



**Business
Support**
COVID-19

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Introduction

As we welcome the announcement on the re-opening of all non-essential goods retailers this Friday 11 December 2020 this information ezine has been prepared to support and advise small retailers. Information includes Asked Questions, a useful checklist to ensure you have considered all key points and other signposting information that you may find useful.

We encourage all businesses to keep in touch and if you require any additional information or advice please do not hesitate to make contact by emailing regen@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can I contact for help if I need some advice or support before or when I re-open my business?

Within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, the Environmental Health Department can be contacted with any queries around social distancing measures, or when you are permitted to open etc. This team currently can be contacted by telephone on 0300 0300 900 or emailing ehhealth@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk. They will provide you with any advice on COVID-19 precautions and if you have very specific queries will carry out a virtual call or visit your business.

What is the COVID-19 assessment I need to carry out?

This is a risk assessment, similar to what you carry out for routine health and safety hazards and to assess and manage this new risk of COVID-19. As an employer, you have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risks to their health and safety. This means you need to think about the risks they face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them. You must now make sure that the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of COVID-19. It is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace. If you have fewer than five workers, or are self-employed, you do not have to write anything down as part of your risk assessment but we would encourage you to do so and it will help you decide whether you have done everything you need to. In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

To help you, there is a template risk assessment for COVID-19 available from the HSENI website www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/example-covid-19-risk-assessment-template or please contact the Environmental Health Department and they will be able to assist you preparing a risk assessment.

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How can I reduce risk to staff and customers?

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with employees and their customers to ensure everybody's health and safety is protected.

- Consider who is essential to be on the premises; for example, back of house workers should work from home if at all possible.
- Increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
- The person responsible for the organisation or operation of the premise must take reasonable steps to ensure that all persons maintain a 2 metre social distance from each other (unless members of the same or a linked household) by altering the layout of the premise including those parts to which customers do not customarily have access, managing and controlling the use of points of access and egress, shared facilities (such as toilets) and managing and controlling the means of moving from one part of a premise to another.
- The person responsible for the organisation or operation of the premise must take reasonable steps to ensure that persons waiting to enter the premises maintain a distance of 2 metres from each other (unless members of the same or a linked household)
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that employees and customers are provided with information on how to minimise the risk of exposure to and the spread of coronavirus.
- Where it is not reasonably practicable for a social distance of 2 metres to be maintained, reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that:
 - Any close face to face contact is limited between persons;
 - Barriers or screens are installed and maintained;
 - Personal protective equipment is used where appropriate and in such a case is made readily available.
- Employees in retail settings must now wear a face covering in areas accessible to the public, unless they are protected by a partition or if they have a reasonable excuse. Further information on a reasonable excuse is available at [/www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/Your%20guide%20to%20the%20COVID-19%20restrictions.pdf](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/Your%20guide%20to%20the%20COVID-19%20restrictions.pdf)
- Businesses should take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff. These actions include:
 - Increase the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
 - Keep the activity time involved as short as possible.
 - Use screens or barriers to separate people from each other.
 - Reduce the number of staff each customer has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).
 - Social distancing applies to all parts of a business, not just the place where your staff spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing.

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How do I maintain social distancing in common areas for staff?

- Stagger break times to reduce pressure on the staff break rooms or places to eat.
- Use safe outside areas for breaks.
- Create additional space by using other parts of the working area or building that have been freed up by remote working.
- Install screens to protect workers in receptions or counters, etc
- Avoid fully opening staff canteens by providing packaged meals or similar.
- Reconfigure seating and tables to optimise spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.
- Encourage workers to remain on-site and when not possible, maintaining social distancing while off-site.
- Consider using social distance marking for other common areas such as toilets, showers, lockers and changing rooms and in any other areas where queues typically form.

What do I need to consider for safe movement for staff and customers?

- For staff and customers where possible reduce movement by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios or telephones, where permitted. Please note these items require cleaning between users if multi-use.
- Introduce more one-way flow through your store. Provision of floor markings and signage should remind both workers and customers follow to social distancing wherever possible.
- Reduce maximum occupancy for lifts. Make sure that people with disabilities are able to access lifts. Provide handsanitiser for the operation of lifts and encouraging use of stairs wherever possible.
- Regulate the use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts, turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing.

What do I need to consider to ensure my staff and customers are safe and feel safe when working or shopping in my premises?

- Define the number of customers that can reasonably follow 2m social distancing within the store and any outdoor selling areas. Take into account total floorspace as well as likely pinch points and busy areas.
- Limit the number of customers in the store overall and in any particular congestion areas, for example doorways between outside and inside spaces.
- Suspend or reduce customer services that cannot be undertaken without contravening social distancing guidelines. This may include re-thinking how assistance is provided, for example, using fixed pairs of colleagues to lift heavy objects rather than a single colleague lifting with a customer.
- Encourage customers to shop alone where possible, unless they need specific assistance.
- Remind customers who are accompanied by children that they are responsible for supervising them at all times and should follow social distancing guidelines.

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- Look at how people walk through the shop and how you could adjust this to reduce congestion and contact between customers, for example, queue management or one-way flow, where possible.
- Use outside premises for queuing where available and safe, for example some car parks.
- Ensure any changes to entries, exit and queue management take into account reasonable adjustments for those who need them, including disabled shoppers.
- Manage outside queues to ensure they do not cause a risk to individuals or other businesses, for example by introducing queuing systems, using barriers and having staff direct customers.
- Encourage customers to use hand sanitiser or handwashing facilities as they enter the premises to reduce the risk of transmission by touching products while browsing.
- Encourage customers to wear a face covering.
- Take into account the impact of your processes, including queues, on public spaces such as high streets and public car parks.
- Encourage customers to avoid handling products whilst browsing, if at all possible.
- Employees in retail settings must now wear a face covering in areas accessible to the public, unless they are protected by a partition or if they have a reasonable excuse.
- Shopping centres should take responsibility for regulating the number of customers in the centre and the queuing process in communal areas on behalf of their retail.

How can I best communicate my COVID-19 guidelines to customers and staff?

- Provide clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival, for example, signage and visual aids.
- Provide written or spoken communication of the latest guidelines to both workers and customers inside and outside the store.
- Consider the particular needs of those with protected characteristics, such as those who are visually impaired.
- Create social distancing champions to demonstrate social distancing guidelines to customers.
- Ensuring latest guidelines are visible in selling and non selling areas.
- Have clearly designated positions for staff where they can provide advice or assistance to customers whilst maintaining social distance.
- Consider how to spread the number of people arriving throughout the day for example by appointments or staggering opening hours; this will help reduce demand on public transport at key times and avoid overcrowding. Maximise usage of on-line sales.
- Continue to keep customer restaurants and cafes closed until further notice, apart from when offering hot or cold food to be consumed off the premises.

How do I keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission of the virus?

- Frequently clean work areas and equipment between uses, using your usual cleaning products.
- Frequently clean objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, including self-checkouts, trolleys, coffee machines, betting machines or staff handheld devices, and making sure there are adequate disposal arrangements for cleaning products.

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- Clear workspaces and remove waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift.
- Clean high touch objects and surfaces such as door handles and trolleys.
- If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then you should refer to the specific guidance available.

How do I ensure correct hand washing, sanitation and use of toilets?

- Use signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
- Provide regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards.
- Provide hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.
- Set clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
- Enhance cleaning for busy areas.
- Provide more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.
- Provide hand drying facilities - either paper towels or electrical dryers.

Can I open fitting rooms safely?

- Fitting rooms should be closed wherever possible given the challenges in operating them safely.
- Limit contact between customers and staff during fitting, for example by suspending fitting assistance.
- Where fitting rooms are essential, for example to support key workers buying critical protective clothing, they should be cleaned very frequently, typically between each use.

How do I reduce viral transmission with objects in the store?

- Limit customer handling of merchandise, for example, through different display methods, new signage or rotation of high-touch stock.
- Stagger collection times for customers collecting items, with a queuing system in place to ensure a safe distance of 2 meters.
- Set up 'no contact' return procedures where customers take return goods to a designated area.
- Encourage contactless refunds, where possible.
- Encourage increased handwashing and introducing more handwashing facilities for workers and customers or providing hand sanitiser where this is not practical.
- Put in place picking-up and dropping-off collection points where possible, rather than passing goods hand-to-hand.
- Consider placing protective coverings on large items that may require customer testing or use, for example, furniture, beds or seats. Ensuring frequent cleaning of these coverings between uses, using usual cleaning products.
- Clean touch points after each customer use or handover. For some examples, such as rental equipment, and test drive and rental vehicles, interior and exterior touch points should be considered.

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COVID-19 | Small Retailers Checklist

This checklist is a quick guide to support retailers to work safely when re-opening during COVID-19 restrictions.

Physical Distancing/ Movement of your Customers	
Measure the capacity of your store and review how many customers can safely follow 2m social distancing in your store.	
Manage customer traffic, you may wish to consider changes to your opening hours or provide a shop by appointment and/or, click and collect service.	
Review entry and exit points, and where possible create a one-way system if required. Use markings on your floor if necessary to encourage social distancing.	
Pay particular attention to busy areas/pinch points where queues are likely to develop, for example at counters.	
Consider how customers visiting your store are likely to queue, and how outside queues may impact neighbouring shops, pedestrians and road traffic. Speak to neighbouring business to avoid overlap, blocking of entrances etc.	
Be mindful of your customers demographics/size of groups etc. and encourage customers to shop alone.	
Use screens to create a physical barrier between people to maintain the 2m separation in particular at tills.	
Ensure lifts are only used by people with disabilities or for essential purposes, or on a one person per lift basis. Exemplar cleaning regime must apply to lifts.	
Hygiene	
Encourage customers to use contactless or cashless payment where possible.	
Have a robust cleaning routine to clean down all surfaces and in particular high touch areas such as door handles.	
If using touch-based security devices such as keypads to enter the business through controlled areas, seek alternatives or implement enhanced cleaning.	
Encourage customers to wash their hands by providing hand sanitation facilities at entry and exit points and in any common areas. Provide regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards. If handwashing facilities is not possible, then hand sanitiser should be provided for use by staff and customers. Consider hand free sanitiser options.	
Set clear usage and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean. Try where possible to avoid queues at toilet areas.	

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Other methods of reducing transmission

Limit customer handling of stock and consider placing protective coverings on large items that may require customer testing such as seats or beds.

Limit usage of fitting rooms wherever possible and if essential should be cleaned between customers. Suspend personalised fitting services.

Store items that have been extensively handled for example tried on shoes or clothing for 72 hours. Other items handled by customers should be cleaned before displaying on the shop floor.

Customer and staff support

Provide written or verbal communication details of your COVID-19 guidelines to both staff and customers e.g. using posters at entrance points and inside the store and providing staff with written information or through staff briefings. Listen to any customer or staff concerns.

Give your customers reassurance and be aware of customer apprehension. Remember if a business is being serious about COVID-19 controls then customers will feel safe and will be more likely to take precautions.

Remind staff that if they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 to stay at home and follow PHA Guidance. Give particular consideration to any staff who are clinically vulnerable. Remember to consider staff rest areas and stagger break times or, if possible use outside areas for breaks.

Be mindful to include all customers in your messaging and procedures and be aware that some customers may have additional needs or disabilities, for example hearing or sight impairment.

Legal

Prepare a COVID-19 risk assessment to help you decide which actions you need to take just as you would for other health and safety matters. Involve your staff in the risk assessment.

Useful Links

Help with signage can be downloaded from
www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/business-information-advice-faqs/#healthprotectionsafetyadvice

A template risk assessment for COVID-19 available from the HSENI website
www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/example-covid-19-risk-assessment-template

It is advised to regularly check NI Business info website, for the latest information
www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk