**Risk Assessment**

**Individual workplace risk assessment – COVID-19**

This risk assessment has been based on the Scottish Government toolkit and workplace risk assessment guidance and should be used in relation to employees at work within council establishments and worksites.

This is relevant to all staff but in particular those staff members who are classified as at highest risk of Covid 19 and had previously been shielding, and those with underlying health conditions who are at high risk. This guidance is intended to support managers and staff to have a greater understanding of an individual’s risk from COVID-19 and to facilitate a conversation about what can be done by the employer to enable them to work safely. This information should help to have a constructive conversation which should be agreed by both parties based on the specific workplace and individual risks. Shielding status can change depending on the level an area is in.

There are three things which affect the occupational health risk from COVID-19:

* Prevalence of COVID-19 in the local area: the amount of Covid 19 circulating in Inverclyde.
* What the workplace risk are and what control measures can be put in place to protect staff.
* Individual characteristics and risks that affect outcome from COVID-19

**Return to Work**

Supporting higher risk employees to work from home where possible remains a key mitigation for these employees, however the latest letter from the Chief Medical Officer states:

*“My advice is that you can go into the workplace along with others if you want to, or if your employer requires this. Employers should not discourage you from returning to the workplace, or from working from home if that is not your choice or in your best interests.”*

Clarification of the final sentence states:

*“The reference in the final sentence that employees have a choice about returning to the workplace is in the context of phased returns to offices or workplaces where employers are giving their employees a choice in the matter.  However, once a workplace is open if an employer does require an employee to return, then the employee does have to return.  The remaining requirements for workplace safety and risk assessments apply.  However we continue to encourage employers not to require people to come into the office if not necessary as this will help to reduce transmission of the virus.”*

**Vaccination** - The Guidance states:

*“Your COVID-Age is not currently impacted by your vaccination status. We know the vaccine offers significant protection to a population, but we do not yet have evidence of exactly how effective it is for an individual and in particular people with some underlying health conditions.*

*Whilst we are still understanding the effectiveness of the vaccine, we are not advising any modifications to current COVID-Age assessments.”*

Vaccination status is asked for as part of this assessment however it should not at this time impact on the results of the risk assessment.

Each Service or establishment should have undertaken a generic workplace risk assessment for COVID-19 and made necessary adjustments. After this is completed, if there is a concern about individual vulnerability, they should support those staff members to complete an individual risk assessment with their manager using this COVID-19 occupational risk assessment tool. This will support staff and managers to agree work duties. Employers should also use this approach with volunteers in the workplace. Risk to staff in the workplace can be reduced by adopting safer work practices and measures. Council guidance is available on Icon <http://icon/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-policy-and-guidance/chemical-safety/covid19-coronavirus/>

The UK has an existing legal framework to make sure that staff are protected whilst at work. Laws are already in place to promote a safe working environment (primarily the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974), to prevent discrimination (Equality Act 2010), and to minimise exposure to risk (such as the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013).

Further guidance for employers on equality obligations in the context of COVID-19 pandemic is available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission here: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-employers>. It links to guidance on [reasonable adjustments for employees](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-employers-reasonable-adjustments-employees) and [employers’ duties on pregnancy and maternity](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-employers-your-duties-pregnancy-and-maternity).

This guidance is intended to complement existing occupational risk assessment processes by providing a means of assessing the specific risk of COVID-19 in an occupational context. It does not replace, or exempt employers from their existing legal obligations but seeks to support employers in meeting those obligations given the new risks presented by COVID-19. Please continue to follow general and sector-specific advice in relation to COVID-19. This is available at <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Council guidance is available on Icon <http://icon/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-policy-and-guidance/chemical-safety/covid19-coronavirus/>

**Occupational Health Risks of Covid-19**

Risk is a combination of the possible consequences of a specific hazard and the likelihood of this consequence occurring. When considering occupational risk from COVID-19, there are two overall considerations:

* **The risk of the individual contracting COVID-19 at their workplace.** This will depend on factors including community prevalence of COVID-19 and the nature of the working environment, taking account of mitigating measures put in place (e.g. PPE use, physical distancing, infection control with enhanced hygiene measures).
* **The potential harm that COVID-19 might cause an individual.** This will depend on individual characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and underlying health conditions or vulnerabilities.

**COVID-19 Occupational Risk Assessment Tool**

This tool should be used in conjunction with the COVID-19 Occupational Risk Assessment Guidance and will help staff assess their vulnerability from COVID-19. Staff members can complete the individual risk assessment with their manager or on their own, to identify their individual level of vulnerability. This outcome, in combination with the outcome of the workplace risk assessment completed by the manager, should be the basis of a discussion between the member of staff and their manager. The aim is for an agreement to be reached on how they can work safely.

**About the risk assessment tool**

The risk assessment tool is based on published evidence for the main risk factors. Age was chosen as the basis for the tool because the evidence shows age is the greatest risk factor for death from COVID-19; for example, in comparison with a healthy person aged 20, a healthy person aged 60 has more than 30 times the risk of dying if they contract COVID-19.

**How to use the risk assessment tool**

Staff should complete the online covid 19 risk calculator [Covid risk calculator](https://alama.shinyapps.io/Covid_Age/)

If you cannot get online access you can use the excel spreadsheet which can be downloaded using the link below however the tool is amended regularly therefore it can become out of date quickly. The online tool should be used in preference and the spreadsheet checked against it as soon as online access becomes available.



**Staff in the moderate or above category**

Using this assessment of vulnerability and by completing table 2 in section 2 managers should have a constructive conversation with their staff member about how they can be enabled to work safely. Any concerns, control measures agreed and actions required should be recorded in section 4, the action plan. Where an agreement cannot be reached, additional input may be required.

**Control measures should be proportionate to the Covid age vulnerability risk and the local prevalence.**

Further assistance

* Human Resources
* Health and Safety Team
* Occupational health referral made by manager (where available)
* Trade Union Representative or Professional Organisation
* GP or medical specialist by the staff member (managers should not liaise directly)
* Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)
* Health Protection Scotland

**Section 1 - Covid Risk**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name: | Service: |
| Date: | Job Title: |

Table 1

Once the “Covid-age” tool has been completed tick the appropriate box below to identify the employee’s risk of adverse effects from Covid 19.

| **Your COVID-age** | | **Your risk** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Very high**  COVID-age 85 and above | | You’re at very high risk if infection occurs  You should take additional, sensible precautions when leaving your home to minimise your risk of contracting COVID 19 as much as possible.  Ideally you should work from home | |
| **High**  COVID-age around 70 to 85 | | You’re at high risk of serious illness if infection occurs. | |
| **Moderate**  COVID-age around 50 to 70 | | You’re much less likely to develop severe illness if COVID-19 infection occurs. | |
| **Low**  COVID-age below around 50 | | You’re at very low risk from COVID-19 | |
| Double Vaccinated |  | Very high |  |
| Single Vaccinated |  | High |  |
| Unvaccinated |  | Moderate |  |
|  |  | Low |  |

For most people in the low, moderate or high COVID-Age categories, you can attend work, if required to do so, provided appropriate controls are in place and unless high viral prevalence indicates otherwise. For those in the very high risk category, they can attend work however work from home would be the ideal option. Additional precautions may be required and discussed with the employee.

**Section 2 – Post information**

Table 2

**Local Covid risk.**

Identify the local prevalence rate for the virus. The higher the rate the more important it is that staff work from home where possible and that robust risk control measures are in place for staff who must attend the workplace. If at the highest levels it is not possible to implement social distancing or finding alternative work or home working then you may need to consider not having staff in the highest risk categories attending the workplace. Such cases must be referred to health and safety and HR.

[COVID-19 Daily Dashboard - PHS COVID-19 | Tableau Public](https://public.tableau.com/profile/phs.covid.19#!/vizhome/COVID-19DailyDashboard_15960160643010/Overview) click on `cases by neighbourhood` and then select Inverclyde at `Select Local Authority`.

Local Covid Risk

7 Day positive rate per 100,000 population

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0 | 1 to 49 | 50 to 99 | 100 to 199 | 200 to 399 | 400+ |

Rate

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Increasing | Decreasing | Static |

For those in the moderate and low risk categories the standard mitigations, as required under the guidance, may be all that is required:

* Social distancing
* Wearing of Face Coverings
* Hand Hygiene

Going through the questions and following the guidance below will help identify if any further mitigations are required.

| **Employee/Post Information** | **Yes/No** | **Comments** | **General Guidance** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Can the employee’s duties only be carried out in the workplace? |  |  | If employees fall into the high or highest risk categories working from home is an important risk mitigation, consider if this is possible. This could be on the basis of a hybrid or other working model that is in keeping with the needs of the service.  Identify the working pattern which has been established. |
| Does the employee have to deal with other employees, clients or service users face to face? |  |  | This activity can come with an increased risk to the employee.   * Can the employee carry out telephone consultations or deal with service users remotely. * If this is not possible can the employee work effectively from home or carry out alternative duties which would not require meeting with service users or clients. * Physical distancing should be maintained as far as possible. (1m minimum but 2m preferred) * Consider if work could be carried out from behind a screen (i.e. reception duties)? * Consider if PPE (personal protective equipment should be used). This may already be identified as part of the job role. * Wear a face covering when interacting or talking to someone. |
| Do they work in a large open plan office or with groups of people where it may be difficult to maintain social distancing requirements? |  |  | This is a higher risk activity.   * Can they work from home, either full time or as a blended approach. * Can duties or work plan location be adjusted to avoid contact with large groups of people? * If not consideration could be given to reducing the number of people the employee comes into contact with, maintaining closed groupings (bubbles) or reducing the time spent with others. * Screens between desks could be considered as part of the mitigation measures. |
| Will they be dealing with clients/service users with confirmed or suspected Covid 19? |  |  | This is a very high risk activity which may not suitable for an employee in the higher risk categories. Consider job adjustments, i.e. only working with lower risk clients/service users. |
| Do they require to take public transport to come into work? |  |  | Use of public transport represents an increased risk to employees. If they do use this could the employee work effectively from home or attend another venue which would not require use of public transport? Could start and finish times be adjusted to help the employee avoid rush hour. |
| Occupational health advice required? |  |  | Contact HR for advice regarding an occupational health referral. For complex cases this is required. |
| Does the employee have to travel in a Council vehicle? |  |  | This is a higher risk activity, can physical distancing be maintained in the vehicle? Or can the employee take their own transport or travel on their own. |
| Can or does the employee work outside? |  |  | Work outside is considered a lower risk activity. |
| Does the employee have to come into contact with another person, employee or service user at a closer distance than 2m. |  |  | i.e. moving and handling tasks requiring two people.   * Consider tasks where the employee can work on their own with no interaction with others. * Wear PPE * Minimise the time spent on the task. |

The above suggestions are not definitive and there may be other options which can be considered, during discussion between the employee and line manager.

**Section 3 Management Action Plan**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name:** | | | **Service:** | | | **Date:** | |
| **Issue Identified** | | **Control Measure Agreed** | | | **Action/Review Date** | | **By Who** |
|  | |  | | |  | |  |
| **Signed by Manager Responsible** |  | | | **Date:** | | | |
| **Signed by Employee** |  | | | **Date:** | | | |

The risk of an individual getting COVID-19 at their workplace is dependent on the prevalence of the virus in the community, the possible exposure to those with COVID-19 in the workplace and the mitigation measures that are in place to prevent transmission.

**The advice on shielding, and clinically vulnerability is constantly changing, it is important to check government websites for the most up to date information. This generic assessment will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and updated as required. Any concerns should be referred to occupational health for advice. A referral can be made by emailing the request to HROpsTeam** [**HROpsTeam@inverclyde.gov.uk**](mailto:HROpsTeam@inverclyde.gov.uk) **with a copy of this risk assessment.**

**Additional Scottish Government Guidance**

**Risk of an Individual Contracting COVID-19 at the Workplace**

The risk of an individual getting COVID-19 at their workplace is dependent on the prevalence of the virus in the community, and the possible risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace versus the mitigation measures that are in place to prevent transmission.

**1. Prevalence of COVID-19 in Scotland**

The amount of COVID-19 circulating in Scotland (the prevalence of COVID-19) will impact greatly on overall risk, irrespective of individual characteristics.

The Scottish Government have put systems in place for the early identification and contact tracing of anyone who is likely to have been infected. Surveillance is a critical part of our approach to risk assessment, and these tools should be applied with reference to local data on prevalence, to make sure that the right strategies are in place to minimise risk.

**2. Exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace**

It is important that a generic risk assessment of the workplace is undertaken by the manager as the nature of the work and the working environment affects the likelihood of exposure of staff to COVID-19. This should be carried out and reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with prevention and mitigation measures.

The workplace risk assessment aims to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to anyone in the workplace, regardless of their vulnerability to the virus.

Once risk factors for the transmission of COVID-19 infection in the workplace have been identified, implementation of control measures should be considered to reduce this risk. Not all controls will be applicable or practicable in all workplaces.

The Hierarchy of Controls should be used by employers to identify preventative measures to reduce workplace risk as far as is reasonably practicable. The control measures are set out below in the order that they should be considered:

1. Elimination – is it possible to remove or eliminate the occupational risk altogether? e.g. homeworking
2. Substitution – is it possible to alter work activities to reduce exposure? e.g. work in a non-patient/public facing role III.
3. Engineering controls – is there equipment or methods to control the exposure to the risk? e.g. create individual workspaces with screens, hygiene measures such as wall mounted hand sanitiser
4. Administrative controls – are there other procedures to reduce the exposure risk? e.g. COVID-19 control measures (i.e. maintenance of 2m physical distancing), staggered arrival times and shifts/staggered breaks and lunch, online/remote meetings, clear guidance for workers who have COVID-19 symptoms not to present for work, increasing COVID-19 safety precaution signage
5. Personal protective equipment (PPE) – what task-specific PPE is available to further reduce any residual risk not eliminated using the previous measures e.g. as per infection prevention and control guidance

Employers should be innovative and work with their staff to put in place a range of measures which aim to keep staff safe. Steps taken to ensure that workplaces are COVID-19 secure are key to ensuring safety and reassuring staff and their managers that it is safe to return to work.

**3. Personal Characteristics that affect outcome from COVID-19**

The latest evidence shows that age, sex, ethnicity and being significantly overweight, in addition to underlying health conditions, all contribute to an individual’s risk of developing severe illness if they contract COVID-19. This is described as their ‘vulnerability’. The tool we endorse for use works by “translating” the level of vulnerability associated with each risk factor into years which are added to (or subtracted from) an individual’s actual age.

The tool is based on the COVID-age concept developed by ALAMA, following statistical analysis of over 17 million patient records from the OpenSAFELY (OS) collaborative. It is recognised that there will be some limitations, particularly with some significant health conditions, that the tool will not address. In these situations, we have signposted to appropriate support and this tool does not replace clinical judgement on an individual’s vulnerability. The risk factors are under constant review as more data becomes available. More information on COVID-age, including access to the full methodology used, is available at: <https://alama.org.uk/covid-19-medical-risk-assessment/> .

We recommend the use of this tool, because the evidence shows that age is the greatest risk factor for death from COVID-19; for example, a healthy person aged 60 has a 1% chance of dying and an 80 year old has about a 6% of dying if they contract COVID-19.

The tool gives an overall assessment of an individual’s vulnerability to COVID-19, and can be used by all staff. Managers should support staff in confidence to complete the tool to identify the staff member’s own level of vulnerability (low, moderate, high or very high). If a staff member does not feel comfortable disclosing personal characteristics with their manager, a constructive conversation can still take place having assessed their own level of vulnerability. The tool also provides specific information for pregnant workers.

**Outcomes and Actions**

The most important part of the process is the conversation that takes places between the manager and the member of staff. This supportive and constructive dialogue should take into account the workplace risks and control measures that have, or can be, put into place and come to an agreed course of action regarding their working duties underpinned by knowledge of the current community viral levels.

For many staff, no change to their current working arrangements will be required as appropriate controls are already in place proportional to the level of vulnerability. However, for some there may be significant change. Further discussion between managers and staff will be required to agree how a member of staff can work and what support measures are available.

If the staff member and their manager are unable to come to an agreement on the working duties, or there is uncertainty about the impact of the staff member’s health condition, then we would advise seeking additional input, to help reach an agreed course of action. Further assistance or advice could be sought from:

* GP or medical specialist
* Health and Safety Professionals
* Human Resources
* Trade Union Representative or Professional Organisation
* Health Protection Scotland
* Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

For those in the very high/high vulnerability group, or if there is a health issue and no agreement can be reached between manager and staff member, an onward referral should be made by the manager to the employer’s Occupational Heath (OH) service and/or advice sought from the staff member’s GP. By having a more detailed discussion on the risks, it should be possible for staff members to reach an agreed course of action with their manager.

Referral to OH services, where available, is still encouraged, but it is expected that this will only be for complex cases. More advanced clinical risk stratification tools can be used by OH / medical professionals to help inform discussions about the risk posed by COVID-19.

Employers cannot expect staff members to attend work if it is not as safe as reasonably practicable. There is a duty on employers, HR, OH professionals, and staff members to understand how to make the workplace as safe as possible, their role in that process, and the need to be involved to work together in making those decisions. If an agreement cannot be reached despite additional input, this should be resolved using the processes that are already in place to deal with such disputes.

**Support and Advice**

Decisions about return to work should occur in a non-discriminatory way. Managers should ensure that staff have access to the right information and support to come to an agreed view of the level of risk, and the decision to return to work, if this is what is agreed. Staff members are not required to disclose medical details to their managers.

Managers should have sensitive, supportive conversations with staff that consider their health, safety, physical and psychological wellbeing, as well as personal views/concerns about risks. Wellbeing support services should also be promoted to staff.

We have included some useful resources to help with this collaborative process:

**Returning to Work Additional Support**

* <https://www.healthyworkinglives.scot/workplace-guidance/covid-19-return-to-work-toolkit/Pages/covid-19-return-to-work-toolkit.aspx>
* <https://www.som.org.uk/return-to-work/>
* <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-safely-coronavirus/returning-to-the-workplace>
* <https://www.healthyworkinglives.scot/workplace-guidance/covid-19-return-to-work-toolkit/Pages/covid-19-return-to-work-toolkit.aspx>
* <https://www.som.org.uk/return-to-work/>
* <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-safely-coronavirus/returning-to-the-workplace>

General Information

* General information on COVID-19 free helpline on 0800 028 2816 (NHS 24). The helpline is open from 8.00am to 10.00pm each day.
* <https://www.promis.scot/>
* <https://www.healthyworkinglives.scot/workplace-guidance/illness-absence/Pages/ill-health-andabsence.aspx>