Factsheet: Managing a Suspected or Confirmed Covid-19 Outbreak

This factsheet is intended to assist in the management of suspected cases of Covid-19 in the workplace.

It details the action that may be required in the event of an individual showing symptoms of coronavirus infection, as well as confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the workplace.

Main Symptoms of Covid-19

The main symptoms of coronavirus (Covid-19) are:

- *a high temperature:* this means a person feels hot to touch on the chest or back (there is no need to measure their temperature)

- *a new, continuous cough:* this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if they usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

- *a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste:* this means they have noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Further information can be found on the NHS website. https://www.nhs.uk/

Employee Self-isolation Requirements

Employees should stay at home and self-isolate when any of the following criteria are met:

they have any symptoms of coronavirus. https://www.nhs.uk/

- they have tested positive for coronavirus

- they live with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive

- someone in their support bubble has symptoms or has tested positive

- they have been told by NHS Test and Trace that they have been in contact with a person who has coronavirus.

Further information can be found on the NHS website. https://www.nhs.uk/

Developing Symptoms at Work

Employees should be encouraged to report immediately any symptoms they notice when in the workplace.

Where an individual at work reports that they are showing any of the symptoms of Covid-19, the following procedure is recommended.

- *Isolate the individual:* where possible, the individual showing symptoms should be isolated from others in the workplace, e.g. in a separate room.

- *Provide a mask/face covering:* where available, provide the individual with a face mask or face covering. If they have their own, ask them to put on their mask or face covering.

- *Provide assistance:* some individuals may require assistance, e.g. if they are vulnerable or disabled. Assess what assistance may be required.

- *Welfare facilities:* do not allow the individual to use welfare facilities such as the kitchen area or shower facilities. If the use of a toilet is required, try to use facilities that can be separated from other users. Once used, isolate the facility and arrange for it to be cleaned.

- *Travel home:* individuals with symptoms should avoid the use of public transport where possible. For example, if, possible a relative or other person in their household should collect them from work in a private vehicle.

- *Test for Covid-19:* instruct the individual to arrange for a Covid-19 test to be undertaken. Further information on testing can be found on the NHS website.

- *Communicate:* maintain communication with the individual and provide information, as necessary.

Note: Peripatetic employees showing symptoms should make their way home immediately from their location and inform their employer of their symptoms once they are home.

Providing Assistance

There may be occasions when the individual with symptoms requires assistance, e.g. if they are vulnerable or disabled. The following actions are recommended.

- *Social distance:* those providing assistance should try to maintain a safe distance and reduce to a minimum the time they share a breathing zone with the individual.

- *Assess the situation:* assess the situation and determine whether the individual will require any first aid or medical assistance.

- *Use a face mask/face covering:* those providing assistance who cannot maintain social distancing should wear a face mask or face covering.

- *Instruct the individual:* if possible, instruct the individual requiring assistance on what action to take so as to avoid close contact.

- *Provide first aid:* where necessary provide first-aid assistance to the individual following guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

- *Medical assistance:* where medical assistance is required, call 999 and inform the call handler that the individual has Covid-19 symptoms.

- *Waste disposal:* safely dispose of waste items and thoroughly clean any reusable items used when providing assistance.

- *Hygiene:* ensure those providing assistance wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser as soon as possible.

Alerting Close Contacts

When someone develops symptoms and orders a test, they will be encouraged by NHS Test and Trace to alert the people that they have had close contact with.

A "contact" is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 anytime from two days before the person was symptomatic up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (this is when they are infectious to others). Further information on close contact definitions can be found at GOV.UK.

If any of those close contacts are co-workers, the person who has developed symptoms may ask their employer to identify and alert those co-workers. The suggested procedure is as follows.

- *Identify close contacts:* identify those who have been performing work activities without physical distancing in a team or pair with the individual showing symptoms.

- *Inform close contacts:* inform co-workers to the suspected case(s) among colleagues and possible exposure. Ensure you MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY — do not name any individuals.

- *Instruct close contacts:* close contacts do not need to self-isolate unless requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or a public health professional, but they should:

    – avoid contact with people at high increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus, such as people with pre-existing medical conditions

    – take extra care in practicing social distancing and good hygiene

    – watch out for symptoms and self-isolate if they also show signs of coronavirus.

- *Remind close contacts:* that if they display any symptoms of Covid-19, they should self-isolate in accordance with Government guidelines.

Confirmed Cases of Covid-19

Employers may be informed of a confirmed case of Covid-19 by:

- NHS Test and Trace

- an employee/customer

- the Public Health/Health Protection Team.

If the person with symptoms tests positive for Covid-19, the NHS Test and Trace service will notify their close contacts (including co-workers) and instruct them to self-isolate. They will not identify the person who has tested positive.

Where workers are asked to self-isolate because they are a close contact of a positive case, they should inform their employer. At this stage the organisation should take the following actions:

- instruct close contacts not to come into work but to stay at home for their period of self-isolation in accordance with Test and Trace instructions

- continue to communicate with them and provide support

- allow close contacts to work from home if they remain well and it is practicable to do so, eg by finding alternative work that can be completed at home.

Outbreak Management

As part of the Government's risk control measures, there will be a nominated single point of contact to lead on contacting and liaising with public health teams. The nominated lead for Staff Recruitment will be Julie Hughes.

Early engagement with the local health teams will assist in minimising the chances of a possible wider outbreak. They can give help and advice. Contact details can be found at www.gov.uk/health-protection-team.

The following information may be requested:

- contact details of the people affected

- when they became unwell

- when they were last present on the premises

- nature of the roles undertaken by any staff affected

- known links between any individuals with Covid-19 (in or out of the premises)

- number of people those affected had close contact with

- nature of the environment (e.g. layout and nature of the building)

- details of control measures

- any contact with other agencies.

Further Action

Employers may be requested to take further action by the public health team. This could involve:

- enhanced hygiene, handwashing, and cleaning regimes, and use of personal protective equipment

- increased staff awareness of and adherence to preventative measures

- additional measures to limit access to the premises and split staff into teams or shift groups (where possible)

- temporary closure of the premises.

Cleaning the Workplace

Where there is a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 and the individual has left the setting, the Government has recommended certain requirements in relation to cleaning/decontamination (non-health care premises). This can be found at GOV.UK.

Any waste materials associated with the case should be disposed of in accordance with the Government guidelines on disposing of waste for organisations. Details can be found at GOV.UK.

Reporting Cases

Employers may be required to report confirmed cases of Covid-19 under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013.

The reporting requirements relating to cases of, or deaths from, Covid-19 under RIDDOR apply only to occupational exposure, i.e. as a result of a person's work.

Employers should only make a report under RIDDOR when one of the following circumstances applies:

- an accident or incident at work has, or could have, led to the release or escape of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) (i.e. it is a dangerous occurrence)

- a person at work (a worker) has been diagnosed as having Covid-19 attributed to an occupational exposure to coronavirus (a case of disease)

- a worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus (a work-related death due to biological agent exposure).

Further information on RIDDOR reporting requirements can be found on the HSE website.