

Coronavirus – (COVID – 19)

Risk Assessment

Introduction

As an employer, Onward has a legal duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees and others who may be affected by what we do as a business.

Whilst recognising that the risk of COVID-19 cannot be eliminated, Onward will do everything reasonably practicable, based on Public Health England (PHE) and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advice, to minimise the risk and provide a COVID-19 secure working environment.

This document consolidates the numerous risk management arrangements implemented by Onward to protect all those who may be exposed to a COVID-19 risk during Onward's business activity.

With official information and advice regarding COVID-19 being regularly updated, this document and associated risk management arrangements will be constantly monitored and reviewed to reflect the current official position.

Hazard

COVID-19 is a virus that affects the lungs and airways.

Impact of COVID-19

Health effects range from mild, moderate, severe, and in extreme cases can be fatal.

Signs of COVID-19 infection

- High temperature (your back and chest feel hot to touch) or
- A new persistent cough – this means coughing a lot, for more than an hour, or where you keep on coughing 3 or more times in a day.
- A loss of, or change, in your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia).

How COVID-19 is spread

According to current World Health Organisation (WHO) evidence and PHE advice, the COVID-19 virus is primarily transmitted between people through respiratory droplets and contact routes.

- Droplet transmission occurs when a person is in close contact (within 2m) with someone who is infected and has respiratory symptoms (e.g. coughing or sneezing). The uninfected person is at risk of having their mucosae (mouth and nose) or conjunctiva (eyes) exposed to potentially infective respiratory droplets.
- The virus can survive for up to 72 hours outside the human body. Uninfected people can pick up the virus by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their eyes or mouth.
- There is some evidence that COVID-19 infection may lead to intestinal infection and be present in faeces.

Groups at risk of contracting COVID-19 during Onward business operations

Broadly this includes Onward employees, customers, contractors, members of the public.

At particular risk:

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable to COVID-19 – that is, people with specific serious health conditions. The Government will write to everybody who is clinically extremely vulnerable to set out detailed advice while the Lockdown2 restrictions are in place.

Those over 60 or Clinically Vulnerable could be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Clinically vulnerable people are those who are:

- Aged 70 or over (regardless of medical conditions)
- Aged under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds):
 - chronic (long-term) mild to moderate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
 - chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
 - chronic kidney disease
 - chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
 - chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS) or cerebral palsy
 - diabetes
 - a weakened immune system as the result of certain conditions or medicines they are taking (such as steroid tablets)
 - being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
 - pregnant
 - Black, Asian or minority ethnicity (BAME) backgrounds

Risk level

Onward considers the potential transmission of COVID-19 to be a high risk.

General risk control strategy

- Senior management attend a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting at least once a week, including updates and discussion/decisions on all COVID-19 matters affecting Onward.
- The SLT team is staying informed and following Government advice and Public Health England guidelines.
- The SLT team has responsibility for ensuring adequate COVID-19 risk control arrangements are in place across the business.
- A consolidated, business-wide COVID-19 Recovery Plan has been developed.
- Provision of timely and accurate information to colleagues, customers and the trade union, providing a consistent and clear message regarding Onward's strategy and risk control arrangements.
- Onward COVID-19 related H&S safe systems of work and other related documents are stored centrally in a COVID-19 folder in the H&S Library, available via Our Space.

General risk control principles

- Colleagues work from home until further notice as a first option, where possible.
- Identification, via HR system that is updated regularly, of colleagues (or someone in their home) who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 (classified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or Clinically Vulnerable), e.g. they have an underlying health condition, and ensuring those colleagues follow appropriate personal isolation requirements and have

the support required for their health and wellbeing and to enable them to work from home where possible.

- For activities that cannot be completed from home:
 - Social distancing applied to all working situations.
 - Safe Systems of Work (SSoW) are developed based on PHE guidelines and incorporating safe working procedures based on the risk profile of the task/working environment.
 - Office Plans are developed for each office location to make them COVID-19 secure, including arrangements for maintaining social distancing, hand washing facilities and increased surface cleaning regime. Colleagues provided with office safe working practice guidance.
 - Colleagues carry out a point of work risk assessment prior to starting task/entering the working environment and have final Go-No Go decision prior to and during task. No-one is required or obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, that activity will only continue if it is considered essential for Onward business operations, and, if so, all the mitigating actions possible will be implemented to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 between colleagues and others.

Further mitigating actions include, for example:

- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
- Increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).
- Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other.
- Provision of appropriate PPE.
- Any activity where people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, must be assessed by the Onward manager responsible for the work to decide whether the activity can safely go ahead, with particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Such instances will be by exception and will require a specific safe system of work developing and communicating to those involved.
- Contractors SSoW checked for adequate COVID-19 management arrangements prior to permitting contractor to recommence working at Onward properties.

Consultation

- SSoW developed in collaboration with those teams who are to carry out the task the document refers to. Approved by the senior managers responsible for the activity. Teams briefed on the content and safe working procedure.
- Recognised Trade Union informed of SSoW and feedback invited.
- Regional Health & Safety Forums - ensure that COVID-19 SSoW remain suitable and are embedded/engaged with by all Onward colleagues. Concerns/issues raised at Regional H&S Forums escalated to the Health & Safety Group for resolution.
- Health & Safety Group – assurance checkpoint to the business that COVID-19 arrangements are suitable and sufficient.

Communication

- Coronavirus updates shared with colleagues on Our Space at least once a week (with 'mandatory read' confirmation box).

- Previous updates are stored in the News & Events > [Coronavirus updates](#).
- Important supporting documents and resources are stored in the [Coronavirus resources](#) folder in SharePoint.
- Regular vlog updates to colleagues by Chief Executive and other SLT members/senior managers on Our Space.
- Weekly SLT update calls via MS Teams.
- Weekly OLT update via MS Teams.
- Directorate meetings via MS Teams.
- Team briefings via MS Teams.
- Recovery Plan shared with colleagues via Our Space and colleague update via MS Teams.
- [Monthly customer updates](#) and Chief Executive vlog shared via Our Space and the Onward website.
- Quarterly customer newsletters shared via the Onward website.
- Customer updates/newsletters also delivered by post.
- Customer in Onward schemes also receive information delivered via letters and posters.
- Ad hoc announcements shared on Our Space and through organisational announcement emails.

Risk Control Arrangements

Working from home

- Online colleague assessment survey carried out to assess individual availability for work and personal needs.
- Colleagues have access to an office chair, monitor, keyboard and mouse to collect from their office location, via arrangement, to their home to facilitate their home workstation.
- Online DSE home workstation assessment to be completed by all colleagues affected.
- DSE Home Working Guidance available to all colleagues via H&S Library, COVID-19 folder. Availability of the guidance communicated via colleague updates and Our Space article.

Working from office / contact centre

Office locations limited to:

Lancashire Region	Manchester Region	Merseyside Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accrington • Onward Repairs, Altham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renaissance Court • S4B 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watson Building • Century Building (EST)

Office plan

A detailed office plan developed for each location, based on a location risk assessment, and signed off by Heads of Property Strategy, Health & Safety and Trades Union representative.

Office plans include all reasonable arrangements to maintain a safe working environment whilst maintaining social distancing.

Colleagues are provided with office safe working practice guidance.

Mobile workers

- SSoW developed and updated for each activity based on the risk profile of the activity and latest PHE advice and guidance.

- Colleagues briefed by line managers on content.
- PPE / face coverings provided for task to be completed safely.
- Colleague carries out an informal Point of Work risk assessment and has final Go-No Go decision at point of work.

Health & wellbeing

- Prominent Health & Wellbeing area on intranet with support information for colleagues.
- Colleague assessment survey.
- Line managers to monitor wellbeing of team members. This subject is included and recorded in monthly performance conversations to ensure colleagues wellbeing is actively being discussed.
- Virtual training available to all colleagues on a range of topics in this area, including mental health awareness, resilience and working remotely.