

PDSA Policy Working Safely During Covid 19

Last reviewed date: July 16th 2020

Policy Statement

PDSA is fully committed to ensuring that the appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate the risk of the spread of coronavirus and ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of staff and volunteers, clients, customers and members of the public who may be affected by the work we do.

All colleagues are expected to follow the appropriate measures that have been put in place to sustain a safe & healthy workplace during this unique period of time. It's important that we all respond responsibly and transparently to these additional measures.

Colleagues have a moral obligation, as well as a requirement to adhere to this policy and the related legislation and guidance.

This policy is susceptible to changes with the introduction of additional or changes in government guidelines.

Covid 19 safe workplace - Objectives

The objectives of this policy and the supporting procedure are to:-

- outline PDSA's commitment to ensuring we provide a safe workplace for our colleagues

- outline the measures and practices in place to prevent the spread of the virus within the workplace;

- set out the responsibilities of PDSA and all colleagues, in observing and following the additional measures

This policy applies to all colleagues and third parties where appropriate.

PDSA will monitor compliance with the policy and procedure on a minimum of a quarterly basis and review it periodically through the Business Continuity Group.

Introduction

This policy has been produced in line with government advice on how to work safely during a Covid 19 pandemic, keeping as many people as possible socially distant from those they do not live with.

PDSA will continue to review and update this policy in line with government guidelines, including the announcement on June 23rd 2020 regarding social distancing and the announcement regarding face coverings which comes into effect as of 24 July.

On social distancing the Government recommends that people keep 2 metres away from each other, or one metre when you can mitigate the risk by taking other precautions.

On face coverings the government has mandated that face coverings should be worn in shops as of the 24th July 2020. In light of this PDSA will continue to reflect within its operational guidance that achieving 2m social distancing will remain the over-arching aim of any control measures put in place, providing the 2m recommendation does not change.

However, where there are occasional instances during normal operations that 2m distancing will not be possible and in these instances it will be acceptable to reduce this to 1m+, providing further measures are put in place such as ways of working and PPE.

If there are certain sites or processes within sites that consistently breach social distancing guidelines then PDSA will consider whether alternate processes can be implemented. If this is not possible, operations may have to be stopped, up to and including the closure of premises.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

We have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety. This means we need to think about the risks our colleagues face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising that we cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.

We will make sure that the appropriate risk assessment for our locations and colleagues personal circumstances addresses the risks of COVID-19 and ensure appropriate decisions and control measures are taken.

PDSA has a legal obligation to adhere to the Health & Safety at Work act and therefore this policy does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment

or equalities and it is important that you continue to comply with all existing policies. As with this policy and risk assessments or ways of workings that are created for COVID-19 will be used in conjunction with any existing risk assessment for that activity.

If any colleagues feel the need to flag any health & safety concerns, they should raise these in the first instance with their line manager, if further support is required following this, they should contact a senior manager or the Health & Safety Manager.

1.0 Managing risk

We have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. We will work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected.

In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps in order:

1. All our colleagues in every location will be expected to increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
2. We will make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. Where working from home is not possible, we will make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government.
3. Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, we will consider whether that activity needs to continue for the charity to operate, and, if so, we will take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between our colleagues.
4. If our colleagues must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed people, we will assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one will be expected to work in an unsafe work environment.
5. When undertaking any assessment, we will pay particular attention to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. We will review our service offering in line with government advice and make appropriate changes to our ways of working to ensure that we minimise risk to our people, clients and customers. This may include altering or stopping activities being carried out such as the requirement to wear face coverings in shops.

2.0 Who should go to work?

Government guidelines indicate that everyone should work from home where this is practically possible and that nobody should go to a place of work that is current closed under current government regulations. We recognise that this will look different for each of our working environments and therefore in addition to this policy there will be a series of supporting risk assessments that will be used to assess specific environments and apply appropriate measures. As a minimum these risk assessments will assess the risk of the below.

In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps:

1. We have considered who is essential to be on the premises; for example, identifying any roles / duties that can be fulfilled by working from home wherever possible

2. We will plan for the minimum number of people to be on the premises to operate safely and effectively.
3. We will monitor the wellbeing of people who are working from home and help them stay connected to the rest of the workforce, especially if the majority of their colleagues are on-site. This will be in conjunction with our working from home policy.
4. We will keep in touch with all colleagues in regards to their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security.
5. We will provide guidance and access to equipment and systems where applicable for people to work from home safely and effectively.

2.1 Protecting our colleagues who are at a higher risk

1. We will protect individuals who are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable by ensuring we consider them as a separate group of colleagues when any actions and decisions are made
2. We will use the following NHS guidance to support us in identifying those that fit into these categories.
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>
3. Where we identify clinically extremely vulnerable individuals who have been advised not to leave the house for 12 weeks, and who cannot work from home, we will work with them to identify the most appropriate options available for them to continue to receive an income whilst they are required to shield. This will be in conjunction with our sick policy.
4. Where we identify clinically vulnerable individuals, who have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing, and who cannot work from home, we will work with them to identify the safest available working practices that enables them to stay socially distant and away from others. If they have to spend time within 2m of others, we will carefully assess whether this involves an acceptable level of risk through the completion of a risk assessment.
5. We will take into consideration, so far as is possible, the needs of those colleagues that live with a clinically extremely vulnerable person on a case by case basis.

2.2 People who need to self isolate

1. Where appropriate we will ensure that they and their household members have access to a testing appointment to enable their safe & timely return back to the workplace.
2. We will make sure that individuals who are advised to stay at home under existing government guidance do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 as well as those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms.
3. We will enable where appropriate for our colleagues to work from home whilst self isolating
4. Where it is not appropriate or not possible for a colleague to work from home we will work with them to identify the most appropriate options available for them to

continue to receive an income whilst they are required to self isolate, for example compassionate or sick pay. This will be in conjunction with our pay / sick policy

2.3 Equality in the workplace

1. In line with our equal opportunities policy we will treat everyone in the workplace equally when applying this guidance.
2. We will be mindful of the particular needs of different groups of colleagues. For instance, we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid colleagues with a protected characteristic being put at a disadvantage compared to those who don't.

3.0 Social distancing in the workplace

All colleagues will need to maintain social distancing requirements according to Government guidelines (and put in place additional measures for essential activities that require close proximity working), including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when travelling between sites.

Each environment, hospitals, retail shops, warehouses and offices, will have a specific risk assessment that will review each of the areas below as a minimum and identify the specific risks and steps that apply to that environment.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, we will consider whether that activity needs to continue for the charity to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between our colleagues. Further mitigating actions include:

1. further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
2. keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
3. using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
4. using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
5. 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)

3.1 Coming to work and leaving work

1. Where possible we will stagger arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics.
2. Where possible we will provide facilities such as bike-racks to help people walk, run or cycle to work where possible.
3. We will where possible have a one-way flow at entry and exit points, which are clearly marked and with appropriate signage.
4. We will provide hand sanitiser facilities at entry and exit points.

3.2 Moving around our offices, hospitals & shops

1. We will 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. These items require cleaning between users if multi-use.
2. We will where possible introducing more one-way flows through buildings. Providing floor markings and signage to remind both colleagues and customers / clients to follow social distancing wherever possible.
3. Where lifts are available these should only be used by one person at a time and when the use of the stairs is not physically possible. We will also provide hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts.
4. We will regulate the use of high traffic areas including corridors, and walkways to maintain social distancing.
5. We will comply will government guidelines as to the use of face coverings by clients, customers and colleagues.

3.3 Workplaces, workstations and equipment

1. We will where possible assign workstations / equipment to an individual, where they need to be shared this will be between the smallest number of people.
2. We will review our layouts to allow our colleagues to work further apart from each other wherever possible and designate how many people can be in any one area at a particular time.
3. We will use floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people keep to Government social distancing guidelines.
4. We will avoid people working face-to-face. For example, by working side-by-side or facing away from each other wherever possible
5. Where appropriate we will utilise screens to create a physical barrier between people.
6. We will introduce a pairing system if people have to work in close proximity. For example, a & b teams.
7. We will actively minimise contact around transactions, for example encouraging the use of contactless payments.
8. We will have in place enhanced cleaning procedures that will need to be followed in between uses.
9. We will follow Government guidelines regarding the use and wearing of face coverings, face masks, face shields or other items of PPE including when this use is mandated, and ensure we have face coverings available for use by our colleagues.

3.4 Common areas

1. We will stagger break times to reduce pressure on the staff break rooms or places to eat and as part of this place restrictions on the maximum amount of people allowed in common areas at any one time.
2. Where possible we will be actively encouraging the use of outside areas for breaks.

3. Where possible we will reconfiguring seating and tables to optimise spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.
4. We will encourage our colleagues to bring in ready to eat food to minimise the use of appliances such as toaster and microwaves and where these are used our colleagues are to wipe down after each use
5. We will encourage workers to remain on-site and, when this is not possible, maintain social distancing while off-site.
6. We will use social distance marking for other common areas such as toilets, showers, lockers and changing rooms and in any other areas where queues typically form.

3.5 Meetings

1. We will use remote working tools to avoid in person meetings, for example teams
2. Where there is no alternative to a meeting taking place face to face then all colleagues should adhere to the following
 - Maintain social distancing guidelines throughout.
 - Avoid sharing pens and other objects
 - Have access to hand sanitiser in the meeting rooms.
 - Hold the meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.
 - Use floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

3.6 Accidents and other incidents

Our normal policies and procedures will still apply in regards to accidents, however in the event of an emergency, for example, an accident, fire or break-in, people do not have to stay socially distanced if it would be unsafe.

People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.

4.0 Managing our customers / clients, visitors and contractors

We will review our service offering and ways of working to minimise the contact resulting from visits to our premises and ensure where people do need to enter our premises they understand what they need to do to remain safe

In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps:

1. We will define the number of customers / clients that can reasonably follow the social distancing guidelines within each of our premises. Take into account total floor space as well as likely pinch points and busy areas.
2. We will limit the number of customers / clients that can be in our premises at any given time.

3. We will continue to review our service operating model and suspend or reduce customer services that cannot be undertaken without contravening social distancing guidelines. This may include us introducing new ways of working.
4. We will encourage customers / clients to enter our premises alone where possible, unless they need specific assistance.
5. We will remind customers / clients who have no option than to be accompanied by children, that they are responsible for supervising them at all times and should follow social distancing guidelines.
6. We will constantly review how customers / clients are moving around our premises and make adjustments where possible. Ensuring any changes take into account reasonable adjustments for those who need them, including disabled customers / clients.
7. We will use the outside of our premises for queuing where available and safe.
8. Where required we will work with the local authority or landlord to take into account the impact of these processes on public spaces such as high streets and public car parks.
9. We will have clearly designated positions from which colleagues can provide advice or assistance to customers / clients whilst maintaining social distance.
10. We will provide clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival, for example, signage and visual aids.
11. We will provide clear guidance on the procedure to follow in regards to the exchanging of donations, pets and cash
12. We will limit customer / client handling of merchandise, for example, through different display methods, new signage or rotation of high-touch stock.
13. We will be putting in place picking-up and dropping-off collection points where possible, rather than passing goods hand-to-hand.
14. We will provide guidance to how our colleagues can safely assist customers / clients with handling large item purchases.
15. We will follow Government guidelines regarding the use and wearing of face coverings or masks for clients, customers, visitors and contractors and when required, advise they should be worn, or mandate their use when on PDSA premises if guidelines change.

5.0 Cleaning the workplace

To reduce the risk of transmission we need to make sure that our cleaning schedules are increased and adhered to in addition to ensuring that any site or location that has been closed or partially closed is cleaned prior to reopening.

Each environment will have a specific risk assessment that will review each of the areas below as a minimum and identify the specific risks and steps that apply to that environment.

In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps:

5.1 Before reopening of a site that has been closed for a period of time

1. We will complete an assessment for all sites, or parts of sites, that have been closed, before restarting work
2. We will have documented cleaning procedures in place and provide hand sanitiser, before restarting work
3. We will check whether we need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.

5.2 Keeping the workplace clean

1. We will put in place procedures to ensure frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses, using your usual cleaning products. This will also include the completion of a register to document the frequency for key areas / equipment.
2. We will put in place procedures to ensure that clearing of workspaces and removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift.
3. We will put in place procedures to support you if you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19. This will be in conjunction with the process to follow for the reporting of a confirmed or suspected Covid 19 case.

5.3 Hygiene: handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets

1. We will 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.
2. We will provide regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards.
3. We will provide hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.
4. We will be setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.
5. We will enhance our cleaning schedules for busy areas.
6. We will provide more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection where possible
7. We will provide paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in handwashing facilities.

6.0 Personal protective equipment (PPE) and face coverings

PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing and face masks.

We already have a number of activities that our colleagues undertake that require the use of PPE to protect against non-COVID-19 risks. The use of this PPE is to continue in line with our PPE procedures

To manage the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what is usually worn is not always going to be beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks that our colleagues normally face in a workplace, and this will be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering.

We will follow government advice (including any devolved government advice) in relation to the use of non-medical grade face coverings and face visors. This should not to be used as an alternative to social distancing and regular handwashing.

We will recommend that colleagues follow this advice if they use public transport to get to and from work. With regards to the workplace we don't believe that the use of face coverings will be required in the majority of occasions due to the social distancing measures that will be in place.

Where social distancing guidelines cannot be adhered to a risk assessment will be completed to identify firstly if that task needs to be completed and if so what appropriate PPE should be worn.

Where this is identified via the risk assessment the appropriate industry standard PPE will be sourced and purchased by PDSA and provided to our colleagues to reduce the risk of Covid 19 transmission.

7.0 Work-related travel

1. We will utilise remote options wherever possible to minimise non-essential travel.
2. We will minimise the number of people travelling together in any one vehicle, and this should only be done in very few situations
3. Where we have shared vehicles we will have an enhanced cleaning schedule in place for any handovers.

8.0 Communications and training

1. We will provide clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.
2. We will engage with our colleagues through existing communication routes and our forum to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.

3. We will develop simple, clear communication and training materials for our colleagues in regards to new ways of working.
4. We will ensure that all colleagues returning from a period of furlough undertake a period of training prior to commencing work

9.0 Inbound and outbound goods

To maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission when goods enter and leave our locations.

In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps:

1. We will review pick-up and drop-off collection procedures to minimise unnecessary contact.
2. We will look at ways to reduce frequency of deliveries.
3. We will where it is possible and safe, have single colleagues load or unload vehicles.
4. We will where possible, use the same pairs of people for loads where more than one is needed.

10.0 Safe working resources

To maintain a safe working environment for our colleagues it is important they have the right resources.

In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps:

1. We will review our ways of working and identify the appropriate resources required such as PPE, signage, posters and hand sanitiser.
2. We will source and supply the appropriate resource to each site as required
3. We will provide clear communication and training on the use of resources
4. We will put procedures in place to ensure the resource are maintained and replenished as required

Supporting procedures and Information:

Working from home policy

Pay policy

Sick policy

Covid 19 Testing procedure

Equal opportunities policy

Covid 19 Cleaning procedure

Accident & incident reporting procedures

Exchange of pets during Covid 19 procedure

Reporting of confirmed or suspected Covid 19 procedure

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PPE procedure
Fleet policy
Travel policy