

Working in independent health and care during the COVID-19 pandemic

Health and safety checklist

Use this checklist as a starting point to:

- check what protections should be in place in your workplace, and
- decide what you need to do next.

Remember:

- All workers, including agency and bank workers have a right to work in a healthy and safe environment, where risks are controlled.
- All workers also have rights to rest breaks, time off and paid holidays.
- You have a right to be provided with free personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE). See [Public Health England \(PHE\) Guidance for the correct PPE for all health and care workers](#).
- You have a right to be consulted (either directly or through appointed or elected representatives) on health and safety matters. Involvement in health and safety is simply a two-way process where you and your employer talk to each other, listen to concerns, consider what everyone has to say, solve problems together and make decisions together. See [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) guidance on consultation and involvement](#).
- You also have a responsibility for your own health and safety. You should understand your employer's health and safety procedures, make sure you have proper training and use the PPE provided.
- In addition to wearing PPE, you should practice usual infection prevention and control measures, including environmental cleaning and hand hygiene to reduce the risk of onward transmission.
- You must report any concerns over maintaining health and safety and any injuries or illness you experience as a result of your work. You have the right to do this without being disciplined.

	Question	Answer (Yes, No or N/A if not required)
1	<p>Is your employer carrying out workplace risk assessments and COSHH assessments (as required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002)?</p> <p>Not sure? Read guidance about risk assessments and COSHH assessments from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).</p>	

2	Is your employer carrying out risk assessments on vulnerable staff (i.e. BAME staff, those with underlying conditions or those who are pregnant) and taking all necessary steps to protect those staff at increased risk? (Steps to take could include redeployment to safer areas, home working or supporting absence with full pay)	
3	Is it clear how you can report incidents and safety concerns that occur in your workplace? Are you encouraged to report your safety concerns and incidents?	
4	Have you received training on infection control procedures and the correct use, donning and doffing and disposal of PPE?	
5	If you required to wear either a FFP3 or FFP2 mask? If so, have you been correctly fit tested and received training for fit checking when required to wear one (including donning and doffing)? Read our PPE and COVID-19 guide for more information.	
6	Do you have access to private changing facilities and access to showers at work?	
7	Do you have access to regular hydration and rest breaks, with facilities for time away from resident/patient/client areas?	
8	Are your shift patterns designed to limit the onset of fatigue? Are they compliant with the Working Time Regulations 1998? Read more about the Working Time Regulations.	
9	Does your employer have a written policy for staff needing to take time off for dependents or emergency leave?	
10	Does your employer have a written policy for those struggling with attendance at work due to travel disruption and inability to use public transport services?	
11	Do you have access to counselling or other psychological support and Occupational Health referral if needed?	
12	Does your employer consult you on measures they are taking to address health and safety risks in the workplace?	
13	Where staff are required to self-isolate due to symptoms of COVID-19, are they provided with leave from work on full pay?	
14	If you are classed as extremely clinically vulnerable (e.g. you've had a letter asking you to 'shield' and not go into the workplace) and you're not able to work from home, has your employer confirmed: A. if you can be medically suspended with full pay? or B. if they will apply to the furlough scheme (the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) on your behalf?	

15	Does your employer take measures to prevent and protect staff from work related contact dermatitis of the hands, including regular skin checks and the provision of hand creams containing emollients? More information at rcn.org.uk/skinhealth	
16	Is your employer updating workers with clear information on work-related risks from COVID-19 on a regular basis?	
17	If you have been absent from work relating to COVID-19, has your employer implemented disciplinary action against you?	
18	Has your employer advised you that your absence be counted towards any future sickness absence related action?	
19	Some employers are managing workplace closures by requiring moves to flexible working, home working and use of holiday entitlements. If this has happened at your workplace, or any there have been other changes to your regular working practices: A. have you been consulted with? B. were you given the opportunity to have support from your trade union before the changes were made?	
20	Some employers are asking staff to stay in their workplace for several days or more in order to reduce transmission of infection and maintain staffing levels. For example, some staff have been asked to 'live in' at care homes for periods of time. Have you been asked to do this by your employer? (Note: The RCN strongly opposes 'locked in staffing' arrangements such as this, so if you're asked to do this please contact us for support).	

Next steps

Your workplace must have effective procedures in place to allow you to raise any concerns in relation to equipment, policies and processes for managing COVID-19 at the earliest opportunity.

All staff should feel able to raise concerns without detriment and should receive timely feedback on their concerns. If your concerns remain unresolved, refer to:

- our [raising concerns](#) guidance
- [PPE - are you safe?](#)
- our [refusal to treat guidance](#),

and speak to your line manager without delay.

If you need our support, please call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100.