

## Coronavirus Covid-19: Protecting yourself and your colleagues

### Coronavirus Covid-19 - a serious threat to your health, and the health of others

Coronavirus Covid-19 is highly infectious and, potentially, deadly. It has killed a number of transport workers and caused serious illness in many more. It is far more serious than 'flu, and it is likely that many more will die. Whilst the majority of those killed by it have been older or otherwise vulnerable people, it has killed fit and young people who have had no underlying medical conditions. The majority that are infected experience relatively mild symptoms, but a large number are seriously ill and hospitalised.

The reason people have been asked to stay at home where they can and not to mix with others is to ensure the NHS hospitals, already stretched to breaking point, are not completely overwhelmed.

If you think you have the symptoms you should self-isolate, stay at home, and abide by the current NHS advice.

Take the threat seriously - if you don't, you and your loved ones and colleagues may pay with their lives.

### If You Can, Stay at Home

If you can work from home, then you should do so. If your employer is refusing to let you work from home and instead is forcing you to go to your normal (or another) workplace unnecessarily, please contact your TSSA rep.

If you have a medical condition that makes you particularly vulnerable to either contracting the Covid-19 infection, or you would experience much more serious consequences were you to be infected, you should stay at home. Some employers are insisting that staff leave their homes and go to work if they have not got a letter from the NHS advising them to stay at home. In these circumstances, contact your GP.

### Working from Home

If you work from home your employer continues to have a legal responsibility for your health, safety and welfare. Employees working from home are owed the same duty of care as any other employee. Employers must check that any equipment they supply is in good working order and, if applicable, an employee is supplied with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE).

Members should note that all employees also have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety as well as that of others who may be affected by their employment.



If, an employee believes there are employment-related hazards whilst working from home, it is the employee's responsibility to report it to their employer.

## Social Distancing

The UK Government and its various agencies are clear - you must maintain at least a 2-metre separation between yourself and your colleagues and any other persons in your workplace, including passengers. It should be emphasised that this is the **MINIMUM** distance that must be maintained. However, the virus can travel much further than 2 metres, and a greater separation distance should be maintained wherever possible.

If it is necessary for workers to be closer than 2 metres to another person in order to perform any work task, it is **ESSENTIAL** that control measures are in place - usually a physical barrier such as a screen or window, or the wearing of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). If you are unable to maintain a 2 metre separation **AT ALL TIMES** then you are advised not to commence any work activity that would result in this. You should **STOP** any work activity should the problem arise after starting. If necessary, remove yourself to a place of safety and report this to an appropriate manager or supervisor. You should use your employer's 'Work Safe' procedure (it may go by another title), a procedure which allows you to exercise your legal right to stop work if you are in serious and imminent danger.

## Risk Assessment

You should be able to have sight of a risk assessment relating to any work activity which could be impacted upon by the risk of infection from Covid-19. Your TSSA health and safety rep should have been consulted about any risk assessment undertaken.

Employers are legally obliged to undertake risk assessments in order to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission and infection to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures in the following order of priority:

- **Eliminate:** Does the activity need to be done at all in the current Covid-19 crisis? Can it be cancelled, or postponed?
- **Substitute:** Can the task be re-designed to ensure for example a 2-metre separation? Can the task be undertaken by having a larger separation than 2 metres?
- **Engineering Controls:** Can you use equipment to undertake a task and avoid individuals doing it manually and therefore having to do it with less than 2 metres separation? Can a suitable screen be used?
- **Administrative Controls:** Can the time spent on the task be minimised? Can staff be rotated to avoid long periods of exposure?
- **Personal Protective Equipment:** only after all of the above measures have been tried and found ineffective in controlling the risks of infection must PPE be resorted to. It must be suitable for the task, and staff must be properly trained in undertaking the task when using the PPE.

## Working on passenger trains

Unless you are a driver or guard, you should not be working on a train or travelling by train on work business unless there is a clear need for you to do so in order to ensure the provision of a safe and secure essential train service. Should it be necessary for you to



work or travel on work business on a passenger train in service, a risk assessment must have been undertaken and consulted upon. Contact with passengers must be minimised, and you must maintain at least a 2-metre separation between yourself and your colleagues and any other persons including passengers.

## **Travelling in road vehicles whilst at work**

Unless absolutely necessary, only one person should travel in any road vehicle (except buses) whilst travelling on work business. If it is necessary for more than one person to travel in a road vehicle (including a bus), you must maintain at least a 2-metre separation between yourself and any other persons in the vehicle. If you cannot maintain the 2 metre separation between you and the driver of a road vehicle (such as a taxi), there must be a screen between you.

## **Washing Facilities**

Adequate washing facilities must be available where at all possible, and you should wash your hands using soap frequently and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds. Hot water is NOT necessary. Hand sanitiser is no substitute for washing in soap and water and should generally only be used when access to soap and water is not available.

## **Handling potentially contaminated materials**

Handling potentially contaminated materials such as cash should be avoided. Where it is absolutely necessary gloves must be worn to undertake the task, and the gloves should be removed and safely disposed of each time such a task is undertaken.

## **Stopping or Refusing to Work**

You have the legal right to refuse to begin a task or continue with a task if you believe that to do so would place you or your colleagues in serious and imminent danger of potential infection by the Covid-19 virus.

Your employer must have a procedure in place that allows you to do this. Check on what your employer's procedure is and familiarise yourself with it.

If you are unable to find such a procedure, report that to your TSSA rep or contact the TSSA Helpdesk (see below).

If you do refuse to commence work or stop working under these circumstances, you should immediately report this to your TSSA rep, or the TSSA Helpdesk.

## **Tell us what is happening where you work**

If you are in a non-operational role, please complete the form on our website at:

<https://www.tssa.org.uk/en/campaigns/safe-at-work/index.cfm>

## **TSSA Helpdesk**

Call: 0800 328 2673. The Helpdesk is open 9am-5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am-4pm on Fridays.

Or you can fill out a website form at any time here: <https://www.tssa.org.uk/en/Your-union/about-us/contact-us/contact-the-helpdesk.cfm>

