



APSE Briefing: COVID-19: New Guidance for Working Safely in Other People's Homes

To all APSE members in England and Scotland and for information to Wales and Northern Ireland

Key issues

Following announcements by the Prime Minister on Sunday 10 May as to a route map out of lockdown a series of measures have now been announced to support employers bringing staff back into the workplace.

- This briefing therefore provides links to the latest guidance effective as of the 12 May but subject to further updates on measures in relation to working safely in other people's homes.
- It is worth noting that this guidance has been prepared by BEIS in consultation with devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales;
- This briefing contains details of guidance published by the UK and Scottish Governments on the 11 May 2020. The guidance should be considered alongside local public health and safety requirements and legislation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

1. Introduction

Regardless of COVID-19 all employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk. This should be to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Therefore, given the known risks of COVID-19, work in people's homes cannot be undertaken without suitable assessments to ensure the health and safety of the workforce and householder. This includes employees working with any other employees, or contractors, sharing the same place, and other people so that everybody's health and safety is protected.

The guidance issued on the 11 May (updated / effective as of the 12 May 2020) suggests that the guidance applies to those working in, visiting or delivering to home environments, these include but are not limited to, people working in the following areas:

- In-home workers- such as repair services, fitters, meter readers, plumbers, cleaners, cooks and surveyors (this is not an exhaustive list)
- To home delivery services – such as delivery drivers momentarily at the door.

2. Guidance published by the UK Government

This is a link to the full guidance document which runs to 30 pages and contains downloadable resources.

[Working safely during covid-19-other people's homes](#)

The document focuses on eight specific areas which can be summarised as follows: -

Thinking about risk – This section of the guidance outlines six steps and it states that the recommendations in the rest of the document are to be considered as this process is undertaken.

Sharing risk assessments -The guidance advises that all businesses with over 50 workers are expected to share the risk assessment with others working in the home or visiting others and that they could consider publishing details on their website.

Who should go to work - There is an acknowledgment that it is not often possible for in-house providers to work from home. Therefore, this section of the guidance outlines advice for protecting people who are at higher risk; protecting people who need to self-isolate and equality in the workplace.

Social distancing at work – The guidance re-iterates that the 2m social distancing restriction should be maintained wherever possible, and states that an assessment is required to determine if the activity needs to continue for the business to operate. If it is determined that the activity does need to continue, the section provides an overview of mitigation and steps that would be usually required for coming to and leaving work, moving around and when working in a home, undertaking appointments in the home and in scenarios relating to accidents, security and other incidents.

Interacting with householders – This section of the guidance focuses on the steps required to make sure that people understand what they need to do to maintain safety in the home for both the worker and the household.

Cleaning the work area - The aim of this aspect of the document is to ensure that work areas are left clean to prevent transmission of the virus and offers guidance on the steps required to keep the work area clean, hygiene measures, and handling goods and merchandise and other materials.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) and face-covering - In addition to the PPE that is required to carry out the job under current health and safety legislation and guidance, there are details provided in this section regarding the consideration to be given to face coverings.

Workforce management: guidance for employers and agencies – In this section guidance is provided for employers and agencies about team working, work-related travel and communication and training.

Deliveries to the home – It is stated that the objective of the steps contained in this part of the guidance is to maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission.

It should be noted that the guidance states that it does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, equality and it is important that employers continue to comply with existing obligations.

Councils have already extensively planned for remobilisation, including through APSE's remobilisation working groups, and in many cases, staff have remained on-site albeit with additional safety measures. However, as more people transition back to the work environment the guidance may prove to be a useful 'check list' to ensure the safety and well-being of staff.

3. The guidance published by the Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has published updated guidance on 11 May 2020 in the Coronavirus (COVID-19): staying at home and away from others (physical distancing) document. The key points that relate to working in people's homes are outlined below:-

The guidance advises that that work carried out in people's homes, for example by Tradespeople carrying out repairs and maintenance, can continue, provided that the tradesperson is well and is not showing coronavirus symptoms and neither they nor any of their household are self-isolating. It also reports that it will be important to ensure that a 2 metre distance from any household occupants is maintained for everyone's safety.

However, the document states that no work should be carried out in any household which is isolating or where an individual is being shielded, unless it is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household, such as emergency plumbing or repairs, and where the tradesperson is willing to do so. In such cases, Health Protection Scotland

guidance can provide advice to tradespeople and households. No work should be carried out by a tradesperson who has coronavirus symptoms, however mild.

As set out in the section on closing non-essential shops and public spaces, the government has ordered certain businesses and venues to close. They have set out which organisations this requirement covers in Coronavirus: business and physical distancing guidance.

The Scottish Government also advises that at all times, workers should follow the NHS Inform guidance on self-isolation if they or anyone in their household shows coronavirus symptoms.

APSE Comment

Clearly all councils will have the safety of their workforce and service users at the heart of their decision-making processes. COVID-19 does not supersede the normal requirements for safe working and obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and other regulatory requirements. Where workers are entering people's homes to carry out work, undoubtedly consideration will need to be given to effective planning, to ensure the safety of the householder and the employee. Many councils have continued to enter people homes to undertake emergency works and other requirements such as gas safety. However, as the restrictions are amended and additional work can be undertaken, a phased transition, to test operational safety and practices, would be a sensible approach to take.

Further support

The APSE COVID-19 support hub was set up to ensure quick information is available on frontline services to our member councils. You can access the hub using [this link](#).

APSE has also introduced new services to support our members including a rapid response network query service, dedicated WhatsApp groups, dedicated COVID-19 briefings and online forums for remobilisation of council services. To access these services please enter your details using [this link](#).

If your council is not a member of APSE you can enquire about joining using [this link](#).

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