

Risk Assessment

Title	Managing the threat of COVID-19 transmission and infection at NFER premises			
Document no.	RA/20/01			
Author	Anna Rech			
Completion date	23 July 2020	Reviewed	21 December 2020	Updated sections:
				(a) Covid-19 vigilance; (d) Reduce touch points
Approved by	SHE Committee			
Approval date	29 July 2020			
Review period	This risk assessment will be reviewed at least monthly and prior to moving to a new step in the office reopening road map.			

Summary of activities covered by this risk assessment

This risk assessment sets out the control measures implemented to make **NFER premises**¹ “COVID Secure” and manage the risk to staff safety and wellbeing posed by the threat of COVID-19. Both **Slough Head Office and York regional office** are considered within this assessment. The main difference between the sites is that NFER offices in York are located within a shared facility and are serviced by York Science Park (YSP). YSP is responsible for managing the communal areas as well as the cleaning, however, the same principles apply to both sites. Where there are notes specifically pertaining to the York office, or to Slough, this is indicated. The measures implemented by YSP can be found on their website via the Coronavirus update link: <https://www.yorksciencepark.co.uk/>

This risk assessment is primarily concerned with **risks to employees**, but also takes into consideration **visitors, contractors, and delivery drivers**. At present, all individuals may both *pose* a risk as well as being *at* risk.

¹ The Mere, Slough; and IT Centre, York Science Park. The warehouse at Ajax Avenue warehouse is not specifically considered within this risk assessment, but any activities at taking place at the warehouse should be carried out in line with the principles set out in this risk assessment (warehouse use terminates 9 October 2020).

The virus can be transmitted in the following ways:

- From person-to-person through droplets from the nose or mouth, spread when the person coughs, sneezes, or exhales
- Via contact with contaminated surfaces (which has been coughed on, etc.) where the virus can survive for up to 72hrs
- A person can pick up the virus by breathing in droplets or by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their eyes or mouth

Note regarding PPE: The government guidance is clear that the risk of COVID-19 “needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE”.

The standard used for this risk assessment is the guidance from HM Government *Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres*, supported by guidance produced by the Health and Safety Executive and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

The outcome of this risk assessment is that the risks are ADEQUATELY CONTROLLED based on all control measures being fully implemented.

NFER risk assessment process

The overall safety, health and environmental risks at NFER are considered in a document entitled Summative Risk Assessment. This risk assessment considers specific areas identified as potentially greater risks within NFER activities. The risk assessment process is described in the Risk Assessment Procedure. All documents are available at: <http://nfer.net/policies/risk-assessment/>

In addition to process described above there are a number of other risk assessment documents including fire risk assessment, first aid risk assessment and others.

Risk Calculation Table

Ref	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Hazard	Control measures	Likelihood	Likelihood rating	Severity	Severity rating	Total score	Result
a.	COVID-19 symptomatic persons on-site	<p>COVID-19 vigilance</p> <p>The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high temperature • A new, continuous cough • A loss or change in your sense of smell or taste <p>https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/symptoms/</p> <p>Who, how and when to get a test:</p> <p>https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-an-antigen-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/</p> <p><i>Employees:</i> Anyone who feels unwell, or who has had any symptoms in the last ten days should stay at home and not come into the office. Anyone who is on-site and starts to feel unwell should go home immediately.</p> <p>In both cases an email should be sent to the line manager or department administrator as soon as possible. Relevant policies:</p> <p>Unplanned absence procedure</p> <p>Managing instances or suspected instances of COVID-19</p> <p>Arrangements should be made by the individual as soon as possible to be tested for COVID-19.</p>	Low	2	Lost time injury	4	8	Adequately controlled

		<p>Anyone with symptoms or, after testing, a positive diagnosis, should self-isolate for ten days.</p> <p><u>Visitors:</u> No general visitors are permitted. Meetings requiring external delegates should be held virtually wherever possible. If physical on-site presence is required, each event should be risk assessed in advance to ensure all appropriate mitigations can be implemented.</p> <p><u>Interviews:</u> Wherever possible, interviews should take place virtually. If it is necessary for a candidate to attend site, they should be asked to confirm that they have had no COVID-19 symptoms in the last ten days. They should be advised in advance of the key Covid-secure measures adopted by NFER.</p> <p><u>Contractors:</u> Essential maintenance works will continue to be necessary to maintain the safety and operation of Facilities and ICT plant and systems. Contractors will only be permitted to attend by prior arrangement. The organiser will establish the contractors own COVID-secure arrangements in advance of the visit and will share NFER control measures with the contractor. The attending person(s) will be required to confirm prior to attending (or, if that is not possible, prior being allowed to commence work on-site) that they have not displayed symptoms of COVID-19 in the last ten days. All contractors will be required to adhere to the control measures.</p>						
--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

		<p>York: Liaison with landlord as required, to ensure contractor attendance is out-of-hours, or when the office is vacant.</p> <p><i>Delivery drivers (Slough):</i> Delivery drivers will be asked to drop off items at the front door where possible. There is a legal duty to provide welfare and washing facilities for visiting drivers. If a driver needs to access these facilities, they will be required to wear a face covering and to sanitise their hands.</p> <p>If a member of staff tests positive for coronavirus, they must share information promptly with their line manager or HR as well as through the NHS test and trace service. See NFER procedural document <i>Managing instances or suspected instances of Covid-19</i> for further information, available on NFERnet.</p> <p>York: the landlord must be advised as soon as possible, including where on-site the person has been.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works</p> <p>Contact logging Staff will log in advance that they will be coming to site. Additionally, at Slough, the access control system will be used to provide a record of everyone in the office on a given day. Records need to be kept for 21 days.</p> <p>Anyone who may have been in close contact with the infected person will be notified and asked to begin self-isolating at home for 14 days. This may be by NHS test and trace or by the relevant NFER manager or HR.</p>						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

		<p>York: Each building is set up on the NHS Track and Trace system and has its own QR code. This should be scanned by all residents and visitors upon entering the building. Additionally, all companies must keep a log of all visitors for 21 days as per the government guidelines. If there is an outbreak within the building, individuals should then be contacted via the NHS track & trace system.</p> <p>Cleaning Sanitising spray, cloths and wipes to be readily available to wipe surfaces as needed during the day.</p> <p>All staff working in the office will be encouraged to wipe down their desk and equipment after use.</p> <p>Daily cleaning routines will include the sanitising of all frequent contact points e.g. intercom buttons, door release buttons, hand rails, door handles. Additional cleaning of touchpoints will take place during the day. A record of touchpoint cleaning will be kept.</p> <p>Where sharing a workstation is unavoidable, the desk and equipment must be wiped down by the user prior to handover to another.</p> <p>In the instance that someone with confirmed COVID-19 has been on-site whilst displaying symptoms, the appropriate cleaning guidance will be followed, proportionate to the circumstances.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings</p>						
--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

		<p>York: The landlord has put in place routines in line with those set out above.</p> <p>Local lockdown In the case of the local lockdown, the local guidance will be followed.</p>						
b.	Getting or spreading the virus through close contact	<p>Social distancing Signage in place stating 2m social distancing is in place and should be observed.</p> <p>Wherever possible, tasks should be redesigned so that they can be carried out whilst following 2m social distancing guidelines. If this is not possible, the duration of the activity should be kept as short as possible and additional mitigations may be required. Such tasks should be risk assessed by the relevant manager in conjunction with the individuals who will be carrying out the task and appropriate control measures implemented.</p> <p><u>Fixed teams or partnering:</u> If all parties are agreeable, then a fixed team or partnership can be implemented which would allow for two people to work more closely together. All other control measures, as set out in this document would still apply.</p> <p><u>Reception (Slough):</u> At Reception hygiene screens are installed for protection which will allow persons to approach the Reception desk. Behind the Reception desk 2m social distancing must be maintained, unless fixed teams implemented (see above). The waiting area at Reception has been adapted in line with 2m social distancing.</p>	Low	2	Lost time injury	4	8	Adequately controlled

	<p>Managing occupancy</p> <p>Occupancy levels will be managed in order to enable and support 2m social distancing. The government guidance states that businesses should ensure workplaces are safe whilst continuing to enable working from home.</p> <p>Staff are able to attend the office on a business-needs basis, and on a voluntary basis, if they cannot work effectively at home; following the appropriate procedures and logging their attendance in advance.</p> <p>As business needs, or government guidance, changes, more staff may be present on-site. Additional measures will be introduced which may include any or all of the following: a rota for coming to site; staggered start, finish and break times; one-way systems for moving through buildings; allocated entrances.</p> <p><u>Workstations</u>: A small number of workstations have been taken out of use where it is not possible for 2m social distancing to be maintained, for example where a desk is located adjacent to a printer.</p> <p>As a general rule, only alternate desks should be used, so that no two people are sitting directly opposite each other.</p> <p>Where members of the same team are office-based at the same time, desk location should be considered before attending site so that no-one's social distancing is unduly compromised when working at their allocated desk. A team may decide to split their members into smaller groups based on desk location, so they know that</p>						
--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--

		<p>anyone in Group 1, for example, could be in the office on the same day because they will be suitably spread out.</p> <p>Where business needs require someone to work in the office, but their usual desk is compromised, desks may be reallocated.</p> <p>PPE PPE including visors, masks, and disposable gloves are available should they be needed by specific individuals or for specific activities as identified through risk assessment; however, see <i>Note regarding PPE</i> on p.1. Guidance on use will be provided to anyone who is issued with PPE.</p> <p>Car parks and bike racks All users are requested to show consideration when using the car parks and bike racks and, if possible, leave a space between their vehicle and the next one. Once the car parks and bike racks are busier and this isn't possible, then allow others time and space to park and move away.</p>						
c.	Getting or spreading the virus through poor hygiene practises	<p>Promote good hygiene practises Good hygiene practises to prevent infection include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds • use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available • wash your hands as soon as you get home • cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze • put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterward. 	Low	2	Lost time injury	4	8	Adequately controlled

		<p>https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/social-distancing/what-you-need-to-do/</p> <p>Signage displayed on the importance of cough/sneeze hygiene, frequent hand washing and avoiding face-touching.</p> <p>Handwashing guidance displayed in washrooms.</p> <p>Hand sanitiser stations available inside all external access points, and sanitiser dispensers available throughout the site in areas where there are no hand washing facilities.</p>						
d.	Getting or spreading the virus from contaminated surfaces, equipment or workstations	<p>Reduce touch points</p> <p>Frequent contact doors to be propped open where there is no security risk: e.g. kitchens, washrooms, Zone café etc. Fire doors must not be propped open.</p> <p>Foot operated or hands-free door openers to be fitted where practicable.</p> <p>Individuals to use workstations in line with social distancing measures. No hot-desking unless unavoidable.</p> <p>Team leaders must consider alternative options to eliminate shared desks or equipment wherever possible.</p> <p>Hygiene</p> <p>Signs in communal areas (Slough) for the individual to wash or sanitise their hands before using shared equipment.</p> <p>Catering equipment will be wiped down twice daily.</p>	Low	2	Lost time injury	4	8	Adequately controlled

		<p>See also (a) under <i>Cleaning</i></p> <p>York: Cleaning in communal areas is the responsibility of the landlord. Cleaning of toilets, kitchens and the main touchpoints takes place at midday as well as in the evening.</p> <p>Paper-based systems Where paper-based systems are in place which involve the handover of paperwork or shared pens or other equipment, these should be reviewed with a view to elimination. For example, at Slough:</p> <p><u>Signing in:</u> the duty Receptionist will sign in any contractors who attend site; otherwise, hand sanitiser will be kept adjacent to the signing in book.</p> <p><u>Collecting parcels from Reception:</u> confirmation of receipt will be via the Facilities Helpdesk.</p> <p><u>Contractor paperwork:</u> service and attendance reports should be emailed.</p> <p>This list is illustrative only and a review of departmental processes is the responsibility of the relevant manager and team.</p>						
e.	Getting or spreading the virus in communal or high use areas such as entry/exit points, washrooms, kitchen and café areas, lifts,	<p>Manage use of communal and shared spaces</p> <p><u>Meetings rooms:</u> Virtual meeting technology to be utilised to minimise the need to meet face-to-face. All meeting rooms will be subject to restricted capacity so that 2m social distancing can be maintained. Signage in place to advise limited</p>	Low	2	Lost time injury	4	8	Adequately controlled

	<p>meeting rooms and any other communal areas</p>	<p>maximum capacity in each room. Hand sanitiser available in each room.</p> <p>Sharing equipment such as pens, documents, and other items should be avoided.</p> <p>Shared computer equipment (keyboard, mouse) in quiet working spaces will be removed.</p> <p>Sanitise hands before and after using telephone handsets or conference units and use sanitising wipes to clean equipment.</p> <p>Headsets to be made available where needed to facilitate non-confidential desk-based virtual meetings.</p> <p>York: York Science Park meetings rooms are currently closed; should the landlord make the rooms available, precautions in line with those set out above should be observed.</p> <p><u>Zone café and breakout spaces:</u> Available seating reduced to support 2m social distancing.</p> <p>Users of the café and refreshment areas should avoid peak times and should stagger their use of the facilities throughout the day. Use of the Zone café and Mere Refreshments room will be monitored and phased use of these facilities may be introduced.</p> <p>York: The Park Central Cafe is open for takeaway service from 09.00 - 14.00. Card/contactless payment system only. A one-way system is in place and</p>						
--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

	<p>customers contact details may be retained for 21 days to support the NHS Test and Trace.</p> <p><u>Catering provision:</u> Disposable cups, cutlery, and plates only, will be provided. Otherwise staff should use their own items which they should keep by their workstation.</p> <p>Staff encouraged to bring own lunch in insulated bags or flasks and to avoid bringing food that requires reheating to minimise the need for using shared resources.</p> <p>Users must sanitise their hands before and after using shared resources.</p> <p>Sanitising wipes or sprays will be available for the individual to wipe touch points before and after use.</p> <p>Items being stored in the communal fridge should be in a wipe clean container, no loose items. At Slough, the fridges will be emptied and cleaned each Friday.</p> <p>Hot drinks vending machines will be available to use. Strict sanitising procedures will be followed when cleaning or restocking the machines.</p> <p>Other food and snacks vending will <u>not</u> be provided in the initial phase of office opening (Office reopening roadmap, step 1 and step 2).</p> <p>York: A fridge and kettle will be provided to minimise need to access communal kitchens. Individuals using these will be responsible for keeping them clean and sanitised.</p>						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

		<p><u>Washrooms, kitchens, lifts:</u> Numbers using these facilities at any one time will be restricted. Clear signage in place advising maximum numbers. Sanitising wipes or hand sanitiser available.</p> <p>Manage movement throughout the site: Keep to the left when moving through corridors and walkways.</p> <p>While staffing numbers are very low, it is not necessary to implement more complex traffic-management systems. One-way systems or allocated entrances may be introduced in response to increased staff numbers.</p>						
f.	Poor workplace ventilation leading to risks of COVID-19 spreading	<p>Milestone House The air conditioning system takes in fresh air and expels air extracted from the offices externally. Air is not recycled between areas.</p> <p>Contractors working on the filtration system adhere to COVID-secure working practices.</p> <p>The Mere In The Mere, windows can be opened to improve ventilation where needed. Fans can be used to improve ventilation when it is too cold for open windows.</p> <p>York: The air conditioning system in the IT Centre takes in fresh air and expels air extracted from the offices externally. Air is not recycled between areas.</p>	Almost never	1	Lost time injury	4	4	Adequately controlled
h.	Hazards arising from lack of information or inaccurate	Official advice will be monitored by the Business Continuity Group and relevant policies updated accordingly.	Low	2	Lost time injury	4	8	Adequately controlled

	information being circulated	<p>Department heads and team leaders are briefed and kept updated.</p> <p>All managers to beware 'fake news' and discourage the circulation of misinformation or rumour.</p> <p>Staff kept informed of key messages such as the importance of frequent handwashing, social distancing and staying home if homeworking or if unwell.</p> <p>This risk assessment to be available to all employees internally and all employees to confirm they have read and understood the risk assessment prior to returning to office working.</p> <p>All changes and updates to this risk assessment will be broadly communicated internally.</p> <p>This risk assessment to be published on the NFER external website as required by the UK government.</p>						
i.	Use of public transport	<p>Where there is a business need for an employee who is reliant on public transport to return to office-based working, the risks should be considered on a case by case basis.</p> <p>It is a legal requirement to wear a face covering on public transport. Face coverings will be available in the office in case needed for those travelling on public transport.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#face-coverings-on-public-transport</p>	Almost never	1	Lost time injury	4	4	Adequately controlled

j.	Business travel	Business travel will be kept to an absolute minimum. Meetings will be held virtually wherever possible. Any business travel will be subject to its own risk assessment.	Almost never	1	Lost time injury	4	4	Adequately controlled
k.	Vulnerable employees, as defined by Public Health England, at greater risk	<p>Identifying vulnerable employees</p> <p>A person is classified by Public Health England as being vulnerable (moderate risk); this includes those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are 70 or older • are pregnant • have a lung condition such as asthma, COPD, emphysema or bronchitis (not severe) • have heart disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease or liver disease (such as hepatitis) • are taking medicine that can affect the immune system (such as low doses of steroids) • are very obese <p>A person is classified by Public Health England as being extremely vulnerable (high risk); this includes those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have had an organ transplant • are having chemotherapy for cancer, including immunotherapy • are having an intense course of radiotherapy for lung cancer • have a severe lung condition (such as severe asthma or severe COPD) • are taking medicine that makes them much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids) • have a serious heart condition and are pregnant <p>A full list of people considered vulnerable (at moderate risk) can be found at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-</p>	Low	2	Lost time injury	4	8	Adequately controlled

		<p>covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/</p> <p>The PHE report <i>Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19</i> shows that older males, and persons from some Black, Asian or minority ethnicity backgrounds may also be more at risk.</p> <p>Government guidance states that staff in these categories may return to work in a COVID-secure workplace if necessary, although the risks should be assessed on an individual basis.</p> <p>Office-based working is currently both on a business-need and voluntary basis, where someone cannot work effectively at home (Office reopening roadmap, step 1 and step 2). Low occupancy means that 2m social distancing – the key measure identified in the guidance – easy to maintain.</p> <p>Staff returning to the office will be required declare whether they identify with any of the vulnerable categories and to either, confirm that the control measures set out in this risk assessment are adequate for their personal circumstances, or raise their concerns with HR. Where an individual has concerns regarding the adequacy of the measures already in place a full individual risk assessment (self-assessment) will be completed, and the outcome will be discussed between the individual and HR, and the Facilities Manager, where necessary.</p>						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Overall Assessment of Risks

Trivial	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately Controlled	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not adequately Controlled	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further Action Required

No. Review monthly.