a test within the first 5 days of symptoms starting. You can do this by either contacting Workforce or via the [Government Online booking system](https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-covid-19-test).

**Someone in my household has symptoms, can they be tested?**

In line with the [Test, Trace and Protect strategy](https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-coronavirus) if anyone in Wales experiences symptoms they should organise a test within 5 days of symptoms starting. Testing is being prioritised for critical workers.

You should arrange a test within the first 5 days of symptoms starting. You can do this by either contacting Workforce or via the [Government Online booking system](https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-covid-19-test).

**An employee has become unwell at work, what should we do?**

If a colleague starts experiencing symptoms at work follow the Guidance, which currently states

* get at least 2 metres away from other people
* go to a room or area behind a closed door, such as a sick bay or staff office
* avoid touching anything
* Cough or sneeze in a tissue and put in the bin or if they do not have tissues cough and sneeze in the crook of your elbow
* use a separate bathroom from others if possible
* go home (safely) and self-isolate for 10 days
* Follow the [Test, Trace and Protect process](https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-process-summary)

Everyone is responsible for cleaning / sanitizing their work station, drawers, chairs etc in their immediate work area. We recommend work stations are wiped down with anti-viral wipes at the beginning and end of an individual’s working day. All our sites have ample supply of wipes and cleaning resources, please contact your [Site Lead](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/building-site-leads-group) if you need any.

Follow the [Covid-19 Reporting process](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/covid-19-reporting-update)

Let the local [Site Lead](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/building-site-leads-group) know who will ensure necessary cleaning arrangements are made with the contracted cleaners.

Make sure there is a list of those who may have been in close proximity (within 2 metres) up to 2 days prior to symptoms starting as they may be contacted by contact tracers if individual tests positive for Covid-19

**Someone I work with has tested positive for Covid-19, what does that mean for me?**

We will follow the necessary guidance in line with the [Test, Trace and Protect strategy](https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-coronavirus) . Guidance may differ for different working environment due to the diverse nature of NWSSP. Please ensure your manager has your most up to date contact details, via ESR.

Within our workplaces we have put social distancing measures in place to avoid our colleagues being within close proximity.

If you answer yes to any of the below you may need to self-isolate for 10 days, working from home where possible.

In the two days before the individual became symptomatic:

* Have you been within 2 metres of the individual for more than 15 minutes?
* Have you been within 1 metre of the individual for more than 1 minutes?
* Have you shared a car or sat in close proximity on public transport with the individual?

**If a team member tests positive what do we tell the rest of the team / department / local work area?**

Any confirmed or suspected cases should be treated sensitively and confidentially in the same way you would with anyone’s health condition.

It is ok to advise the team that there has been a potential case, without disclosing names, in the office / local area and reassure staff that with the measures put in place then there is low risk due to social distancing.

It is likely that some colleagues may be anxious, and we recommend line managers listen to these concerns and try and reassure colleagues. Where possible you may want to suggest that anyone in work with the individual on the 2 days prior to symptoms starting work from home for 10 days.

If you need any further guidance contact Workforce

**I have received a message from a contact tracer in line with the Test Trace Protect Plan advising me that I have potentially been in contact with someone with COVID-19, what steps need to be taken?**

You should go home immediately and self-isolate in line with the advice of the contact tracer. The next steps may include a test, which will be organised by the contact tracer, would be either:

1. If test is positive;
	1. Self-isolate for 10 days post symptom development or until 2 days without fever (whichever is the latest), or
	2. If asymptomatic, the individual should self-isolate for 10 days from last contact with case
2. If test is negative; 10 days from last contact with case.

Household members may also need to self-isolate for 10 days from the start of symptoms in the case.

Please refer to [ESR Recording Covid Absence](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/covid-19-reporting-update) document on how to record.

**Someone in my household has received a message from a contact tracer in line with the Test Trace Protect Plan advising them that they have potentially been in contact with someone with COVID-19, what steps need to be taken?**

If you are able to work from home please do so for 10 days as a precautionary measure.

If you are unable to work from home please speak with your line manager or Workforce.

**My child has been told to self-isolate due to a positive case in their class, what does this mean for me?**

Managers will try and be as flexible as possible in these circumstances. Where possible work from home. Where home working is not available look at alternative working arrangements around childcare arrangements. Where no alternative arrangements can be found then up to 3 days (pro-rata) Special Leave may be granted per episode and this can be used flexibly around childcare and used in hours. This can be used in conjunction with other leave, such as annual leave, time off in lieu or unpaid leave.

If your child has been told to self-isolate then it is only them that need to isolate within your household unless they become symptomatic and then the whole household will need to self-isolate.

If further advice is needed please contact Workforce.

## Self-Isolating

**I am self-isolating, do I need to provide any evidence from day 8?**

No

If you are self-isolating and on sick leave no fit note or evidence is needed until day 21. This is to help the demand on GPs.

This is only if the absence is related to Covid-19 symptoms/illness - all other illnesses we require a fit note from day 8.

**I am self-isolating but want to work from home, what can I do?**

You must self-isolate to help control the spread of infection, if you have the facilities to work from home then that is the preferred option if you are fit to work. In all cases this will be recorded on ESR so we can accurately monitor cases. Speak with your manager about whether any work can be done from home if you are well enough.

We recommend you must you maintain regular contact with your manager to keep up to date about changes.

**What does Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (Social Distancing Regulation) mean for NWSSP?**

Under [regulations](https://gov.wales/new-powers-to-enforce-coronavirus-social-distancing-come-into-force-in-wales) implemented from 7th April 2020 it became law for employers to ensure that all reasonable measures must be taken to ensure a safe social distance, 2 metres, is maintained between employees. Within our work places we have been able to do this and site leads / health and safety representatives are monitoring this and utilising empty areas / meeting rooms to help spread out any staff required in the office.

Further information can be found in the [Safe Systems of Work](https://nwssp.nhs.wales/covid-19-information/staff-area-coronavirus-updates1/library-of-information-for-staff/) document which will be updated when new guidance is issued.

We recognise this isn't as straightforward for some of our other working environments, but all reasonable measures will be taken across all environments.

If you have any concerns regarding your working environment please contact Workforce.

Any tasks that may mean social distancing isn’t possible will needs a [Working in Close Proximity](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/524457) risk assessment completed.

**How can we safely socially distance in the office?**

It is everyone’s responsibility to socially distance.

All our workplaces have been space planned by colleagues in Specialist Estate Services to ensure we know the maximum number of colleagues that we can safely accommodate in the workplace. Signage has been put up across all our work places in line with government guidance and the space plans. This includes safety measures in communal areas, for example one in one out of small areas. Each workplace has been assessed based on space available.

All offices, where possible, have extended their opening hours so employees can work at different times to reduce the number of staff in the office. We recommend teams produce rotas based on local requirements and building hours. We suggest you share the rotas with the local Site Lead, so they are aware of team working hours.

Local teams are responsible for ensuring they keep rotas or lists of who attends the office. You may want to liaise with your local [Site Lead](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/building-site-leads-group) for support and guidance.

We recommend those that are able to work from home do so.

**Myself, or someone in my household, is awaiting surgery or other treatment and we have been advised to self-isolate for 10 days, what does this mean for me?**

If you are fit to work and want to continue working from home, you can continue to do so.

The time will be recorded on ESR as Special Leave Increasing Balance as you are being “medically excluded” for infection precaution purposes.

Whether you can work from home or not you will receive full pay as this is classed as an authorised absence. Please speak with your line manager to discuss arrangements.

Where it is someone in your household we would follow the guidance as if someone in the household was symptomatic.

Recovery time also needs to be planned – if it is yourself it may be classed as Sickness Absence under the Managing Attendance at Work Policy, if it is someone in your household you may be asked to utilise annual leave, TOIL or unpaid leave.

## [ESR and Covid-19](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/511962)

**How do I record self-isolation?**

This will depend on the situation and whether you are able to work from home or unfit for work. Further details can be found [here](https://www.nhsconfed.org/-/media/Confederation/Files/Wales%20Confed/Wales%20Employers/COVID-19%20Reasons%20for%20Absence%20Table%20-%201Apr201).

Where the absence is sickness related a Return to Work must be completed for every occasion.

**Will contractual sick pay be paid if self-isolating?**

If you are self-isolating and unable to work from home then this will be classed as paid special leave. If you are self-isolating and able, to you can continue to work from home. If you become symptomatic and unfit for work then this will change to sick pay in line with contractual sick pay entitlements.

## High Risk / Vulnerable colleagues

Everyone within NWSSP should complete the ESR All Wales Covid-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool and those who may fall into the high risk or extremely vulnerable categories should discuss what adjustments could be put in place for additional protection.

**How do I know if I am in the extremely vulnerable category?**

The guidance issued by [Welsh Government](https://gov.wales/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-people-defined-on-medical-grounds-as-extremely-vulnerable-from-coronavirus-covid-19-html) lists the following as extremely vulnerable:

* Solid organ transplant recipients
* People with specific cancers:
	+ People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
	+ People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
	+ People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
	+ People having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
	+ People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
* People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
* People with severe single organ disease (e.g. Liver, Cardio, Renal, Neurological).
* People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (SCID), homozygous sickle cell).
* People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection.
* Pregnant women with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.
* Children up to the age of 18 with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

Those within those categories would have received a letter from the Chief Medical Officer, their GP or Consultant.

Everyone within NWSSP should complete the ESR All Wales Covid-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool and those who may fall into the high risk or extremely vulnerable categories should discuss what adjustments could be put in place for additional protection.

**Will I need to shield again if my area goes into local lockdown?**

Not necessarily. So far none of the local lockdowns have required shielding to resume. Welsh Government will keep a record of those in the extremely vulnerable category and the areas they live in. This will be monitored and if the Chief Medical Officer thinks there is a risk shielding in those areas may be reinstated. This will be communicated via news outlets; Welsh Government briefings and letters will be issued.

**I am high risk but not classed as extremely vulnerable, what applies to me?**

This group includes those who are:

* aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
* under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
	+ chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as [**asthma**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/a/article/asthma), [**chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/ch/article/chronicobstructivepulmonarydisease), [**emphysema**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/e/article/emphysema) or [**bronchitis**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/b/article/bronchitis)
	+ chronic heart disease, such as [**heart failure**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/h/article/heartfailure)
	+ [**chronic kidney disease**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/k/article/kidneydisease%2Cchronic)
	+ chronic liver disease, such as [**hepatitis**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/h/article/hepatitis)
	+ chronic neurological conditions, such as [**Parkinson’s disease**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/p/article/parkinsonsdisease), [**motor neurone disease**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/m/article/motorneuronedisease), [**multiple sclerosis (MS)**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/m/article/multiplesclerosis), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
	+ [**diabetes**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/d/article/diabetes)
	+ problems with your spleen – for example, [**sickle cell anaemia**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/s/article/sicklecellanaemia) or if you have had your spleen removed
	+ a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as [**HIV and AIDS**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/h/article/hivandaids), or medicines such as [**steroid tablets**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/s/article/steroidtablets) or [**chemotherapy**](https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/ch/article/chemotherapy)
	+ being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
* those who are pregnant

The advice for those in this high-risk category is the same as that for the wider population. Anyone who falls into this category should pay particular attention to [social distancing and hygiene advice](https://gov.wales/coronavirus-social-distancing-guidance).

Everyone within NWSSP should complete the [ESR All Wales Covid-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/page/79094) and those who fall into the high risk or extremely vulnerable categories should discuss what adjustments could be put in place for additional protection.

**Are there any special steps we need to take in respect of pregnant workers?**

An [Expectant Mothers risk assessment](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/415970) should be completed by line managers for all pregnant colleagues.

Latest guidance recommends that pregnant women under 28 weeks’ gestation (in the first and second trimester of pregnancy) with no underlying health conditions, should follow the guidance on social distancing in the same way as the general population.

Subject to taking social distancing precautions in the work environment, in the same way as other colleagues, pregnant women under 28 weeks gestation may continue to work as normal where homeworking cannot be facilitated.

However pregnant women from 28 weeks’ gestation (in the third trimester of pregnancy), and pregnant women with underlying health conditions, such as lung or heart disease, may experience more severe symptoms of the virus and are therefore advised to take a more precautionary approach and are strongly advised to follow social distancing advice and where possible work from home.

Everyone within NWSSP should complete the ESR All Wales Covid-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool and those who may fall into the high risk or extremely vulnerable categories should discuss what adjustments could be put in place for additional protection.

## Working Arrangements

**What are the current working arrangements within NWSSP?**

Due to the diverse nature of the organisation there isn’t a simple answer to this.

Our front line staff have had their roles risk assessed and measures have been put in place to ensure colleagues safety.

Our office based staff have had their roles assessed to see if they could be enabled to work from home and where possible this has been put in place. In some areas attendance at the office is still required and these roles have been assessed to ensure safety measures put in place.

Where appropriate flexible measures have been put in place such us:

* Longer office opening hours to minimise staff at peak times
* Flexible working options
* Working outside core hours
* Working on a rota for office attendance

**Can I work from home?**

Firstly, we appreciate not all colleagues can work from home, particularly those in front line roles. Secondly, our network will not be able to support every colleague with remote access and as such, we aim to communicate with managers to ensure business critical roles have priority access. Other than those who are required to self-isolate it is recommended that you dock / connect to a network within any office to update software regularly. This will be determined by business needs at local team level.

Staff who are self-isolating will not be required to come into the office.

Colleagues who are unable to work from home but are asked not to come into the workplace are assured that they will be paid in full. You may consider volunteering for other roles within NWSSP or supporting community efforts (whilst staying safe and following public guidance on social distancing).

Please appreciate this situation is changing daily and often rapidly so, if not working and asked not to come in, stay in contact with your manager. Managers should liaise with Workforce regarding Deployment opportunities.

##

**How long are these measures going to be in place?**

At this moment we have no idea. The next 6 months are going to continue to be uncertain and until January working arrangements will remain as they are.

The key message is that if you are able to work from home please continue to do so to minimise the risk of infection.

**Do I have to go to the office / workplace?**

This is dependent on your role and facilities available to you. In the first instance you should speak with your line manager.

**Is the office / workplace safe?**

The site leads have worked hard over the last 6-9 months to ensure all our workplaces are Covid safe in line with current guidance.

All workplaces now have signage, cleaning supplies, social distancing measures and safety measures in place.

Several resources have been published, and continue to be updated as things change:

* [Safe systems of work](https://nwssp.nhs.wales/corporate-documents/corporate-coronavirus-useful-public-information/safe-system-of-work-on-social-distancing-at-sites-16-09-2020/)
* [New ways of working – site information](https://nwssp.nhs.wales/corporate-documents/corporate-coronavirus-useful-public-information/site-toolkit-new-pdf/)
* [New ways of working](https://nwssp.nhs.wales/corporate-documents/corporate-coronavirus-useful-public-information/new-ways-of-working-pdf/)
* [Checklist](https://nwssp.nhs.wales/corporate-documents/corporate-coronavirus-useful-public-information/checklist-pdf/)
* [Making our Workplace safe](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YehCO2KwQ0&t=116s) - Video from Unison representative Alwyn Hockin

Information on the Site Leads is available [here](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/building-site-leads-group), they meet fortnightly as a group to ensure best practice is being carried out across the sites. Levels of stock of cleaning supplied and hand sanitiser is checked and we are confident there is ample stock across the sites currently. Supplies are kept secure by the site leads so if you require any stock please liaise with your local site lead.

**Do I need to wear a face covering in the office/workplace?**

Yes, all employees are required to wear a face covering in the workplace apart from when sat at their desk / workstation.

As of Monday 14th September it became mandatory in Wales to wear [face coverings](https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-public) in indoor public places, with the exemption of those under 11 and premises where food and drink is sold for consumption on the premises.

##### As NWSSP have requested that visitors should not be visiting sites unless essential our reception areas are not classed as public areas for the time being. Where visitors do attend any of our sites there will be an expectation that visitors will wear face coverings.

##### At NWSSP we will be sensitive to the fact that not all exemptions for wearing face masks are visible and obvious and we ask colleagues to be discreet as we don’t know everyone’s personal circumstances. It is an individual’s responsibility to wear a face covering in the mandated areas.

If you are exempt from wearing a face covering and are required to attend the workplace please speak with your manager immediately to discuss arrangements and see if alternative working arrangements can be made.

Please ensure that any single use face coverings are disposed of responsibly.

**I have concerns over Covid safety in the workplace, who do I contact?**

If you have any concerns about Covid safety in the workplace in the first instance you should speak with your line manager. If your concerns are not resolved or you don’t feel comfortable speaking with your line manager contact Workforce.

**Can I work in the office on an alternative pattern e.g. in the evenings to help with childcare arrangements or at weekends?**

Office hours across our offices have been extended to help staff work more flexibly, further details are available on our [website](http://www.nwssp.wales.nhs.uk/home).

This will help those who cannot work from home, to minimise travelling on public transport at peak hours and for those who may need to make alternative arrangements due to caring responsibilities

We recommend teams having a rota of when staff will be in the office and sharing that with their local Site Lead for security reasons.

##

## Annual Leave and Bank Holidays

**I am working the Bank Holiday / weekend, will I be eligible for Overtime?**

In line with NHS Terms and Conditions of employment you may be eligible for [enhancements / overtime](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/opendoc/514133).

Any work on bank holidays / overtime should be agreed with your line manager prior to the work being carried out. If you are working the bank holiday as part of your normal contractual working hours you may not be eligible for enhancements / overtime.

**Do I need to book bank holidays on ESR?**

Yes.

If Bank Holidays fall on a normal working day, and you are not working, it will need to be booked on ESR.

**The Government have announced the possibility of carrying over leave for the next 2 years. Will this apply here?**

It may be possible to carry over an agreed amount of leave over the next 2 years but this would require agreement with your manager with consideration to the needs of the service. This will be managed through NWSSPs Carry Over of Annual Leave procedure.

**I have a holiday booked and need to quarantine for 14 days after my return, how should this be handled?**

The UK government advises against non-essential travel, except to countries listed as exempt.

The current list of countries can be found here –

[*https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-countries-and-territories-exempt-from-advice-against-all-but-essential-international-travel*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-countries-and-territories-exempt-from-advice-against-all-but-essential-international-travel)

Travel from a country not listed will mean that an individual must self-isolate for 14 days on return.

Individuals should speak with their line manager as soon as possible to discuss arrangements on how this time will be handled.

This time will be dependant on role and personal circumstance. Where possible employees should be given the opportunity to work from home. Where that is not an option the time can be taken as a combination of annual leave, unpaid leave and TOIL.

There may be circumstances where self-isolation rules changes while abroad and these cases needed to dealt with sympathetically.

There may be reasons where someone has had to travel to a country not on the exempt list due to personal reasons, e.g. a funeral, and a compassionate approach should be taken in these circumstances.

In all cases it is important that holiday plans are discussed with line managers beforehand to ensure necessary arrangements and/or contingencies are put in place.

For Local Authorities with [Local Lockdown](https://gov.wales/local-lockdown) restrictions part of the guidance is that residents do not leave the county to go abroad.

**Will I face disciplinary action if I ignore the Government advice?**

We will look at these situations on a case by case basis but potentially yes, disciplinary action may go ahead if your actions are deemed misconduct. Please refer to the Disciplinary Policy and Standards of Behaviour Framework which outlines responsibilities as an employee.

In all cases an Initial Assessment of Facts should be completed to fully understand the individual situation and for an informed decision to be made.

## Recruitment

**I have a new starter due to start, what should I do?**

It’s important to communicate with your new colleague to keep them up to date with what they can expect when they start. This will include working arrangements, homeworking, on site working, equipment, training, flexible working etc.

It’s important that your new starters risk is assessed to ensure we are putting the correct protective measures in place for their individual needs.

##### For all new starters the process is as follows:

##### Inform the site lead of new starter and intended once appointment is finalised and start date is agreed

##### Line Manager to go through the [Checklist](https://nwssp.nhs.wales/corporate-documents/corporate-coronavirus-useful-public-information/checklist-pdf/) (currently named Returning to the Workplace Checklist) with new colleague

##### Line manager contact local [Site Lead](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/building-site-leads-group) for a copy of the Health and Safety Local Induction Handbook

##### Line manager to carry out/organise for someone within team to carry out Health and Safety local induction and complete the Handbook

##### Return the signed Handbook to site lead

Due to social distancing and infection control measures site leads are unable to do local inductions – a member of your local team will need to carry out this induction. Your local site lead will be able to provide you any paperwork needed for this.

Contact Workforce or your local [Site Lead](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/building-site-leads-group) for further information and to discuss possible options.

**Am I still able to advertise jobs on TRAC and NHS Jobs?**

Yes, contingency plans are in place to ensure our recruitment services continue to run.

**Are job interviews still going ahead?**

Interviews should take place via virtual means, for example Teams, and not in person. Guidance is available on virtual meetings online.

If you need any further guidance or advice then please contact Workforce.

**What about Pre-Employment Checks (PEC)?**

Recruitment are carrying out PECs virtually. On the individuals first day the new employee will need to show their ORIGINAL identity documents, right to work documents and proof of qualifications (if applicable) to their line manager.

## Deployment

**Can I help in another part of NWSSP or NHS Organisation?**

During extraordinary times it may be necessary to rely on deploying colleagues to other areas of NWSSP to ensure critical work is completed. Workforce have been working on identifying critical services and staff who may be able to be deployed to support those critical services. In particular the services deemed most critical: Supply Chain, Health Courier Service, Payroll, Recruitment etc

Workforce have also been expanding the NWSSP Bank to ensure there is additional resource to call on should it be needed.

We are working with other Welsh NHS organisations to explore this, but in the first instance to ensure we can operate our business critical areas and you will be asked if you would consider deployment to an alternative role in the short term to support other areas of the organisation.

**If I am travelling to an alternative work location(s) as a result of being deployed to support front line / critical services, will I be eligible to claim expenses?**

Yes you will be able to claim for any travel expenses incurred as a result of supporting services. This will be through the e-Expenses system and claimed as business mileage, the system will automatically deduct home to base and you can use the reason 'COVID-19' for reporting.

## NWSSP Bank

**I have a friend / family member who wants to join NWSSP BANK, who do they contact?**

It is likely we are going to need to more BANK workers, so anyone interested should email Workforce or 01443 848564 to register their details.

**If I have to self-isolate, and I’m on the bank, will I get paid?**

You will be paid for any pre-booked shifts.

Unfortunately bank workers are not entitled to occupational sick pay, so if you do not have shifts booked, and you are unable to take any because you are unwell, this will not be paid.

## IT and Systems

**What is happening with Office 365 (O365)?**

Colleagues in IT have been working hard to upgrade as many users as possible to Office 365, which will allow more staff to work from home without the need of a VPN. In order to do this staff are recommended to dock their laptops once a week at an NWSSP office for system updates.

Where staff are self-isolating they should try and attend an office once isolation finishes.

Further information about O365 , applications and training is available here.

**Can I access ESR without a VPN?**

You can access ESR Self Service without a VPN. This will allow you to view payslips, annual leave and personal information.

**I don’t know my ESR login?**

Contact the ESR Hub on esrhub.wales@wales.nhs.uk or 02920905400

You will need your employee number or National Insurance number

**Can I access the intranet without a VPN?**

IT are working on all colleagues being able to access information off the intranet without VPN. In the meantime we are keeping the website up to date and all Covid-19 related information can be found on the NWSSP Website

**I need a phone to carry out my role effectively, how can I get access to a phone at home?**

IT are working on providing a ‘soft phone’ solution to users who need access to a phone from home. This runs through your laptop and is linked to the phone network.

IT have asked that this is coordinated by departments or teams and if interested log a call via IT Self Service Portal to enquire about access to a ‘soft phone’. Please not this is only available if f you are a telephone user, but not on one of our contact centres.

For those in contact centre roles this is being looked at as an organisation to aide our colleagues in these roles.

## Well-being

**Where can I find information about looking after my well-being**?

Information is available on our [website](http://www.nwssp.wales.nhs.uk/looking-after-your-health-and-well-being)

**What support is available to me?**

Our colleagues have been busy pulling together support during Covid-19. Some of these wellbeing resources include:

* [Mental Health First Aiders](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/955/MHFA%20A4%20English%20intrav2.pdf)
* [Peer Support Network](http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/955/NWSSP%20C-19%20Well-being%20Service%20for%20staff.pdf)
* [MIND](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/) - Active monitoring guided programme
* [Silvercloud](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/news/65266) – online CBT
* [Headspace](https://help.headspace.com/hc/en-us/articles/360044971154-Headspace-for-the-NHS) – guided mindfulness
* [Neyber](https://wellbeing.neyber.co.uk/) – financial advice and support
* [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org/)

**How can I contact a Mental Health First Aider?**

Contact details can be found [here](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/955/MHFA%20A4%20English%20intrav2.pdf).

Our Mental Health First Aiders are employees who have volunteered to undertake this role and work across our services. Sometimes they may be unavailable themselves due to work commitments so if you are having trouble contacting a Mental Health First Aider please contact nwssp.workforce@wales.nhs.uk who will be able to pass a message on or put you in contact with another colleague to ensure you receive support when you need it.

##

## Single Lead Employer Colleagues

**Do these FAQs apply to me?**

Generally, yes.

Our advice is based on the information from Public Health Wales and Gov.UK

Please speak to your Educational Supervisor as advice may vary dependant on where you are currently on rotation.

## Training and Development

**What is happening with internal training events?**

Our Workforce and OD colleagues have launched a new virtual training programme.

The most up to date schedule can be accessed on the [Learning and Development pages](http://nww.sharedservicespartnership.wales.nhs.uk/learning-and-development-opportunities)

**What is happening with external training events?**

External training providers are restarting their training programmes, to find out more contact our Learning and Development Team.

## Business Continuity

**What Business Continuity plans should we put in place?**

It is recommended that managers ensure they have up to date contact details for all their team and prepare local business continuity plans as needed to ensure they monitor service delivery and impact. Workloads should be prioritised with clear responsibilities for work.

Managers should give consideration to whether, in the case of staff absence through illness or self-isolation, they need to engage Bank workers to support the service. Managers may also want to consider training others from inside the wider service / organisation. If you would like to explore and of these options please contact Workforce who will be able to advise you further.

**What should we do about internal and external meetings?**

We recommend that all meetings are conducted virtually.

We are not accepting visitors to any of our sites currently. Please speak with your local site lead if you may need someone to visit a site.

**Will there still be post delivered and picked up from our offices?**

We have contingency plans in place if we need to redirect deliveries to other offices.

**Will we have people to open and close our offices?**

Make sure you are aware of who your local key holders are.

If key holders plan to work from home/self-isolate etc., they need to let building managers know.

If you are happy to become a key holder, please make yourself known to the local building manager.

## Employee Relations (i.e. disciplinary, grievance, sickness)

**Will I prompt the next sickness stage if I have coronavirus?**

If suspected coronavirus we would not expect employees to ‘trigger’ the next sickness stage under the Managing Attendance at Work Policy.

**I am currently involved in an employee relations case (e.g. disciplinary, grievance, formal sickness stage).**

Employee relation cases were put on hold during the lockdown, these have now restarted as appropriate and we are working with our Trade Union Partners to ensure that these are dealt with dependent on the individual situation.