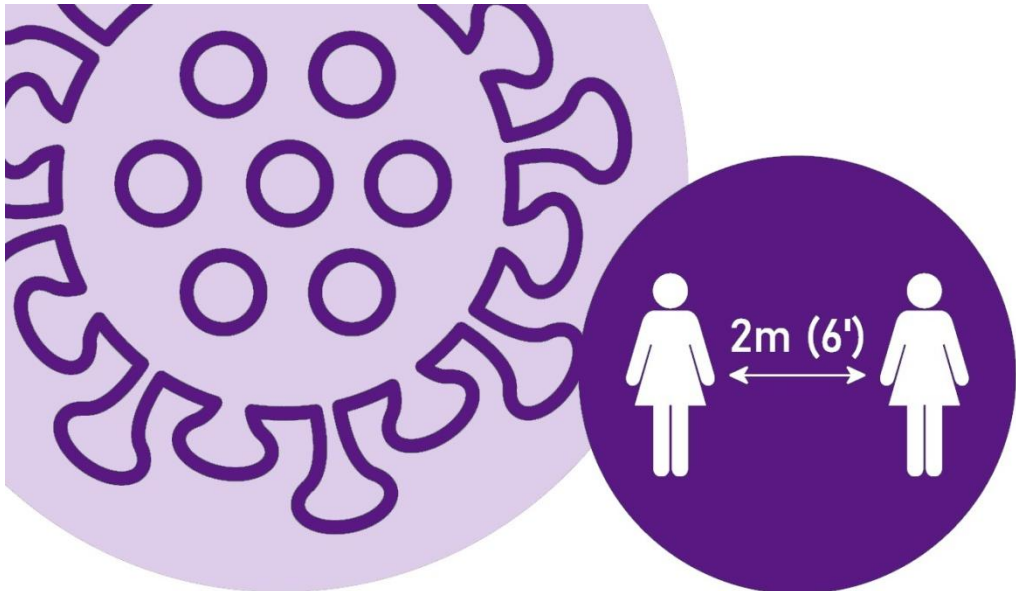# Be on the **Safe Side**

The organising approach to safe work after lockdown
Information Pack & Safety Checklist

Contents

-

Section 1: Safety in **numbers**

An Organising Approach

Organising

UNISON is the organising union. Taking an organising approach has a particular meaning when we are working on safety issues, especially during a pandemic when the virus is a threat to all members, everywhere.

- An organising approach means we work together, to achieve collectively for all members what individual workers cannot achieve alone.

- An organising approach means all workers have the right to contribute to the decision to accept employer assurances that a workplace is safe. If we have concerns we speak as one group.

- During a pandemic "an injury to one is an injury to all". One worker exposed to infection is a risk to all workers. And a risk to their families.

- Finally, a collective approach requires us to pay close attention to those, such as some disabled and Black workers, who are particularly at risk of infection or for whom infection has particularly serious consequences.

We only achieve and maintain this level of collective safety by working in groups, keeping close contact, and sharing information updates.

The safety challenge

Scotland's public services operate from several tens of thousands of buildings scattered across the country. Every work location must be risk assessed by the employer and safety measures must be sustained.

Unison Scotland has a magnificent team of around 400 highly trained and experienced safety reps. However our existing safety reps can't check every individual work place, or hold employers to their commitments as the pandemic continues:

- The scale of the task is enormous
- Within each workplace the safety requirements may vary in different parts of a building or service
- Many individuals require personal risk assessments and reasonable adjustments to the outcome of generic risk assessments
- COVID safety requires a detailed knowledge of service provisions, staff duties and the nature of service user contact if all infection risks are to be managed.
- In addition to checking risk assessments there is the added work of inspecting and challenging unsafe work where risk assessments have been agreed but not applied.

Negotiating, assessing and enforcing thousands of safety plans must be a shared effort. We need a collective approach.

We also need new reps, specifically trained to work on Covid safety. To achieve this we all need to be inclusive and flexible in our support of new reps.

The challenge of organising for safe work

To achieve safety at work we must work together - experienced reps leading groups of new reps and members. All committed to staying safe at work.

UNISONs response:

- Mapping our safety work to cover all workplaces.
- Training hundreds of new safety reps and safety mentors.
- Linking experienced reps with new safety reps for training, mentoring and safety checks.
- Sharing information on workplace checks with all members affected
- Building a collective voice on safety with the clear message - no unsafe work.

If you would like to join this work in any of the above roles, please contact your branch.

Making work clean & safe

The virus affects workers in different ways.

- Working from home is safest, but not everyone can work from home.
- Cleaners are undervalued by employers but they are possibly the most important people in the campaign for safe workplaces. Where cleaning is outsourced we need to ensure cleaners benefit from the safety of the union.
- Private offices are more easily secured than offices with service user contact.
- The more staff and service users that enter a building, the greater the infection risk.
- Measures such as screens protect staff in some public facing services, but screens are impractical in some work settings such as care.
- Social distancing is difficult or impossible in some care and education settings.

Your local knowledge of the particular way your workplace operates is crucial to the success of our work. Make your voice heard. Become a safety rep.

Priority groups

Women and Covid 19

Many of the key frontline jobs are held by women whose work is historically undervalued - cleaning, social care, residential care, health care etc.

Women are also underrepresented in our existing safety rep group. Supporting women as safety reps in jobs such as care and education is particularly important.

Black workers and Covid19

Black workers face greater risk than other workers. The risk of infection and death is four times greater for Black workers. The full reasons are not known but we can play our part in addressing this issue by pressing employers for action and ensuring our Black members face no barriers to safety information and support.

Disabled workers and Covid19

The position of disabled workers is complex and variable. Some disabled workers have the same pandemic experience as all workers. Some lost their reasonable adjustments in the shift to homeworking and were effectively furloughed. And some disabled workers

have medical conditions which require them to shield or isolate. With lockdown over the challenge is to make the 'new normal' inclusive and safe.

The particular circumstances of each disabled worker requires attention through a combination of **BOTH** personal risk assessment **AND** reasonable adjustment. What is safe and inclusive for most workers may not be 'Equally Safe' for disabled workers.

Many workers who have been shielding remain rightly anxious about safety and work from home must remain a top priority where required.

Safety in numbers - how to get involved

Our simple message is that there is safety in numbers. By working together in groups with new safety reps we can

- Check the safety of thousands of workplaces
- Examine each work setting in greater detail using the real experts - UNISON members
- Share safety information to wider networks of colleagues and UNISON members
- Create a united collective when we say "yes" to safe work, or we say "No" to unsafe work.

You can help this process by:

- **Volunteering to be a safety rep**

- **Training in Covid safety issues**

- **Following your branch Facebook page and UNISON websites**

- **Sharing UNISON information with colleagues**

- **Attending online safety meetings**

- **Being a part of a shared response to the pandemic - safety in numbers.**

Train to be a
safety rep

To register for UNISON's two hour seminar send an email to
membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

Be on the safe **side**

Section 2:

How to work **safely**

We know from private care homes and the Leicester sweatshops that workplace safety is key to beating the virus. This section contains very brief, summary guidance for UNISON Scotland members about safe work during the pandemic.

Many UNISON members worked through the pandemic. As Scottish government ease the lockdown restrictions, other UNISON members in Scotland will again be at work and may be working with colleagues who, until now, have been in workplaces with fewer staff. Others will work from home and those with extreme health vulnerabilities will be shielding. This leaflet addresses your safety needs.

COVID19 Symptoms?

One thing has not changed. Whatever your job or wherever you work, if you have any coronavirus symptoms you should self-isolate immediately in line with government advice. This is the only way to stop the spread of coronavirus in a workplace or to the wider community.

UNISON Support

UNISON is here to support members through these changes. If you have any questions or concerns about any of the things mentioned in this guidance, or are worried that your employer is not properly assessing the risks and taking steps to protect you at work, you should contact your UNISON health and safety rep. You can do this via your UNISON branch.

If you don't know how to contact your branch use our branch contact finder at: https://branches.unison.org.uk/

Alternative contacts for UNISON Scotland: membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

Glasgow 0141 342 2899
Aberdeen 01224 620624
Inverness 01463 715891

Risk assessment

For those returning to work – or working alongside colleagues as they come back into the workplace – employers must ensure that the risks to staff are assessed and managed. The aim is to make workplaces "COVID secure".

Employers have a legal responsibility to start with a risk assessment where they prioritise measures that eliminate or minimise the risk

of COVID-19, for their employees and service users.

Click for UNISON advice on risk assessments

Employers must consult with union safety reps, and should, where possible, jointly agree and publish the risk assessment.

ADVICE

Employer action after risk assessment

Some key Employer duties

1. Let staff work from home where possible
You can only be compelled to work when it is reasonably safe. Home is the safest place. Employers must therefore first make every reasonable effort to enable as many staff as possible to work from home. This is particularly important to workers with health vulnerabilities.

UNISON has produced guidance on working from home. Please contact your branch if you would like information on working from home or go to: https://www.unison.org.uk/coronavirus-rights-work/coronavirus-working-home/

2. Work with staff and unions to make workplaces as safe as they can be
Where working from home is not an option – and workplaces have stayed open or are reopening – employers must use the results of their risk assessment to help them adapt

workplaces and working practices to comply with the government's social distancing guidelines.

That means keeping people two metres apart wherever possible and to minimise face to face contact between people to the safest level possible.

Those planned adaptations should then be agreed with union safety reps, explained to all staff, and appropriate training organised for staff **before a workplace reopens or more staff come in**.

Training on arrival at work procedures is especially important. Every employer should provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitisers at entry and exit points for staff and any visitors.

Employers and unions should work with unions to monitor the impact of these changes to workplaces and working practices.

3. Address mental health impact
Worry about health and the knock-on effects of the pandemic can give rise to mental health issues. Employers should be aware of government guidance and offer staff support if they need it.

UNISON Learning offers a range of mental health resources [click here]

UNISON's charity *"There for You"* can also provide signposting to emotional support. [click here]

4. Social distancing
In workplaces where social distancing measures are possible employers should re-design workspaces to maintain a distance of

two metres between people wherever possible. For UNISON social distancing guidance click here.

5. Keeping workplaces clean

Workplaces should be cleaned more frequently, paying close attention to high-contact objects like door handles and keyboards. Supplies of hand sanitiser should be replenished frequently. Employers should also communicate clear hygiene and cleaning information to staff and service users.

6. Where staff are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 or have protected characteristics

Employers must pay particular regard to whether staff doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

Extremely vulnerable staff ("shielded") and staff who are clinically vulnerable (but are not in the "shielded" group) should work from home where possible. Particular attention should also be paid to staff who live with clinically extremely vulnerable ("shielded") individuals.

The employer must also ensure that any measures they take do not unfairly discriminate against anyone on the grounds of age, race, sex, disability or other protected characteristic and that reasonable adjustments for disabled workers are provided.

7. Personal protective equipment (PPE)

You may need to wear PPE if you are providing direct care to service users, cleaning premises contaminated by COVID-19, or where measures such as social distancing are not always possible. For UNISON guidance on PPE click here [UK] or here [Scotland]

Steps you can take

1. Do a safety check

If you are concerned about your safety at work we can help. We have a written safety checklist (below) and an online safety checklist you can complete and email to your branch or UNISON Scotland. You can complete the checklist by clicking here.

2. Attend a UNISON safety webinar

UNISON runs online safety briefings for members and new safety reps. They are free and you can get information on the next Webinar by emailing membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

3. Train to be a safety rep2.

UNISON has created an easy and accessible route for members who want to work on Covid safety issues. The initial training lasts two hours. After that you will work in a group with support from experienced mentors. If you want to go on to complete further safety training that can also be done onlne.

To train to be a safety rep just email: membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

4. How to raise a concern

Remember, if you have concerns about what is happening in your workplace, please speak to your health and safety rep who you can contact via your UNISON branch. You can get contact details for your branch at https://branches.unison.org.uk/

Alternative contact for UNISON Scotland: membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

Section 3: Action on **equalities**

Covid19 has a disparate impact on many workers who have protections under the Equality Act 2010. The virus doesn't discriminate, but it strikes at underlying inequalities and disadvantage that existed before the pandemic.

This section summarises how equality obligations combine with safety duties to create particular safeguards for workers with protected characteristics.

Key equality facts

- Almost two thirds of Covid deaths in the UK are among the disabled community.
- Black workers are four times more likely to die from Covid 19 than white workers.
- Older people account for around 80% of Covid deaths
- Deaths have been clustered in care homes predominantly staffed by low paid women.

Safety duties

Step 1: Identify the hazard

Step 2: Identify who is affected

Step 3: Determine measures to remove or mitigate the threat

Step 4: Implement the measures and communicate with staff

Step 5: Monitor & review

Equality duties

Step 1: Identify discrimination

Step 2: Identify who is affected

Step 3: Eliminate discrimination and promote equality including reasonable adjustments for disabled workers

Step 4: Monitor, review and report

Victimisation

Challenging discrimination and unsafe work is key to our campaign. One crucial law applies to both equality duties and safety duties and protects members who stand up for safety and equality - it is unlawful to punish or victimise workers who challenge inequality or unsafe work.

Protected characteristics

The grounds for protection under the Equality Act are as follows:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Examples

Some **real** examples of discrimination include:

- Forcing someone to attend work when their health leaves them extremely vulnerable to C19
- Excluding migrant workers from workplace communications about safety after they have complained about unsafe work
- Instructing a disabled person to work from home without assessing reasonable adjustments
- Compelling a person to attend work when they are the main carer for a dependent with an extreme health vulnerability

- Reconfiguring the layout of a workplace without due regard for the access needs of disabled workers
- Freezing the recruitment of older workers and Black workers because they face an increased risk from Covid infection

Equality proofed risk **assessment**

Step 1: Identifying discriminatory hazards

Although the virus is new, knowledge of its impact is substantial. Under safety law the employer is obliged to take reasonable steps to understand the nature of the hazard.

For example, an employer who houses migrant farm workers in mobile homes ought to know that cramped living conditions are a common experience for migrant workers and this creates an increased risk of infection. But the hazardous situation has two dimensions:

- The cramped conditions risk virus transmission; and,

- The marginalised, temporary and non-union status of migrant farm workers workers impedes a joint approach to infection control.

Employers have a duty to include equality impacts as they assess hazardous situations.

Step 2: Identifying who is affected

Identification of workers with equality protections should be included at step two of the risk assessment.

For example, workers from the following groups should be identified and subject to individual risk assessment:

- Disabled workers who also have health vulnerabilities

- Workers who have care commitments to people with health vulnerabilities

- Disabled workers who need reasonable adjustments to comply with new work arrangements

- Disabled workers whose pre-existing adjustments are degraded or removed by changed working practices

- Older workers who are at greater risk of serious impact if effected

- Pregnant workers

Communication

Employers may lack detailed information on the vulnerability of individual workers. This should be addressed by informing trade unions and staff that individual risk assessment is available for people who identify as belonging to a vulnerable group.

Fear and powerlessness are ideal conditions for transmission of the virus. Some employers may genuinely believe that "workers know to come forward and raise their concerns about Covid safety".

The uncomfortable truth is that underlying discrimination, austerity, cuts, outsourcing, privatisation, competitive commissioning and precarious work have left public services riddled with fear. Fear and silence are barriers to safe work.

Women, Black workers and other protected groups are disproportionately represented in the jobs and services where fear prevails.

Active measures are required to reassure workers that it is safe to ask for an individual risk assessment and to assert the right to benefit safety measures designed with their needs in mind.

Step 3: Measures to manage risk and keep workers equally safe

Many Covid safety measures are general rules that apply to all workers. For example, wearing face masks in shops.

However, all employers should know that treating all staff the same does not necessarily create equality. On the contrary, many "standard" policies have a different impact on disadvantaged groups.

General policies are a common source of discrimination and the same goes for generic risk assessments

In the case of face masks, many people with hearing impairments rely on lip reading to aid communication.

Increased homeworking and other technology enabled systems are an effective shield against infection. But not all workers have equal access to homeworking.

Women, Black workers and disabled workers are typically concentrated in lower paid jobs and often unable to access IT systems from home without additional support.

Some disabled workers rely on workbased adjustments to make employment fully accessible. A shift to homeworking, or safety adjustments in the workplace, can actually remove existing adjustments and make work less accessible.

These examples are just illustrations of the general point - individual risk assessments are the key to overcoming the discriminatory impact of Covid19

Step 4: Implementation

The reasoning behind Individual Risk Assessment is to create the opportunity for the employer to customise the implementation of safety measures in a way that has regard to the needs of workers facing discrimination.

It also breaks the dangerous silence created by fear of conflict and victimisation.

Step 4: Monitoring

Monitoring is vital to both safety and equality work. Monitoring systems must be capable of capturing and protecting the safety needs of individual workers with personal safety requirements.

Combating fear

Fear and silence heighten the hazardous effect of the virus.

Union support and individual risk assessments are the only way to make work Equally safe by overcoming the fear and powerlessness experienced by workers facing underlying discrimination.

Covid Equality **Plans**

The key is to develop a safety approach that embeds equality at all stages

Meet with the trade union and agree a Covid Equality Plan

Increase facility time to enable union reps to take on increased equality and safety duties

Ensure equality training, briefings and guidance for all managers and union reps engaged in risk assessment and safety management

Ensure union involvement in all stages of the risk assessment and safety management process

Make a public commitment to keep workers **Equally Safe** and describe how that works in practice.

Have regard to the known equality impacts of the virus and apply that to the workforce and the settings in which protected groups are employed

Agree the process for individual risk assessments, embed equality issues and communicate that facility to the workforce

Adopt all required measures for equal safety having due regard to the preservation of existing reasonable adjustments

Communicate ALL Covid safety measures to ALL staff with equalities embedded so that ALL staff can ensure that work is equally safe

Promote a culture within which staff are empowered to assert equality and safety rights, and challenge discrimination and unsafe work

Provide staff with a No Victimisation Guarantee and, adopt a Zero Tolerance approach to all forms of victimisation

Monitor the safety and wellbeing of all workers so they are **Equally Safe**

Section 4: Safety **Checklist**

This checklist helps UNISON safety reps ensure that workplaces are safe when they open, and remain safe. If the checklist raises concerns about your workplace use the online safety checklist to report your concerns to UNISON (see below)

Be on the safe side

Be a safety rep and make your workplace safer

All employers should have individual recovery plans for each workplace which must include risk assessments for all areas and activities.

There is also a requirement for individual risk assessments in various situations including but not limited to:

- Black workers

- Disabled workers

- Pregnant workers

- Staff with any significant health vulnerability

- Service users who fall into one or more of the categories above

Key principles:

Employers are obliged to work with UNISON to create the conditions for a safe return to work based on the principles and requirements set out below:

- The safety and welfare of staff are paramount

- The employer MUST take such action as is required to eliminate or mitigate the risk of infection

- National guidance should be followed with all risk assessments revised if and when guidance changes

- Staffing numbers and service user access may need to be restricted to ensure social distancing

- Various key groups require particular and individual attention

- Where workers can work from home this should be facilitated

- Additional resources are required for enhanced cleaning, PPE and risk assessments

- There should be training for staff and awareness sessions should be provided to ensure they are fully familiar with the new arrangements being put in place

- Binding procedures and protocols for staff and service users who display symptoms should be in place

- Where there is a requirement for homeworking consideration should be given to physical or social issues, costs beyond HMRC provision, accommodation, and equipment

- If measures to manage infection are overlooked and the risk to health is serious and imminent you are not obliged to work

- Your employer may be liable if you are needlessly infected or if you are punished for questioning work arrangements that you reasonably believe to be inadequate.

To use UNISON's online Covid Safety Check **click here**

Equality - key principle

Covid19 has a different impact on groups facing discrimination. It is a key principle of equality in safety work that the particular risks of workers with protected characteristics are identified and addressed.

In addition to risks from the virus, revised working arrangements can create new ways to exclude or disadvantage groups such as disabled workers.

All equality issues should be identified and addressed.

Breaks

In addition to safe workspaces, staff should have safe areas for regular breaks that comply with all guidance.

Transport

Risk Assessments should include any work related travel and any issues linked to compliance with public health guidance as it affects travel to work and travel during work time.

Conclusion

The above list of key principle is limited to the main elements of any discussion about safety during the pandemic. We provide questions to test these issues in greater depth below.

Questions for **you** and **UNISON**

Risk assessment is the employer responsibility, but UNISON seeks to engage wherever possible.

Does the branch have a plan to address safety issues during the pandemic?

(Yes) (No)

Does the plan address all the key issues?

(Yes) (No)

Step 1

Planning

Have the workplaces been mapped so the branch can chart progress on safety across different services?

(Yes) (No)

Has the spread of safety reps been included in the map so the branch knows the areas that each rep has to cover?

(Yes) (No)

Equality - UNISON's response

Covid19 has a different impact on groups facing discrimination. This must be included in the branch plan.

Has the branch included equality issues in the safety plan?

(Yes) (No)

Have safety reps been trained in the equality impacts of Covid19?

(Yes) (No)

Are equality reps included in the process of safety checking and challenging unsafe work?

(Yes) (No)

Step 2

Training

Have new safety reps been recruited and are there enough reps to cover all services?

(Yes) (No)

Has the employer been notified that UNISON has appointed new safety reps for this Covid safety work?

(Yes) (No)

Have all reps received basic training in Covid safety issues?

(Yes) (No)

Are all reps familiar with their role and the powers they have as safety reps?

(Yes) (No)

Have new reps been signposted to further health and safety training and the pathway to becoming fully trained and accredited?

(Yes) (No)

Step 3

Organising

Organising for safety brings all members to the process, protects individual reps from excess pressure and ensures the branch has power when safety arrangements are questioned or challenged.

Does the branch have a plan to address safety issues through a collective, organising approach?

(Yes) (No)

Mentoring

Mentoring plays a key role in supporting new reps and building an organising approach.

Have mentors been trained to lead new reps in an organising approach to Covid safety?

(Yes) (No)

Have new reps been allocated to experienced reps who can mentor them within informal safety groups?

(Yes) (No)

Member engagement

Do safety reps engage with members on their safety work, share information with members and encourage members to participate in the safety process?

(Yes) (No)

Step 4

Work with the employer

Many employers are supporting UNISON's project to strengthen our safety work.

Does your employer respect the obligation to engage with UNISON's safety reps?

Yes) (No

Do safety reps get time and facilities to do their work?

Yes) (No

Challenging unsafe work

If the need to challenge the employer arises, are the reps and members ready to work collectively as a group?

Yes) (No

Are there effective processes for groups to challenge unsafe work?

Yes) (No

Disputes

Are there processes to communicate quickly and effectively with members and keep members safe by escalating issues that cannot be resolved by discussion?

Yes) (No

Equality - challenging inequality

Does the branch have the processes, reps and member engagement to identify and challenge the discriminatory impact of Covid19?

Yes) (No

Questions
about the employer's consultation and overall plan for **safe work**

Has your work group been consulted on the risk assessment for your workplace?

Yes) (No

Are you satisfied that the union consultation addresses all key issues?

Yes) (No

Equality - Employer's response

Has the employer identified and addressed equality issues in their overall response?

Yes) (No

Has the employer consulted on equality issues in all workplace risk assessments?

Yes   No

Step 1

Preparing the Site

Health and Safety Check of the Building

Are you satisfied that these checks will be completed in time for your workplace opening?

Yes   No

Step 2

Availability of staff

Are you satisfied that safe staffing levels will be in place when the workplace re-opens?

Yes   No

Availability of key staff

Will the workplace close if key staff such as cleaners and safety supervisors are unavailable?

Yes   No

If not, are you satisfied that a safe environment can be maintained in the event of their absence?

Yes   No

Cleaning and hygiene

Have hygiene plans and resources targeted the key contact surfaces and locations where infection risk is greatest?

Yes   No

Are there enough cleaners to deliver the plan for extra cleaning?

Yes   No

Have the cleaners been trained and issued with required PPE such as gloves, overalls etc?

Yes   No

Have staff been trained in any tasks they must undertake to help cleaners meet revised cleaning and hygiene standards?

Yes   No

Are you satisfied with the cleaning and hygiene arrangements that will operate from when the workplace re-opens?

Yes   No

Are the cleaners outsourced to a contractor? If so, were they consulted about workplace safety?

Yes   No

Have the cleaners been recruited to UNISON? If so, do we have safety reps in the cleaning workforce?

Yes   No

Yes   No

Movement around the workplace

Are there plans to control movement around the workplace to maintain social distancing and limit the risk of infection?

Yes   No

Are you satisfied that staff, service users and visitors will be able to move safely through the workplace?

Yes   No

Is information on Covid Safety workplace rules available for staff, service users and other workplace visitors?

Yes   No

Step 3

Meetings, groups and clusters of staff, visitors and service users

Are you satisfied that plans are in place to manage situations where people gather for meetings or cluster in groups?

Yes   No

Step 4

Site Examination

Has the entire workplace been examined to ensure that all locations and scenarios have been addressed in the risk assessment?

Yes   No

Step 5

Changes to routines for staff and service users

Are you satisfied that these issues have been adequately addressed before the workplace re-opens?

Yes   No

Step 6

Communicating with staff

Communication with staff and service users is vital if safety plans are to work effectively.

Are you satisfied that this issue has been adequately addressed before the workplace re-opens?

(Yes) (No)

Communicating with service users and visitors

Are you satisfied that this issue has been adequately addressed before extended opening begins?

(Yes) (No)

Equality - communication

Is their specific communication to address the needs of Black workers, disabled workers and other groups?

(Yes) (No)

Have equality groups been consulted on communication plans to make sure information is relevant, accessible and inclusive?

(Yes) (No)

Step 7

Managing staff wellbeing and mental health

Are you satisfied that appropriate support for mental health and wellbeing will be in place when the workplace begins to open more widely?

(Yes) (No)

Equality - staff wellbeing

The mental health impact on protected groups has been pronounced. Are specific measures in place to address the adverse mental health impact on groups with protected characteristics?

(Yes) (No)

Have staff facing discrimination been offered specific consultation on their mental health and wellbeing support needs?

(Yes) (No)

Step 8

Service delivery

Has the way services are delivered been altered to make it Covid secure? Does this have safety implications for staff?

(Yes) (No)

Equality - changed service delivery

If service delivery has changed, has it taken account of the safety of staff and service users with protected characteristics?

(Yes) (No)

Questions for reps to **ask**

Step 1

Preparing the Site

Health and Safety Check of the Building

Questions for reps to ask:

Has the safety check been through consultation between the union and management?

Has confirmation been given to you that each of these points will be addressed in advance of reopening for schools that have been entirely closed?

Have assurances been given in writing about the safety of the following areas?

- hot and cold water systems

- gas safety

- fire safety

- kitchen equipment

- Specialist equipment used by pupils (eg for access/mobility/changing)

- security including access control and intruder alarm systems

- ventilation

Are you satisfied that these checks will be complied with in time for extended opening?

(Yes) (No)

Cleaning and hygiene

Employers should make clear to staff and service users what their 'expectations' are about cleaning and hygiene.

They should consider the following:

- The availability of soap and hot water in every toilet and any areas used for personal care.

- The location of hand sanitizer stations, for example at the entrance for staff and service users, and their replenishment.

- The location of lidded bins in the workplace for the disposal of tissues and any other potentially infected waste, their double bagging and emptying.

- Ensuring you have a good supply of disposable tissues as well as lidded bins with double bagging for disposal, with any other potentially infected waste, and where these should be located.

Questions for reps to ask:

Reps need assurances about the systems that the managers will be able to implement. Without these assurances there can be no 'expectations' on either staff or parents.

◎ Will soap and, preferably warm, water be available at all times, with systems in place to ensure continuity of supply of soap and sanitizer?

◎ How will the organisation ensure that staff and service users arriving can safely queue up, at 2-metre distance from each other, to access the sanitizer on arrival?

◎ Are lidded bins available? Unless operated by pedal, the lids will need to be regularly sanitised throughout the day. How will this happen? Who will empty them during the day?

◎ Will appropriate PPE be provided where and when required?

◎ Will hand dryers be disconnected and replaced with paper towels and bins?

◎ Will drinking fountains be taken out of use?

◎ Will only rooms with windows that can be kept open be used?

◎ Will doors be kept open where possible to aid ventilation?

◎ Will air conditioning systems not be used unless it can be confirmed that there is no additional risk?

◎ Will all areas of the premises be thoroughly cleaned on a daily basis with particular focus on surfaces that are touched by multiple people such as photocopiers, door handles, table/counter tops, computers including mouse and keyboard, light switches, telephones, chairs, bannisters, toilets and toilet handles, sinks, taps and other areas touched regularly, with additional cleaning during the day as necessary?

◎ Will each work area be provided with gloves and disinfectant spray in case a a member of staff or a service user coughs or sneezes on a piece of equipment?

◎ Is there capacity amongst the cleaning staff to meet these requirements?

Are you satisfied with the cleaning and hygiene arrangements that will operate from when extended opening begins?

(Yes) (No)

Movement around the workplace

Many workplaces are looking to adopt one-way systems or other movement controls.

Questions for reps to ask:

- Will a one-way system be introduced? If not why is it not needed?

- What arrangements are proposed for safe movement on staircases?

- What arrangements are in place for use of lifts?

- How will staff and service users be made aware of the new arrangements with particular reference to service users with communication support needs?
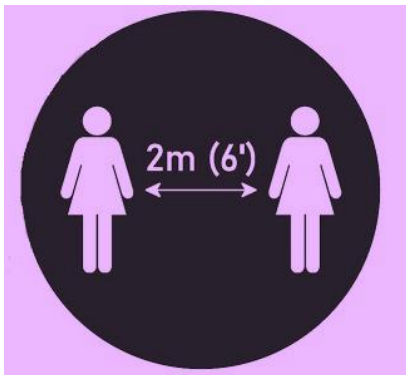
- Who will monitor that the systems are being complied with? Will a member of staff be on duty at all times?

- Are other measures needed in corridors, for example floor markings or removal of furniture?

- What signage will be displayed to support these new systems?

Are you satisfied that staff and service users will be able to move safely through the corridors and up and down stairs from the date when the workplace opens?

(Yes) (No)

Equality: Are you satisfied that these detailed site preparations have taken all equality issues into account including any new adjustments for disabled workers?

(Yes) (No)

Step 2

Reviewing staff for availability.

Audit of staff

Employer should undertake an audit of how many staff are available.

Questions for reps to ask:

Are you satisfied with the proposed rota arrangements?

(Yes) (No)

Have you been given an assurance that there will always be a manager, first aider, Janitorial, and sufficient cleaning staff on duty at required times?

(Yes) (No)

Has it been confirmed that sufficient cleaning staff will be engaged to allow for the enhanced cleaning levels required?

(Yes) (No)

Has the site been measured to ascertain what the maximum capacity is and the total number of staff and service users the building can accommodate safely?

Yes No

Is it clear to all staff and service users that only those who are healthy and who are not exhibiting symptoms, and who do not need to self-isolate, may attend the workplace?

Yes No

Equality - vulnerable groups

Is there specific communication to address the needs of Black workers, disabled workers and other groups?

Yes No

Is it clear that pregnant staff and those with underlying health conditions that make them vulnerable, or who live with or care for vulnerable or shielding household members or those over age of 70 are permitted to continue to work from home?

Yes No

Have the risks to Black staff been assessed when planning rotas?

Yes No

Are satisfactory arrangements in place for safe induction of new staff during this period?

Yes No

Have unions and staff been involved in discussion about safe preparation and consumption of food in canteens and staff rest areas?

Yes No

Is there a procedure to close the workplace at short notice - for example if staffing levels fall to levels where safety cannot be assured?

Yes No

If there is no manager, janitor or cleaning staff available
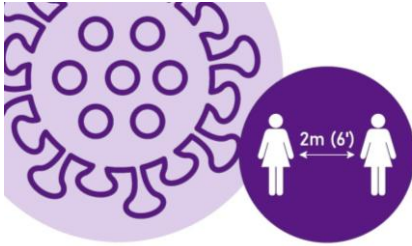
Questions for reps to ask:

Will the workplace close if any of these key staff are unavailable?

Yes No

If not, are you satisfied that a safe environment can be maintained from when the workplace opens?

Yes   No

Step 3

Questions for reps to ask:

Are there satisfactory arrangements to maintain social distancing in all work settings?

Yes   No

Where there is a risk of airborne contamination, because social distancing cannot easily be adhered to PPE must be provided and training given on its use and disposal. Will this happen?

Yes   No

Will PPE be available for emergency situations, for example when a member of staff develops symptoms at work?

Yes   No

◎ What assurances can be given about secure arrangements for sourcing PPE?
Can confirmation be given that, if any member of staff wishes to wear a face

covering, they will not be prevented from doing so?

Yes   No

Step 4

◎ Will all staff be sent home as soon as they report symptoms and will arrangements be in place to provide cover as necessary?

◎ For those who have no car and cannot walk or cycle, how can they safely travel to work, when use of public transport is discouraged?

◎ What plans are in place to ensure safe travel during work time when absolutely necessary?

◎ Are you satisfied that these issues have been resolved to your satisfaction ?

Yes   No

Step 5

◎ Are you satisfied that these issues have been considered and that measures covering these areas will be in place in time for extended opening?

Yes   No

Step 6

Communicating with staff

Guidance recommends that employers communicate effectively with staff prior to re-opening of workplaces.

Questions for reps to ask:

- What arrangements are in place to train or brief staff about revised workplace safety arrangements?

- What arrangements will be put in place to ensure regular staff feedback on arrangements?

- Are you satisfied with on-going communication arrangements?

(Yes) (No)

Train to be a
safety rep

To register for UNISON's two hour seminar send an email to membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

Be on the safe **side**

Step 8

Managing staff wellbeing and mental health

It is recognised that the pandemic and lockdown may have caused significant mental health difficulties and some staff may have suffered a bereavement in circumstances affected by the pandemic and associated controls.

Members may experience some difficult feelings. These may be new feelings, or things they have experienced in the past.

Employers have an obligation to safeguard both physical AND mental health of workers. As the pandemic continues the need for effective measures to support mental wellbeing becomes more pronounced.

Questions for reps to ask:

- Does the employer recognise its duties under health and safety law to protect the mental as well as physical health of staff?

- What plans are in place to ensure that this duty is applied?

- Was mental health and wellbeing included in the risk assessment?

- If measures were identified, how were they communicated to staff?

- What guidance will be given to staff on mental health and bereavement?

- What support services will be available?

- Given that mental health concerns are not always triggered by a safety incident, how will the employer monitor ongoing mental health pressures after the risk assessment is complete?

- How will the employer monitor workload at this time to ensure a reasonable work/life balance for staff?

Are you satisfied that appropriate measures are in place to support staff wellbeing and mental health?

(Yes) (No)

Section 4: Challenging unsafe **work**

Where there have been spikes of resurgent Covid19 it is often linked to unsafe work. In the fight against Covid19, workers' rights are public health rights.

This section explains the different ways you can raise concerns and work with colleagues through the union to stay safe at work AND promote the fight against further spikes of Covid19.

How do I challenge unsafe work?

Where groups of workers, or individuals, wish to challenge unsafe work this is done through a 3 Stage process for keeping people safe:

- **Stage 1: Guidance & Dialogue**

- **Stage 2: Challenge**

- **Stage 3: Action**

Always work through your branch.

Stage 1: Guidance & Dialogue

Most work arrangements are being addressed and resolved through dialogue with employers around existing guidance.

However, if you are concerned about the application of the guidance to your workplace you should use the checklist in this pack, work collectively with colleagues and seek support from your local rep and your UNISON branch. Contact details below.

Checklist

Where members have questions or concerns, there is a checklist to help you work with your colleagues to ensure that relevant guidance is being followed and your safety needs addressed.

If the Checklist reveals risks that are not resolved through guidance and dialogue you may want to formally challenge your employer.

Before progressing you should contact your branch or use the contacts set out below. Wherever possible, work collectively as a group.

If you complete the checklist you will receive a copy of your answers by email. To receive support with those issues you must forward the email and attachment to your branch and to membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

Stage 2: Challenge

Where the checklist reveals the need for action on safety UNISON will formally notify the employer and call for specific action on safety.

The notice will explain our concerns (identified using the checklist) and set out your right to safety at work. We will also explain the legal protection you have when raising safety issues.

If a formal challenge to unsafe work does not secure improved arrangements, and you relay your concerns to UNISON, we will advise you on the available options at Stage 3.

To use UNISON's online Covid Safety Check **click here**

Stage 3: Action

In extreme situations there are legal rules that enable workers to withdraw from unsafe situations. The rules for withdrawing from a work situation are as follows:

- You face a serious danger to your health
- The danger you face is immediate or imminent
- Your belief that you face imminent danger is reasonable
- You have used all available measures to protect yourself and avert the risk to health

Always seek advice first. Use the checklist and email your answers to the branch and to the regional office. The email address is:

membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

Contacts

Contact your branch in the first instance. Branch contacts are provided on branch websites, social media or through the UNISON Branch Finder.

Alternative contacts for UNISON Scotland: membershipassistancescotland@unison.co.uk

Glasgow 0141 342 2899

Aberdeen 01224 620624

Inverness 01463 715891

Section 5: Useful **links**

This pack is based on the guidance as at 30th June 2020. Some of these guidance documents change as the pandemic progresses. If you need more detail or just want to keep up to date these are useful sources.

UNISON Scotland: portal for UNISON Scotland's Covid publications

UNISON: All UK guidance on Covid and your rights at work

Scottish Government: portal for all Covid guidance by sector

Scottish Government: Guidance for outdoor nurseries

Scottish Government Guidance for childminders

Scottish Government Guidance for schools

CoSLA: Covid19 guidance for councils

Improvement Service: Covid19 support for Scottish councils

NHS Guidance: Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee

Scottish Government: Joint statement with Police Scotland, HSE and local authorities on safe work

Health Protection Scotland: Guidance for non-healthcare settings

Health & Safety Executive: Working safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Equality & Human Rights Commission: Covid19 guidance for employers

Mind: Coronavirus and your mental health