Lifting Lockdown

Guidance Notes for Retail

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many businesses to close but as plans for recovery are being made, businesses are looking to take steps to prepare for reopening. The council understands that there is a lot to consider to ensure that you, your staff and customers return to a safe environment. We have put together this advice pack and useful links to help you with your planned reopening. The government's roadmap for reopening business is available via the following link: www.gov.uk/government/publications/reopening-businesses-and-venues-in-england/reopening-businesses-and-venues

Since September 28, 2020, all businesses and all employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. This will require businesses to do the following to manage risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level. There are five steps to working safely which apply to all businesses:

1. **Operating Safely During COVID-19**
   Employees may work from home or in a COVID-secure workplace. Clinically extremely vulnerable workers may choose to work from home wherever possible, but may return to the workplace when it's COVID-secure. Workers and customers who feel unwell must stay at home.

2. **A COVID-19 risk assessment**
   A COVID-19 risk assessment must be carried out to establish what arrangements will be needed. You should do this in consultation with unions or workers, as best you can.

3. **Managing contact**
   Maintain two metre social distancing, wherever possible (via workstation redesign, altering work activities, staggering start/ finish times, etc).   Where two metres is not viable, then one metre, plus risk mitigation measures, is acceptable.

4. **Adaptions to the workplace for safety**
   Keep activity time short, use physical screens, back-to-back or side-to-side working, fixed teams or partnering.

5. **Enhanced cleaning**
   Clean more frequently all hand contact points and increase the frequency of handwashing. Regularly check and clean door handles, keyboards and other frequently touched surfaces such as shopping trolley handles.

Operating Safely During COVID-19

The latest government guidance to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the pandemic can be accessed through the following link: www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19

Businesses that are reopening on April 12, 2021 must now consider how to ensure that their workplaces are safe for customers and workers. The government has produced detailed workplace-specific guidance (www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches) for the retail sector on how they can reopen and operate safely to protect their staff and customers. See www.gov.uk/coronavirus for full guidance.

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or who has received a positive COVID-19 test result should immediately self-isolate at home. You must ensure workers who feel unwell stay at home and do not attend work. You must turn people away from work with symptoms of COVID-19. Please see guidance: www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance

Licensed businesses will face stricter legal measures to make their premises COVID-19 secure.

- Employers must not knowingly require or encourage someone who is being required to self-isolate to come to work.
- Businesses must remind people to wear face coverings where they are required, for instance using signage.
- Employers must not by law prevent their staff from wearing a face covering where they are required to do so.

A COVID-19 risk assessment

Risk assessments in the work place are a legal requirement under health and safety law. Any risk assessment you have previously undertaken will need to be reviewed and amended to take account of COVID-19 and its implications for the workplace. Where there are five or more employees, the risk assessment will need to be recorded in writing. The Health and Safety Executive has guidance for business on how to manage risk and risk assessment at work along with specific advice to help control the risk of COVID-19 in workplaces. www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm

Sharing the risk assessment

The recently produced government guidance gives the following advice on sharing the risk assessment:

You should share the results of your risk assessment with your workforce. If possible, you should consider publishing it on your website (and we would expect all businesses with more than 50 employees to do so).

You must make sure that the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of COVID-19, using this guidance to inform your decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace. Your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have done everything you need to.

Managing contact

Social distancing is achieved by maintaining a distance of 2 metres (approximately 6 feet) between everybody. Workplaces need to avoid crowding and minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (3 steps) between individuals wherever possible. This advice applies both to inside the workplace and to where staff may need to interact with customers.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing

Wherever possible, there should be minimal contact between staff. One means of achieving this is by the introduction of one-way pedestrian traffic routes around the premises. Where the same aisle or gangway is used then consideration should be given to utilise suitable passing places where appropriate.

In retail businesses, limitations on the number of customers who can be in a retail store at once is important. There may need to be a member of staff to direct customers to maintain determined ratios. This member of staff directing the public should also maintain social distancing. Taping off floors both inside and outside to maintain 2 metre separation distances can be useful. Businesses are also encouraged to have social distancing champions to demonstrate social distancing guidelines to customers.

Adaptions to the workplace for safety

Allowing staff to go to for a break at different times to stagger the potential for contact during break periods is good practice, especially in small retail stores where rest facilities are small. Setting eating areas/tables at least 2 metres apart is a good practice (where appropriate). The provision of Perspex screens or barriers at the counters to protect the sales staff and other customers reduces the potential transmission from customers. Where appropriate, encourage customers to make all payments by debit/credit cards and use the contactless facility.

Queuing

Queuing arrangements will need to consider a number of factors and as such cannot be designed or implemented in isolation. A collaborative approach between neighbouring shops, offices and other organisations will be required to ensure a safe and well managed environment.

When designing a queuing strategy, consideration should be given to the nature of the area, the immediate streetscape and neighbouring premises including residential, retail, businesses, schools, health establishments and transport hubs, among others. This document is not exhaustive and focuses on key considerations for external queuing systems and social distancing. It does not cover internal queuing measures required within premises. However, the consideration of this should form part of your risk assessment.

Planning a queuing area

Firstly, calculate the store capacity with social distancing measures in mind. Instead of working back from the existing store capacity, start from zero. Consider how many people can safely fit inside the business with a 2m distance between each person along with a spacious distance for circulation. Then consider how the business has previously operated taking into account pinch points, dwell spaces, customer behaviour and the position of any infrastructure.

Review the entry and exits to the premises. Is it possible to introduce a one-way system to minimise cross flow of people at entrances? Where possible, allocate different doors for entry and exit, deploying staff at each door to monitor numbers within the store at any given time.

If it is not possible to allocate separate doors for entry and exit, consider marking a line on the floor or signage within the premises to separate entry and exit by a 2 metre distance. If the door is not wide enough, staff or stewards will need to manage the entry and exit of people to ensure social distancing is managed.

If there is a high volume of persons leaving the premises, there may need to be consideration for a holding area with social distancing enforced inside the exit for people to queue as they exit.

Ensure emergency exits remain accessible at all times.

External queuing space

Each premises should review its business operation, anticipated footfall and the time customers are likely to spend in the shop to make an assessment as to how much queuing space they would aim to create.

Remember that arrival rates are not constant, depending on the type of business, some people will arrive in clusters of family or household groups. For retail outlets in particular, service rates are not constant and the time spent in store will vary.

Queue spaces should not be positioned near live traffic where possible. When this is unavoidable, they should be positioned away from the kerb edge.

Once you have identified the area for the queue mark this space into 2 metre spaces to allow for social distancing within the queue.

If additional pavement space is required to create a safe queue, businesses must liaise with the neighbouring premises on the street to ensure that their plans are fully coordinated. These plans must ensure that proposed queues do not overlap. This is particularly important where the pavements are narrow and queues are likely to merge.

A staffing or stewarding plan should be implemented for the queue space to ensure sufficient resource is allocated to manage and monitor the queue space (for further information see the **How to manage a queue** section below).

Consideration needs to be given to existing street furniture in the vicinity of a premises as well as bus stops or waste collection routes. Plans must ensure that a pinch point for public access isn't created.

How to manage a queue

- Identify an agreed queuing capacity.
- Ensure there are sufficient numbers and suitably trained staff and/or stewarding resources to manage the queuing area.
- Ensure signage is visible and displayed in appropriate locations including at the end of the queue.
- Queues need to be monitored to ensure they do not exceed capacity.
- At the end of the trading day, only allow customers in the queue who will be able to enter the premises before closing.
- Provide clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival – signage and visual aids, for example.
- Give consideration to the size of groups allowed and the impact on queue space required (as well as inside).
- Review opening hours when considering how to manage deliveries to de-conflict where possible.
- Ensure any changes to entries, exit and queue management take into account reasonable adjustments for those who need them, including those with accessibility requirements.
- Consider support that may be required for those with hidden disabilities such as deafness and visual impairments when following instructions and queueing.
- Always maintain emergency access and egress.

Cleaning

All businesses will also need to consider additional cleaning measures to reduce the spread of the virus. This is outlined in the workplace guidance and additional cleaning measures if somebody that has tested positive for COVID-19 has been on your premises. General guidance can be found at

Some basic cleaning advice is provided below. You should ensure cleaning is undertaken as frequently as you deem it necessary, depending on the nature of your business and the number of customers using the premises. As a minimum it should be cleaned every day prior to opening and before closing.

Basic cleaning advice

Using a disposable cloth, first clean surfaces with warm soapy water or detergent. Cleaning with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface.

1. Increase routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces which include:
   - Fridge and freezer handles
   - Debit card pin pads
   - Door handles
   - Screens on self-service checkouts
   - Light switches
   - Trolley/basket handles
   - Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected regularly - at least every 2 hours.

2. You then need to use a disinfectant to clean the surface. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces. Use antiviral disinfectants, which have been tested to British Standard BS EN 14476:2019. Alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol may also be used. Diluted household bleach is also known to kill similar viruses if appropriate for the surface.

3. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for application and use, for example, gloves/ventilation, dilution, application and contact times for detergent and disinfectant products. Contact time is the time that the disinfectant/bleach solution must be in contact with the surface. It's important to follow instructions as wiping them off too soon might clean the surface without properly disinfecting it.

Other considerations

NHS Track and Trace

Betting shops are required by law to maintain records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace. All other retail businesses should assist the test and trace service by keeping a temporary record of your staff shift patterns for 21 days and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests. Appropriate Track and Trace signage needs to be displayed. To take part in NHS track and Trace. Please see guidance: www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace

Personal hygiene

You should also follow strict hygiene measures, including frequent handwashing with soap and warm water for a minimum of 20 seconds. Hand sanitiser can be used between hand washing.

Face coverings/PPE

Businesses should not encourage the precautionary principle to the use of extra PPE outside clinical settings. All staff should wear face coverings unless exempt and all customers must wear face covering if in a shop or outlet such as a café. When seated only a customer can remove their mask to eat and drink. They must use the face mask until they leave unless they have an exemption.

Ventilation
Ventilation can be used to mitigate the transmission risk of COVID-19. Ventilation can be optimised by providing fresh air to all areas whenever possible. Measures will include:

- Increasing fan speed
- Operating ventilation fans while people are in the building
- Monitoring and managing filters
- Keeping windows open when possible

Customer toilets
Public toilets, portable toilets and toilets inside premises should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The following points are good practice in customer toilets:

- Include signs for good hand washing techniques
- Use signage for one-way systems and social distancing where queues normally form
- Offer separate hand sanitiser to soap
- Putting a visible cleaning schedule in the toilets
- Ensuring there is adequate ventilation
- Providing more waste collections of bins

Goods and deliveries

Deliveries should be made to reduce unnecessary contact. Thought should be given to pick up and drop off collection points including signage and markings. Single workers only should be used during unloading.

Preparing to open

Legionella

Stagnant water systems can support the growth of legionella and these can then be released in an aerosol spray which can result in respiratory infection if inhaled. To avoid this, the water system should have been flushed on a weekly basis. If this is not the case and your premises has been closed for more than 1 month, the following measures are recommended:

- Flush out the system – please refer to the guidance to understand how to do this without risk of infection
- Disinfect to 50ppm of free chlorine or equivalent biocide
- Run water heated to 60C through the whole water system
- Carry out a risk assessment

Further guidance can be found in the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health's new guidance document: Legionnaires' disease: lockdown risks and reopening safely www.cieh.org/media/4208/legionella-guidance-covid-19.pdf or the Health and Safety Executive's information on Legionella risks during the COVID-19 outbreak. www.hse.gov.uk/news/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm

Fire risk assessments

You may have used the closure as an opportunity to refurbish or have created a new one-way system to adhere to the social distancing requirement. Fire doors should be kept clear. You should ensure you have not made any changes that can affect fire risk assessment. More information can be found on the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service website: www.notts-fire.gov.uk/business-safety/fire-risk-assessment

NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL