NHS TEST AND TRACE
Guidance for employers and businesses

This guidance explains how employers and businesses can play their part in the NHS Test and Trace programme to slow the spread of the virus, protect the health and care system and save lives.

By following the guidance employers can reduce the risk of co-workers having to self-isolate if a member of staff tests positive for COVID-19.

For more detail please refer to:

Local Test and Trace Advice

If you are aware of an outbreak of confirmed Covid-19 within your business setting, please contact Reading Council. In the event of two or more people testing positive within your business, please contact the Council on 0118 937 3787 during normal working hours (out-of-hours emergencies: 0118 937 3737) as soon as possible. You will be directed to the Council’s Food & Safety team. Please note, the out of hours service is only for outbreaks and not for general advice on social distancing measures.

What is the NHS Test and Trace service?

The NHS Test and Trace service:

- provides testing for anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) to find out if they have the virus;
- gets in touch with anyone who has had a positive test result to help them share information about any close recent contacts they have had;
- alerts those contacts, where necessary, and notifies them they need to self-isolate for up to 14 days to help stop the spread of the virus.

By following instructions to self-isolate, people who have had close recent contact with someone with coronavirus will be protecting their family, friends,
colleagues and other people around them, and will play a direct role in stopping the spread of the virus.

For more information visit: www.nhs.uk/coronavirus and www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works

To facilitate the NHS Test and Trace service, employers should encourage workers to heed any notifications to self-isolate and provide support to these individuals when in isolation.

Please ask your staff to self-isolate immediately for 7 days and get tested if they have coronavirus symptoms: a new, continuous cough, a high temperature of a change in their sense of smell or taste. If they test positive, they will be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace Service. They will be asked to share details of people they have been in close, recent contact with, and places they have worked in or visited.

**The role of employers**

It is vital that employers play their part by making their workplaces as safe as possible, by encouraging workers to heed any notifications to self-isolate and by supporting them when in isolation. Although this may seem disruptive for businesses, it is less disruptive than an outbreak of COVID-19 in the workplace will be, and far less disruptive than periods in lockdown.

To help employers, guidance has been developed on the 5 steps for working safely:

1. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment
2. Develop cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures
3. Help people to work from home
4. Maintain social distancing, where possible
5. Where people cannot be apart, manage transmission risk

Find out more at: [www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/5-steps-to-working-safely](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/5-steps-to-working-safely)


It is important to follow this guidance to help to reduce the risk of a spread of infection in the workplace.

**Workplace risk**

COVID-19 is a new risk that must be incorporated into workplace risk assessments. Employers must therefore carry out a new COVID-19 risk assessment if they have not already done so. Health and Safety Executive has guidance to help you conduct a risk assessment here: [www.hse.gov.uk/news/working-safely-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/news/working-safely-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm)

Employers should share the risk assessment with workers and consider publishing the risk assessment on their website.
Supporting employers with a workplace outbreak

If multiple cases of coronavirus appear in a workplace, an outbreak control team from either Reading Council or Public Health England will, if necessary, be assigned to help the employer manage the outbreak. Employers should seek advice from Reading Council in the first instance. Call 0118 937 3787 during normal working hours (out-of-hours emergencies: 0118 937 3737) as soon as possible. You will be directed to the Food & Safety team.

Supporting workers who need to self-isolate

Employers should support workers who need to self-isolate and must not ask them to attend the workplace.

Workers will be told to isolate because they:

- have coronavirus symptoms and are awaiting a test result;
- have tested positive for coronavirus;
- are a member of the same household as someone who has symptoms or has tested positive for coronavirus; or
- have been in close recent contact with someone who has tested positive and received a notification to self-isolate from NHS Test and Trace.

Employers should continue to communicate with workers in self-isolation and provide support. This includes allowing people to work from home if they remain well and if it is practicable to do so. This might include finding alternative work that can be completed at home during the period of self-isolation.

If people can’t work from home, employers must ensure any self-isolating employee is receiving sick pay and give them the option to use their paid leave days if they prefer. Further guidance is available on what employees should do if they cannot work.

Employees in self-isolation are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay for every day they are in isolation, as long as they meet the eligibility conditions. Information for employers on reclaiming Statutory Sick Pay can be found in this guidance: www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-back-statutory-sick-pay-paid-to-your-employees-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19

The NHS Test and Trace service will provide a notification (either a phone call, letter, email or text message) that can be used as evidence that someone has been told to self-isolate. Workers can use this notification to inform their employer that they have been told to self-isolate. Employers will need this evidence if they are going to claim a rebate for Statutory Sick Pay.

The period of self-isolation will be for 14 days from the point of most recent contact with the person who has tested positive for coronavirus. An employee can ask to take their paid holiday for the time they’re off work, entitling them to full pay for the duration of their leave, if they choose.

**Local support channels**

Reading Council has a section on its website dedicated to support for local businesses: [www.reading.gov.uk/c19business](http://www.reading.gov.uk/c19business)

If your employees need additional support whilst isolating (If they have no other means of support from friends or family), they can request help from the Council’s One Reading Community Hub: [www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirussupport](http://www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirussupport)

The hub can help with food supplies and medication collection, as well as helping people deal with the challenge of social isolation.

The Council also provides a range of coronavirus advice and support at: [www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirusinfo](http://www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirusinfo)

This includes information on financial support: [www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirusadvice#financialwelfare](http://www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirusadvice#financialwelfare) and maintaining wellbeing [www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirusadvice#mentalhealth](http://www.reading.gov.uk/coronavirusadvice#mentalhealth)

**Guidance for the self-employed**

If you are self-employed, you must continue to work from home if you can. If this is not possible, the guidance on the 5 steps for working safely and sector-specific advice [www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19) must be implemented for your work environment. As part of this, you must continue to think about how you can observe government guidance on social distancing for the people that you meet, such as customers and suppliers.

If your business has been adversely affected by coronavirus, you may be eligible for a grant through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. More information on this Scheme, and other support available if you are not eligible, is available here [www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme)

**Guidance for agency workers**

Agency workers or workers on zero hours contract who have been told to self-isolate must work from home, unless it is impossible for them to do so. If they are unable to work from home, they may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay or Universal Credit whilst self-isolating in line with Government guidance. Find out more at: [www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay](http://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay)