

HSE in Scotland

during the Covid-19 pandemic



HSE's remit

- **GB wide and founded on the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974)**
- **Applies in workplaces and to work activities**
- **Duties on employers, self-employed and employees to protect employees and others affected by work activity**
- **No new powers or extra responsibilities for HSE under the Scottish Government's Coronavirus emergency legislation**



Health and Safety at Work Act

- **Policy decision by HSE from March 2020 to apply the requirements of health and safety legislation to minimising Coronavirus transmission in workplaces GB wide**
- **Part of the overall public sector response to SARS CoV-2/Covid19**
- **Linked regulatory health and safety requirements for risk assessment, fresh air ventilation, COSHH for laboratory environments etc.**



Working with others in Scotland

- **Agreed arrangements with Scottish local authorities/Police Scotland to ensure a joined up approach, linking public health requirements (e.g. face coverings), with health and safety requirements (e.g. ventilation)**
- **Ongoing reviews of current issues, and compliance with Coronavirus controls in workplaces, with Scottish Government officials, Police Scotland and local authority officers every week since then**
- **Briefing and assistance to public health teams during workplace outbreak investigations, (chilled food manufacturing)**



School premises

- HSE regulatory responsibility for health and safety in education settings
- Scottish Government, '*Reducing risks in schools*' guidance for Covid19 controls, recommendations from the '*Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's issues*'
- Huge variation in premises, from old Victorian schools to very recent designs. Fast developing, but incomplete, knowledge of SARS CoV-2
- Need for detailed local assessment and consideration to establish suitable/achievable controls in schools



School premises – controls

- ***Distancing*** - processes and procedures, signage and barriers, based on individual school layouts
- ***Cleaning/hygiene*** – again, environment specific, touch points identification, moved to importance of hand hygiene over time, some use of ‘novel’ equipment
- ***Ventilation*** – extremely complex and variable, recirculating air for energy efficiency in mechanical systems vs infiltration and natural airflow in older premises. Need to balance ventilation rates against thermal comfort. CO₂ as proxy



School premises - issues

- **HSE Covid19 spot inspections, August/September 2020 – 500 initial calls to Scottish schools leading to 100 sample inspection visits**
- **Generally good compliance with the available Scottish Government and HSE guidance at the time, in both LA operated and independent schools**
- **Electrostatic disinfection**



Good practice

- **Detailed, realistic, local risk assessment establishing workable controls based on the premises layout, systems of ventilation, staffing compliment etc.**
- **Regular management review and checking of controls in place**
- **Limited baseline standards, best endeavours**
- **No guarantees!**



The future

- **Removal of Coronavirus emergency legislation aligns with HSE removal of legal requirement for Covid19 risk assessment.**
- **Move to primarily public health management of Covid19, (vaccination and treatment etc.)**
- **Scottish Government currently considering longer term Covid19 ‘adaptations’, which may include aspects such as ventilation in workplaces**



The future

- Updated building standards requirements for ventilation based on achievable CO₂ levels
- However, need for more 'robust' consideration of existing legal requirements for fresh air ventilation, clean and orderly workplaces and provision of welfare facilities/hot water etc.
- Huge number of ongoing scientific studies, worldwide, on aspects of SARS Cov-2 transmission and Covid19



- Includes the ‘*Protect – National Core Study on Transmission and Environment*’, led by HSE, but involving 70 researchers from 16 universities across the UK



PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study

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The PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study on transmission and environment

Partnership for Research in Occupational, Transport and Environmental COVID Transmission.

The PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study on transmission and environment is a UK-wide research programme improving our understanding of how SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is transmitted from person to person, and how this varies in different settings and environments. This

The rate of SARS-CoV-2 transmission is largely determined by the interaction of three factors: the **characteristics of the virus** itself, the **physical environment** it is in, and the **behaviour of people** in that environment. The PROTECT study will improve our understanding of the role of each of these factors by addressing several key research questions relevant to each of them, including:

- What dose of the **virus** is needed to infect someone?
- How are droplets containing the **virus** generated, emitted and dispersed?

Questions

