Risk Assessment Controls for Returning to Work After "Shielding"

Staff retuning to work after shielding may have specific needs and concerns about their return to the workplace.

The Scottish Government has produced a specific 'Covid-age' risk assessment tool and this should be used as the basis for assessment of returning staff after shielding. You can access it here. This assessment is based on the Covid-age tool, developed by the Association of Local Authority Medical Advisors

The Covid-age assessment will help you and your staff make a judgement on the level of vulnerability of individual members of staff. The staff member concerned should complete the tool and then have a constructive conversation with their line manager about how they can safely return to work. Guidance and a template to help facilitate conversations on a return to work can be found at the Healthy Working Lives 'COVID-19 Return to Work Tool Kit' Healthy Working Lives 'COVID-19 Return to Work Tool Kit'.

The Covid-age risk assessment highlights some specific controls depending on the level of risk to individual members of staff.

Eliminating the risk should be the first option; e.g. by allowing home working to continue. However, if this is not possible you need to reduce the risk; e.g. reducing the time and frequency of being in the workplace. You should redesign work to ensure that staff can maintain physical distancing. For more information on the general risk assessment process, go back to our 'Risk Assessment for COVID-19' guide.

What are the Hazards	Who might be harmed	Current controls	Additional controls required	Action by whom	Action by when	Done
Spread of COVID-19 Virus	Staff returning to work after "shielding"	None	You will need additional control measures, for examples see below.			

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Examples of Control Measures

Consult with employees to identify the specific COVID-19 controls required and decide on their implementation.

Below are some suggested control measures:

Physical elements in workplace,

Ensure that:

- Physical distancing is implemented in all areas as per current Scottish Government Guidelines.
- Appropriate signage is in place in all areas to remind everyone of physical distancing and hygiene.
- Good hand hygiene is encouraged, hand washing facilities are provided and alcohol hand sanitisers/gel are supplied.
- Increased cleaning of all contact areas occurs and that there is adequate availability of cleaning materials/sprays/wipes.
- Home working where possible is an ongoing option (permanent or temporary).
- No hot desking or equipment sharing occurs.
- The "need" to move between departments is reduced and travel around premises is discouraged.
- There are restrictions for non-essential visitors on entering the premises or specific staff areas.
- The use of conference call/video call facilities are utilised to minimise face to face contact.
- Alternative options to face to face staff training, such as online, webinars or use of self-directed learning resources are used.
- More information about risk assessment and how to apply social distancing is here.

Protecting Vulnerable Staff

Ensure that:

- The specific role carried out by "vulnerable" workers has been considered as part of the risk assessment.
- A policy and process is in place for provision of Occupational Health advice to help assess specific needs and adjustments for return to work.
- Line managers understand their responsibility to discuss particular concerns with staff members and work towards reaching a conclusion.
- All pregnant workers follow the regularly updated guidance from the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology occupational health advice.
- Vulnerable workers are the first to be asked to remain at home if there is an increase in local cluster cases of COVID 19.

Staff Responsibilities

Ensure that:

- Staff comply with physical distancing while at work.
- Staff wash hands regularly (for 20 secs) and use hand gels provided.
- Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette is encouraged (cover nose/mouth with a tissue coughing or sneezing, use disposable tissues and discard after use).
- Staff take responsibility for cleaning their work areas, for example wipe down desk/keyboard/mouse/phone – before and after use.
- Staff do not share work equipment.
- Staff bring their own coffee/tea and meals and remove all packaging/waste and dispose of appropriate waste streams.

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Staff Support

- Meet regularly with staff and keep them informed of changes in work practices.
- Ensure all staff are encouraged to promptly report symptoms at work and self-isolate.
- Be aware that some, or all of your staff may need to be sent home quickly (local lock down, individual case of symptoms, caring responsibilities).
- Regular contact as per Attendance Management Policy should continue as normal with absent staff . You can find more information about how support staff attendance here.
- Discuss a COVID-19 Return to Work plan with your staff. Read more about supporting staff returning to work safely at our tool kit.

Resources to Help with Risk Assessments

- Access our COVID-19 page to read more about how to implement a healthy return to work.
- Read more on how to carry out a risk assessment and use our template.
- Learn the risk assessment process by completing our online module 'Sensible risk assessment'.
- Become a Healthy Working Lives Approved trainer and deliver risk assessment training for your employees, read more about it here.