

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Guidance for colleagues and managers – November 2022

Introduction

The alert level of coronavirus (COVID-19) to the UK has been reduced to level 2 by the UK Chief Medical Officer. We continue to monitor the coronavirus situation and are working with the Government, PHE, and the UK's blood donation services to respond to the coronavirus. We are well prepared and working to our plans to enable us to respond to changing circumstances.

The following questions and answers have been put together in anticipation of any you may have, and we shared this document with staff side partners. We review and update these questions and answers in response to any changing advice and messaging from the Government, PHE and the Department of Health, and any answers we give to specific questions within NHSBT.

Each of the devolved governments (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) implement regulations suitable to their risk. Colleagues living and working in those area must adhere to the local requirements. All absences must be reported as usual, and any queries raised with HR Direct to ensure appropriate action is taken and support is given.

What is Coronavirus and what are the Symptoms?

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people with COVID-19 experience mild to moderate respiratory illness or symptoms and recover without requiring any special treatment. It spreads primarily through saliva or droplets from the mouth or nose, this is why respiratory and hand hygiene is very important in controlling this disease. (World Health Organisation)

Most common symptoms:

- fever
- new continuous dry cough
- loss of taste or smell

Less common symptoms:

- aches and pains
- sore throat
- diarrhoea
- conjunctivitis
- headache
- tiredness
- a rash on skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes

Serious symptoms:

- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- chest pain or pressure
- loss of speech or movement

Seek immediate medical attention if you have serious symptoms. Always call [Use NHS 111 online or NHS Direct 111] before visiting your doctor or health facility. People with mild symptoms who are otherwise healthy should manage their symptoms at home. Donor/patient facing staff should take a lateral flow test as soon as possible. Lateral flow tests are now only available free of charge for NHS donor or patient facing staff with symptoms of covid 19. These can be ordered using the following [online offering via gov.co.uk](https://www.gov.uk/online-offering-via). If you test negative, you are free to return to

work when you are well enough to do so. If the test result is positive, then you should follow the flowchart for staff who test positive in [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) or [Wales](#) . Coughing may persist for several weeks in some people, despite the coronavirus infection having cleared. A persistent cough alone will not extend any self-isolation period. For further information on colds and coronavirus please see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/common-cold/>

Where can I find out more?

The latest information for all NHSBT colleagues will be available on [Link](#) - the default homepage for all internet browsers on NHSBT devices. We also share the same updates on People First.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA previously PHE) [page for coronavirus and health professionals](#) is regularly updated and a good source of further information regarding the impact on attendance at work.

NHSBT's pandemic plan is in operation all departments should be operating to the actions and considerations within the plan. Please refer to [MPD617](#) and [DAT3717](#).

Notification central e-mail contact for colleagues admitted to hospital

In order to ensure that we have early notification of colleagues who are admitted to hospital with coronavirus symptoms please can managers immediately email Covid19HospitalAdmissions@nhsbt.nhs.uk with details of their team member as soon as they are notified of a hospital admission to include the name of the hospital if known. This will enable us to provide follow up support, care and well-being advice and address any media enquiries. This is a separate notification from EASY reporting on absence.

Notification of Vaccination email

Colleagues are asked to notify us once they have received their first, second or booster vaccinations. This is in order to keep accurate records of uptake across our organisation. To do this, please fill in the [online reporting tool](#).

Translated Resources – UKHSA

To help reach communities where English is not the first language, the UKHSA have developed translated materials in a variety of languages. These materials can help members of the public understand current guidance, outlined by HM Government:

[Community Testing](#)

Routine lateral flow testing for colleagues is currently not required, it is possible to order lateral flow tests now **only** if you have symptoms and if you work in a donor/patient facing role or if you work with people who are at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 and your employer told you to get a test. Further support is available through the NHSBT COVID helpline on 0121 471 2991 if the above guidelines do not support with the information required.

National Restrictions

Each of the devolved administrations set their own COVID restrictions. Colleagues should adhere to their local restrictions based on where they live, along with NHSBT requirements, at all times.

The health and wellbeing of our colleagues and donors continues to be our number one priority and there are a number of controls in place that will help us ensure that our workplaces reduce the risk to others, protect you and maintain supply of our life saving products and services. This includes:

- Being absent from work if displaying symptoms of respiratory virus including COVID-19, most common: cough and/or fever and/or loss of taste or smell, other symptoms include sore throat, headache, fatigue, runny nose and taking a lateral flow test as soon as possible

- Good ventilation, keeping windows open where possible, increasing air movements and the use of mechanical ventilation units/equipment
- Having the recommended COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters when offered
- Good hand hygiene practice
- Good respiratory hygiene (coughing/sneezing into disposable tissues then washing hands)
- Regular workspace and high frequency touch point cleaning

If you have any questions, please contact HR Direct by phone (0117 322 7700) or email HRDirect@nhsbt.nhs.uk.

Respiratory Illness and Covid Controls

Following a review of COVID-19 government guidance and assessments to ensure adequate ventilation across our estates, we no longer practice social distancing across our organisation.

Facial masks will be optional. They will be needed only where in contact with covid patients or immune suppressed patients as agreed in local risk assessments and trust policies. However, colleagues can continue to wear facial coverings or masks at their own discretion in all areas.

The use of face masks and social distancing will be continuously reviewed. There may be a need for specific departments, teams or locations to revert back to these using these measures to support in the control and spread of the virus at a time of increase in infection rates. If this is the case this will be communicated via local and relevant channels.

Ventilation assessments have been completed in all centres and sessions and have shown good results. Monitoring of ventilation will be carried out periodically and risk assessments will be updated, including those for vulnerable persons.

If you are working remotely and planning to work in a centre, please use our [online desk and meeting room system](#). If you need to be on site every day then your line manager will need to agree this with the relevant estates and facilities team.

The risk assessment for COVID-19 in our centres shows us to be a lower risk environment owing to our current control measures. We therefore continue to consider our premises as COVID-19 secure workplaces. Centre risk assessments are published on People First at <https://peoplefirst.nhsbt.nhs.uk/Safety-at-Work/covid.htm>

E&F and our risk assessments have taken ventilation requirements into account when reviewing our covid secure status, which remains low. Ventilation assessments have been made for each centre by HS&W and E&F to ensure areas are well ventilated or other controls put in place e.g. restrictions on numbers in rooms.

Please review our [FAQs for face coverings](#) on Link.

Are there any precautions I should be taking?

The recommended steps you should take to protect yourself are the same as those to avoid flu and any other similar respiratory infections. You should maintain good hand, respiratory and personal hygiene and do not attend work if you have any coronavirus symptoms.

- Regularly clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based rub.
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or a flexed elbow. Ensure you dispose of tissues hygienically.
- Colleagues in donor/patient facing roles should undertake a lateral flow test if showing symptoms of COVID 19. These are available to order [online](#). Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.

- Wear face covering at your discretion or if required as detailed above
- Provide good ventilation where possible.
- Follow advice for use, putting on and taking off any Personal Protective Equipment.
- Get vaccinated unless you have a medical condition that prevents this.

Attendance and Self-Isolation

Asymptomatic testing for all colleagues has been paused, but donor/patient facing colleagues are urged to test if they are symptomatic and to follow the [guidance for staff who have symptoms or test positive for respiratory infection, including COVID-19](#). There is no longer a legal duty to self-isolate if you test positive or develop symptoms for COVID-19. However, as Healthcare workers all NHSBT staff must follow Healthcare workers guidelines which advises anyone that tests positive or has symptoms suggestive of respiratory illness or COVID-19 to stay at home and to avoid contact with other people.

Staff who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 should inform their line manager in the first instance, who will follow the guidance found on the [COVID Information Page](#). If additional support is required, please contact HR Direct.

Colds and Flu

We know that other viruses circulate, including rhinoviruses, which will cause coughs and colds such as the common cold. If you are feeling unwell and have the following symptoms:

- fever-feeling hot to touch
- a new continuous cough
- loss of taste or smell

You may have COVID-19 and may need to get a test.

If you test positive you should stay at home. If you work in a donor/patient facing role you should have a test within 5 days of the onset of symptoms using the [online offering via gov.co.uk](#)

For further information on colds and coronavirus please see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/common-cold/>

What happens to my absence if I have to self-isolate due to my symptoms or I am sick?

Time off work for colleagues who are self-isolating or sick as a result of COVID-19 will need to be reported and recorded. Updated guidance surrounding this was issued by NHS Employers on the 7th July 2022 and NHSBT guidance can be found in our [COVID pay FAQ's](#)

How should absence be recorded?

Absence should be recorded on EASY/Nextra as soon as it is reported, using the FAQ document as detailed above.

Am I required to provide a GP note if I am off sick with coronavirus?

You will not be required to submit a GP certificate for the initial episode or onset of coronavirus. If, however you subsequently become ill from complications of COVID-19 or for reasons other than coronavirus, a GP certificate will be required for your new grounds for absence.

Shielding

There are currently no requirements in the UK to shield, If at any point it is reintroduced by the government and you have been informed by any individuals in your department/team that they have conditions that fall into this category, you must obtain a copy of the official Government/NHS letter and forward to HR Direct via an online query to support Risk Assessments.

Cases will be assessed on an individual basis and there may be instances where an individual has a complicated medical history which may not appear in the information from government. Individuals can choose not to divulge anything medical but must tell their manager of the effect it has on work, or the effect work has on the condition, so reasonable adjustments can be made as necessary.

We have developed work based and individual risk assessments for discussion with team members to support them, in line with government guidance. To arrange a risk assessment please raise the request through [HR Direct](#) and, if you know it, include the individual's condition.

What advice is there for pregnant colleagues?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has stated that there are no specific safety concerns identified with any brand of COVID-19 vaccines in relation to pregnancy. In excess of 90,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated, mainly with the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines, without any safety concerns being raised. Based on this data, the JCVI advises that it's preferable for pregnant women in the UK to be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines where available. There is no evidence to suggest that other vaccines are unsafe for pregnant women, but more research is needed.

Pregnant colleagues should continue to follow the latest government advice. Individual risk assessments, with control measures such as job adjustments, are in place for your safety at work. The self-assessment tool available helps us support these during COVID which should be submitted to HR Direct for HS&W review and completion of the risk assessment. The risk assessment is then subject to regular review between you and your manager as the pregnancy advances. Managers should raise an additional HR Direct query for complex cases requiring additional HS&W support due to an individual's continuing concern around their 'normal' workplace and the adjustments in place. We will seek to support, understand and address the concerns and if necessary, we will aim to seek alternate duties.

Management of staff who test positive for COVID-19 or have a close contact.

The actions taken by colleagues if they test positive themselves for COVID-19 or they have a close contact is set out in the guidance for healthcare workers, this does vary from the guidance for the general public and required in order to protect those most vulnerable from COVID-19.

What do I need to do if I test positive for COVID-19?

This will depend on your job role, but anyone who has symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 should stay at home and avoid contact with other people, until you no longer have a high temperature (if you had one) or until you no longer feel unwell. If you are well enough, we would advise you to work from home if this is an option. Further guidance is [available here](#):

I am returning to work after a period of long-term absence as a result of COVID-19. What support will I get?

At this early stage, the long term impacts of COVID-19 are not fully understood; particularly for cases of severe COVID-19 illness. Further research is required to better understand the impacts and treatment options. For this reason each case will need to be managed in a supportive and sensitive manner. It is therefore important that any lasting effects that you have and any requirements that you may need at work are fully discussed with your manager. They will ensure that you are supported in order to return to work when you are fit and well enough to do so.

Advice will be taken from occupational health, and options such as a phased return, reasonable adjustments, flexible working, ill health retirement and redeployment will be discussed as appropriate. More information can be found in the [Attendance policy](#) and [FAQ's](#), as well as in the [guidance for managing Long Covid](#)

In addition to this you should work with your manager and occupational health to identify appropriate treatments and interventions to support your return to work at the earliest opportunity.

In relation to Long Covid this may include rehabilitation and Long Covid clinics to support the management of symptoms, both physical and psychological.

NHS Test and Trace

Although this service has now been closed for contact tracing, it is still available for advice. This service can be accessed by calling 119.

If colleagues have any internal queries in relation to covid then these should be directed to HR Direct.

NHS COVID-19 app

The NHS COVID-19 app is available to download to your mobile device via the App store and Google Play. The app is part of the NHS Test and Trace service and NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service. It alerts people at risk of coronavirus, asking them to isolate before they potentially pass the virus on to others. Full details available [here](#).

Switching COVID-19 Test and Trace app off in NHSBT centres

The app alerts people at risk of coronavirus, asking them to isolate before they potentially pass the virus on to others. However, to avoid false alarms, colleagues working in healthcare settings are advised to **switch the app off**, this includes NHSBT workplaces as these are COVID secure with appropriate measures in place.

Routine Asymptomatic Testing

Regular asymptomatic lateral flow testing for healthcare workers has now been paused. This is kept under review and if they become required in the future, further guidance will be given.

Can my manager ask to see my COVID-19 Test result or my contact notification?

Yes. There may be additional information that your manager needs to be aware of before your return for the safety of you and your colleagues. You should also supply the encounter date.

Education and Childcare provision

If you are not able to work flexibly our [Time off Work Policy](#) offers special paid leave that can be used to accommodate time to cover caring for dependents, up to 5 working days paid leave per annum may be granted at management discretion. In normal circumstances special leave is intended to provide a compassionate response to immediate needs and is intended to be short term. An initial time frame will be agreed with you and you are encouraged to seek to identify alternative and suitable care provision as soon as possible. All special leave must be recorded on EASY/Nextra.

There is also the option to take annual leave or carers leave.

If you have any issues or questions with flexible working, please contact [HR Direct](#).

Annual Leave

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is affecting all of us in many different ways, so it is important that you take your annual leave to take care of your own physical and mental wellbeing.

We are encouraging colleagues to take all their leave, to ensure you have regular time away from work. If colleagues are required to shield/isolate they should still book their leave even if this means breaking their period of shielding/isolation.

Can I offer to rearrange my annual leave?

Yes. It is important that colleagues continue to balance wellbeing with working during a pandemic in order to be able to continue with work and their other commitments. We however recognise

that colleagues may offer to reschedule their annual leave if this falls in the peak pandemic period and we are experiencing a shortfall in normal colleague attendance.

Can my manager ask me to consider rearranging my annual leave?

Yes. In the event of severe colleague absence, managers may request colleagues to reconsider their annual leave booking by mutual agreement and where this will not have a counter-productive impact on your own wellbeing.

If I am on annual leave (or there is a bank holiday) and I am required to isolate can I have my leave back?

Isolation is no longer a legal requirement for those that test positive for COVID-19. However, if this changes in the future if any period of annual leave or a bank holiday falls within an isolation period the leave will not be refunded. Special paid leave should only be used as a last resort to support colleagues when all other options have been exhausted.

If a Bank Holiday falls during a period of sickness (or isolation), can I reclaim it?

No. Agenda for Change T&Cs does not allow for this. Managers should adjust leave entitlement locally as ESR cannot accommodate more than 1 reason for absence. Alternatively end the period of absence, in put the BH then restart the period of absence, allowing for discretion when looking at absence policy triggers

I am returning from a period of long-term absence due to COVID-19 and have annual leave from the previous leave year that I was unable to take. Can I carry it over into the new leave year?

If you have been off on long term sick and have been unable to take any annual leave you will be able to carry over the balance of annual leave entitlement specified under the Working Time Regulations (WTR). As at April 2022, this is 28 days inclusive of public holidays and is pro rata if you are part time. Any annual leave you have taken or sold during that leave year will be deducted from the WTR entitlement to be carried over.

On return from long term sickness, you should work with your manager to discuss how this annual leave is booked. If possible it is recommended to request that your leave is taken at the end of your sickness absence immediately before your return to work. If required, your annual leave may be used to support an appropriate phased return to work longer than 4 weeks. This should be discussed and agreed with both yourself and your manager

Travel

Latest guidance surrounding travel abroad from England can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>.

You should consider the impact any change to the government quarantine/self-isolation requirements, or list of exempted countries, would have on your return to the UK and discuss this with your manager **before** you travel. NHSBT expects individuals to follow the [government guidance](#) which is in place, including at the point they return to the UK.

If I am stranded overseas following a period of leave, what are my options.

You should consider all possible consequences before travelling abroad either for a holiday or other personal reasons. Should you find yourself stranded you should contact your manager immediately to discuss your situation and consider your options such as

- additional annual leave
- unpaid special leave

Should I restrict business travel within the UK?

In line with the governments living with covid plan, business travel has resumed to normal. However, the pandemic has highlighted the use of digital meetings and colleagues are advised to choose the option that works best for their team when arranging meetings.

International Business Travel

NHSBT have agreed to reintroducing overseas business travel. However, the value of any travel should still be carefully considered and should only go ahead:

- Where the individual wishes to go
- The travel is of value to the organisation and agreed with their manager
- After taking into account Government guidance for the destination country and return to the UK (e.g. any self-isolation requirement)

In addition, the individual should be aware that the rules may change when away.

Our travel insurance policy is valid for international business travel.

If the cancellation of business travel or a requirement to work from home during the pandemic reduces my business lease car mileage, will I be required to pick up the associated increased costs for the lease?

For lease car agreements taken up prior to 1st August 2020, any costs associated with under contracted business mileage that is totally caused by the travel restrictions due to Coronavirus will not be passed on to drivers. Business mileage will be “topped up” to your contracted required level, therefore you will not be asked to repay NHSBT for any underutilised business mileage allowance. Lease car drivers have been sent an update letter by the lease car administrator explaining how this is applied at the 6 monthly mileage reviews. Guidance for lease cars is on [People First](#)

For lease car agreements taken up after this date of 1st August 2020, reduced business mileage will have been factored into your agreement and therefore the above conditions will not apply, standard policy applies.

Excess Mileage for Blood Donation Teams

Previously, colleagues in Blood Donation mobile teams may have been asked to utilise their own transport to get to session to support social distancing. In this scenario, vehicles were registered under Grey Fleet and excess mileage was claimed as needed if travelling to session. Due to the relaxation in social distancing this offering has now paused as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. However, this flexibility remains in place for a limited period of time to support the blood stocks crisis. To do this you must travel by the shortest route direct to session with no detours. When claiming expenses, you input your home postcode and the session venue postcode, the system will automatically deduct your normal home to base mileage and any excess will be paid.

Working from home

If colleagues who were working remotely are required to be on site, please remind them to [book a desk or meeting room online](#) using Outlook or Teams

The advice to work from home has now ended and centres are now open, if you do not have a permanent fixed desk please ensure you use the desk booking system to ensure you have a work station. This will also mean that we do not overload our centres and cause congestion.

You may wish to work from home and this will need to be agreed with your manager using the hybrid working guidance.

Can I ask to work from home?

Yes. If there are valid circumstances which prevent you from being able to attend your normal workplace, and the nature of your duties can be undertaken from home then you may request to work from home with the agreement of your manager. Ensure that you have the necessary access to facilities to be able to work from home.

Can my manager ask me to work from home?

Yes, if you can reasonably work from home your manager will explore this with you if required.

If you and your manager agree that temporary homeworking may need to be an option for you either now or at a future point, ensure that you have the necessary log on details to work remotely using your home IT equipment or that temporary NHSBT equipment is available to you. This will be subject to organisation through the [IT Service Desk](#) as per normal route and availability of equipment.

Information Governance requirements must continue to be adhered to.

Should I work from home if I am in short term self-isolation?

If you are well enough you should discuss the possibility with your manager and the arrangements you will need to make in order to do this, which may include provision of remote access for use on your home IT device or, where practicable, the issue of temporary equipment. You may also be asked to do other duties to support the delivery of services.

If I work from home for any reason, will I be able to claim any expenses?

It may be possible for you to work from home without incurring additional expenditure through accessing facilities provided by NHSBT including 'Teams' for meetings and teleconferencing.

Where colleagues do not have access to their own home IT equipment colleagues are asked to discuss with their line manager whether temporary access to equipment may be provided through ICT. An electronic workstation risk assessment is now available to help identify equipment needed for home working.

Exceptional cases for expenses will be examined on a case by case basis and should be referred to you manager to take advice from your AD People & Culture.

Is there any tax benefit available to me as NHSBT have asked me to work from home?

If NHSBT has asked you to work from home temporarily during the Coronavirus response, then you may be able to claim tax relief for some of the bills you have to pay. If you've agreed with your employer to work at home voluntarily, or you choose to work at home, you cannot claim tax relief on these bills.

From April 2020 (& April 2021) you can claim tax relief for £6 per week (£26 per month) without keeping any records of actual expenditure. Check if you can claim via [HMRC – Claim tax relief for your job expenses](#)

Working Practice

Can my manager ask me to stop carrying out certain duties/pieces of work?

Yes. In preparation for and during a period of pandemic your manager may prioritise your duties to enable us to focus on business-critical activities and service continuity.

Can my manager ask me to cover another colleagues' work that I would not usually undertake?

Yes. In order to help us sustain business critical activity you may be required to undertake different duties within your existing levels of competence and for which you are already trained or will be given training on. You will not be expected to carry out duties for which you are not capable or trained to undertake.

Can my manager ask me to undertake duties in another department?

Yes. In order to maintain business continuity, you may be required to perform duties in another department for which you are capable and have been trained to do.

Can I volunteer to work additional hours if cover is needed or can my manager ask me to work additional hours?

Yes, you may volunteer to work additional hours to cover colleague absence, or your manager may seek to agree with you to work additional hours. In both cases this is based on voluntary agreement and will either be paid as additional hours, overtime or time off in lieu later once in the recovery phase or out of the recovery phase of the pandemic. Any agreement on working additional hours should consider your wellbeing.

Can my manager ask me to change my hours or work my hours flexibly?

Yes. There may be circumstances where your manager asks if you can change your working hours or shift to help maintain service continuity. This should be done by mutual agreement and consider your circumstances and well-being. We request that you consider such management requests flexibly.

If I cover alternative duties, will I continue to be paid as normal?

Yes, we will continue to pay you as per your current post because you are providing temporary emergency cover of other duties.

How are we going to reward staff that are changing hours i.e. working weekends or later/evening shifts? Will unsociable hours automatically be picked up?

If colleagues are working in their normal roles but doing different hours, then this will be picked up from EASY/Nextra.

What happen to those staff who are on pay protection whose hours have now changed?

They should claim what they actually work on EASY/Nextra this will be calculated and compared with the value of protection. If the amount claimed due to working different hours is greater than the value of protection the greater difference is paid.

Do I need to work my contracted hours if I am required to work from home?

Yes, you would be required undertake meaningful work and work all of your contracted hours. This maybe at alternative times of day to fit around individual home circumstances.

Miscellaneous

What contingency planning should I, as a manager, be making regarding colleagues' absence and maintaining service continuity?

All departments should have a Business Continuity plan which will cover actions to take. These should be followed.

What happens if I need to release clinically qualified employees to work in the NHS directly or what if I am asked to work in a crisis hospital/healthcare setting?

All functions should have a Business Continuity plan which will cover the eventuality of absence of staff that are released to support wider NHS service requirements.

What should I be saying if I am asked about NHSBT's response and preparedness in relation to COVID-19?

If this is a media request, then these should be directed to the [Corporate Communications team](#). Please do not comment directly on such matters. In all other circumstances anyone enquiring should be informed that NHSBT are following our business continuity measures and PHE guidelines.

Can I change my retirement and/or return arrangements?

Yes, in agreement with your manager retirement may be delayed or return arrangements amended. NHSBT's usual requirement for a 2- week break has been suspended during this emergency period. Any cases will be reviewed subsequently.

The NHS Pension Scheme restriction to working no more than 16 hours in first month after retirement has also been lifted.

The lift on these restrictions is currently in place until midnight on the 31st October 2022.

To amend your hours or the date of return, complete and send an updated flexible retirement form to HR Direct.

Can I work or volunteer to support covid vaccination programme?

NHSBT Colleagues can apply to support the programme on a bank or voluntary basis outside of their normal working hours. We fully appreciate the endeavour of our staff to support the wider NHS effort, but we recognise this has been a very busy year for everyone. Before you apply, please consider if this will impact your own wellbeing and performance levels during a very busy time for our organisation maintaining life-saving critical products to hospitals.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The first of our priorities is the health, safety and wellbeing of colleagues, donors and patients.

We have put a number of measures in place over the course of the pandemic, to ensure blood collection session safety. From 20th June 2022 mask wearing for donors will be optional.

For colleagues in the workplace, we ask that you continue to follow the latest guidance to help save lives. To reduce the risk of infection:

- please ensure to keep washing your hands regularly
- do not attend work if you feel unwell or have any of the above symptoms or high fever
- It is optional to wear a face covering but please be respectful to others at all times

Read more via www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Working from Home

Homeworkers should complete a Workstation Assessment form to identify any improvements that may be needed to their workstations.

https://nhsbt.service-now.com/sp?id=sc_cat_item&sys_id=2239cbc91b0d789027cceb91b24bcb67&sysparm_category=51a6c89237ed130080f519a543990e3c

If individuals experience any musculoskeletal issues from working at home with their display screen equipment, they should raise a query with HR direct. A call will then be arranged with Health, Safety and Wellbeing who will contact the individual to advice on control measures, including gaining new ICT equipment. Access to chairs at home are organised where possible.

What should I do if I or someone I am managing has a reaction to a facemask?

This guidance should be followed by Health, Safety and Wellbeing advisors and managers. All reactions must also be reported as an accident on Datix selecting '*Dermatitis - hand/skin soreness and respiratory issues*' as the incident category and providing as much detail on make/model of mask worn at the time.

Useful questions to ask individual(s):

- What type of reaction did you have? (skin soreness, blotchiness, breathing issues)
- Did you get any warnings/sensations ahead of this?
- Where anatomically was the reaction and what was the impact on you?
- How long were you wearing the mask before getting a reaction?
- How often are you changing/adjusting your masks?
- What was the working environment like that day? (venue/weather conditions)
- What roles were you undertaking and how long for?
- Were you hydrated?
- How long did it take for the reaction to clear afterward?
- What shifts/days do you work on session?
- Do you have any health conditions which may exacerbate this? (e.g. eczema)

Working with individuals will help to identify the potential cause and identify possible solutions (control measures) to see if this resolves the problem. The actions taken need to be recorded in an individual risk assessment by Health Safety and Wellbeing.

Problem / Trigger	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never worn before 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check training and how they use • Seek support from colleagues on session • Ensure not too tight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claustrophobia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check training and how they use • Ensure not too tight • Breathing exercises • Regular breaks (removing mask) • Good air circulation / ventilation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying condition (such as eczema, dry skin or allergy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moisturise face well before donning the mask • Consider a barrier cream e.g. petroleum jelly (if appropriate) • Cleanse and moisturise face after mask removal • Have breaks and regular drinks • Wash face regularly • Try a different make of mask (allergy free if available) • Review working pattern (for recovery) between shifts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of time worn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular breaks • Consider changing masks more frequently
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature of work environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve air circulation / ventilation • Improve cooling (air conditioning, fans, open windows) • Regular breaks away from environment • Hydration – regular drinks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of air circulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of fans • Regular breaks away from environment

If these do not work or individuals suffer from breathing issues or allergies, (potential anaphylactic shock) they will need to be restricted from activities or environments where masks are a mandatory requirement, with redeployment considered as appropriate. If they are also an immunocompromised person, their risk assessment will need to be updated to reflect this. Surgical Masks

are not suitable for any areas that require FFP3 respirator mask protection as defined in our risk assessments.

To keep the work environment safe, will you be providing us with stocks of face masks/alcohol hand gel/sanitising wipes/etc?

Face coverings will continue to be provided through E&F in centres and direct to Blood Donation Teams, TAS, TES and SNODs for people who choose to wear them. These may be face coverings or surgical masks depending on whether in a clinical setting.

The Government has recommended handwashing with soap or handwash and running water as the best protection against infections including COVID-19.

NHSBT's fixed sites, main centres and team bases, including blood donor centres are well furnished with handwashing stations and hand sinks in toilet facilities.

Alcohol hand rub is available in centres. Risk assessments are in place for our premises that outline the requirements for COVID-19 Secure workplaces. This relies on good hand washing, regularly cleaning of contact points, stopping individuals attending work with symptoms, and good ventilation. Where this is difficult Health, Safety and Wellbeing, E&F and business continuity are working with managers to ensure we have done everything to manage transmission risk.

What Communications on Workplaces can I expect?

Communications on Infection Protection and Control (IPC) have been provided to all colleagues and available on Link Coronavirus pages.

What reporting do we need to do to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) when colleagues have positive COVID-19 diagnosis?

It is no longer necessary to report COVID outbreaks in centres, as we do not have access to covid patients or testing.

May I review Covid-19 Secure Risk Assessments?

Covid risk assessments are no longer required but we are updating them to reflect respiratory illness and their prevention and control. Individual risk assessments for vulnerable persons will be made available through line managers.

Wellbeing Advice

Advice can be obtained from People first coronavirus pages at <https://peoplefirst.nhsbt.nhs.uk/copy-of-wellbeing/covid-19-wellbeing.htm>

For advice on Health Safety and Wellbeing please contact HR direct, who will forward to a Health Safety and Wellbeing advisor if needed for specialist advice.

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