

## Northern Ireland office- COVID-19 Risk Assessment for reopening of offices

**Updated 23.06.21**

The purpose of this assessment is to identify the risks associated with COVID-19 when reopening the offices, and identify and communicate the actions that have been/will be taken to mitigate these risks. In order to thoroughly consider all risks, we have consulted official sources and benchmarked to other organisations:

1. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/covid-secure.htm>
2. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
3. [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/general-workplace-safety-risk-assessment-example\\_tcm18-77042.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/general-workplace-safety-risk-assessment-example_tcm18-77042.pdf)
4. Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in offices and contact centres (updated 03.07.20)  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>
5. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>
6. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/>
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>
8. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/pregnancy-and-coronavirus/>
9. HSE- First aid at work- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l74.pdf#page=9>

This risk assessment has been created using the HSE risk assessment template, and cross-checked with the UNITE risk assessment template.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Additional actions taken for re-opening
<b>Maintenance of building during lockdown period- risk of legionella from lack of use</b>	All users of the building (staff, contractors , external visitors)	Office has been closed and all staff have been working from home NICVA staff have been on site and ensuring all required maintenance has been carried out	Staff are still encouraged to work from home where they can, but staff can use the office if pre-arranged with Celine McStravick
<b>Transmission of virus</b>	All users of the building (staff, contractors , external visitors, cleaning staff)	Only NICVA staff have been accessing the building, and all NCB staff members have been working from home <sup>1</sup> Follow current government and NHS guidance <sup>2</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cover the mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing</li> <li>• place tissues in bin immediately</li> <li>• Wash hands immediately using soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds</li> <li>• Dry hands thoroughly after washing</li> <li>• If not possible, use hand sanitiser</li> <li>• Wash hands on a regular basis</li> <li>• Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perspex screens in reception and ground floor kitchen</li> <li>• Signage placed around the building to remind occupants to wash their hands regularly, use tissues to catch coughs and sneezing and maintain social distancing measures at all times</li> <li>• Hand sanitisers and sanitising wipes provided around the building for use by occupants, and to be used when entering and using communal spaces</li> <li>• Handwashing to occur, where possible, before and after entering communal spaces</li> <li>• Cleaning regime for communal spaces has been increased to include regular cleaning throughout the day, focusing</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-information-campaign-focuses-on-handwashing>

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Additional actions taken for re-opening
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff are encouraged to work from home where possible<sup>3</sup></li> <li>Any person who feels unwell should remain at home<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>	<p>on high contact areas including door handles, push plates, contact surfaces etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NICVA have provided individual hygiene packs to all individuals in the building</li> <li>Staff will not be required to wear face coverings whilst working, although they can do so if they choose to<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Face-to-face desks will not be used, in preference to back-to-back and/or side-to-side desk formations<sup>6</sup> and appropriate social distancing will be maintained</li> <li>Doors and windows will be opened throughout the building to ensure adequate ventilation</li> <li>As of 16<sup>th</sup> August, anybody who is double vaccinated and does not have symptoms does not need to self-isolate.<sup>7</sup></li> <li>Any staff member who is showing symptoms, receives a positive test result, or has not received both doses of the vaccine must self-isolate as per government guidelines.</li> <li>Staff have also been asked to work from home (if able) if showing any signs of illness, even if not considered a symptom of COVID, to avoid spread of colds etc throughout the office</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Additional actions taken for re-opening
<b>Risks of transmission through staff sharing desk space and equipment</b>	All users of the building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff are encouraged to continue working from home where possible</li> <li>NICVA providing individual hygiene packs to all tenants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desks to be used by one occupant per day and each staff member assigned their own keyboard and mouse</li> <li>Staff must clean down their workstation and contact surfaces at the end of the day, and place all waste in central bins Sanitiser and cleaning items available throughout the office.</li> <li>Staff encouraged to use communal areas of the office, such as the printers, as minimally as possible. Where the must be used, cleaning materials will be available and should be used to clean touch points after using.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk of transmission through inability to socially distance in the office</b>	All users of the building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff are currently working from home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the first phase of re-opening, staff are encouraged to only access the office if they are unable to work from home reducing number of staff in the office. Staff will be asked about their office requirements and a rota will be developed.</li> <li>Access limited to NCB staff and any other business critical persons- no other visitors allowed</li> <li>Staff are required to email NICVA reception if access is required before 9am, or inform reception when they are on site after 9am, whilst still maintaining social distancing.</li> <li>Staff book in advance of attending site, so that we can ensure that the numbers allow for a safe environment. Communal furniture has been moved or removed to ensure social distancing is maintained</li> <li>One way system implemented throughout the building using signage and floor marking<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/covid-secure.htm>

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Additional actions taken for re-opening
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reduced desk layout to ensure social distancing measures are able to be followed without the need for installing screens<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Where possible, meetings should not be held face-to-face</li> <li>• Staff asked to limit their movement around the office as much as possible</li> <li>• Lift to be used when completely necessary, and then only one person at a time</li> </ul>
<p><b>Risk of transmission in communal spaces</b></p>	<p>All users of the building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff are encouraged to continue working from home where possible</li> <li>• No post or deliveries are being made to the office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff to use car park entrance as this will be contact free</li> <li>• Signage around building to encourage social distancing, good hygiene and hand washing</li> <li>• Windows and doors throughout the building will be opened to increase ventilation throughout</li> <li>• Hand washing and sanitising suppliers throughout the building, and must be used before/after entering a communal space</li> <li>• Any equipment and surfaces to be cleaned down using sanitising wipes before and after use</li> <li>• Where communal areas still need to be accessed, max number of occupants agreed and signage put up to communicate this</li> <li>• Additional seating removed and spaced out to meet social distancing guidelines</li> <li>• Microwave and toaster have been removed, staff should bring their own cutlery or keep one set in their</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Additional actions taken for re-opening
			<p>workstation, and cupboards will not be used to store crockery or food items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaning regime for communal spaces has been increased to include regular cleaning throughout the day, focusing on high contact areas including door handles, push plates, contact surfaces etc.</li> <li>• Allow person leaving a communal space to leave before entering</li> <li>• Staff should only organise deliveries/collections where business critical and the recipient will be responsible for collecting these</li> </ul>
<b>Risk of infection to vulnerable and extremely vulnerable staff members</b>	All staff, particularly those needing to shield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff are encouraged to continue working from home where possible</li> <li>• The government guidelines for extremely vulnerable and vulnerable persons is to follow the rules in place for everyone and take extra precautions to protect themselves, including assessing the risks being taken and working from home where possible<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We strongly encourage anybody at a higher risk of infection to work from home and <b>not</b> access the office</li> <li>• As government guidance on shielding changes, we will review and communicate with staff</li> <li>• We are committed to monitoring the wellbeing of our staff and ensuring that anyone working from home feels supported and able to work safely and effectively</li> </ul>
<b>Lone working risk</b>	All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff are encouraged to continue working from home where possible</li> <li>• The offices are patrolled each evening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure that minimum numbers of staff are present in an open office to avoid lone working risks</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The building is open from 9am and staff will need to inform the NICVA team so that they have a record of who is in the space. Staff should ensure they also sign themselves out when leaving for the day.</li> <li>A "nominated person" will be on site each day to oversee the safety and security of the occupants in the event of any incidents</li> </ul>
<b>Travelling to and from the office</b>	All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where travel is not possible without using public transport, we strongly advise all staff members to continue working from home</li> <li>If you must access the office using public transport, a face covering is mandatory<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are encouraged to avoid using public transport to access the office<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
<b>First Aid and Fire Evacuation Process</b>	All users of the building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff are encouraged to continue working from home where possible</li> <li>We have reviewed our fire evacuation plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the event of a Fire Emergency all staff are to follow the procedures previously practiced, but social distancing measures should be followed at the fire assembly point.</li> <li>Any changes to the plan have been communicated to staff before re-occupation</li> <li>A nominated person will be on site each day to be responsible in the event of any evacuations or incidents</li> <li>A DoorGuard system has been put in place that automatically closes all doors in the event of a fire</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Additional actions taken for re-opening
<b>Person accessing the building developing symptoms or having a confirmed case of COVID-19</b>	All users of the building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff are encouraged to continue working from home where possible</li> <li>If any staff member is displaying symptoms, as noted on the NHS site, they should self-isolate as per guidance<sup>13</sup></li> <li>If any staff member is living with somebody displaying symptoms, they should self-isolate as per guidance<sup>14</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If an individual, or anybody within that individual's household/support bubble, develops any of the symptoms listed on the NHS website, they should follow government guidance and under no circumstances access the office<sup>15</sup></li> <li>The COVID leads should be notified of any confirmed cases, or if an employee has been advised to self-isolate by NHS Track and Trace.</li> <li>NICVA staff to be notified in the event of a staff member having symptoms on site</li> </ul>
<b>Communication with employees</b>	All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior members of the organisation have communicated updates and developments to all staff throughout the pandemic and will continue to do so as new developments arise<sup>16</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff guidance for returning to the office has been developed, reviewed by SLT and Union reps and communicated to the staff<sup>7</sup></li> <li>We will ensure that consistent and regular communication is given to staff to ensure all changes to working are followed consistently</li> </ul>
<b>Communication with external partners</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As changes arise, all outward facing communications will be reviewed and updated, to ensure that our plan is clear and consistent to all partners<sup>18</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/general-workplace-safety-risk-assessment-example\\_tcm18-77042.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/general-workplace-safety-risk-assessment-example_tcm18-77042.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/general-workplace-safety-risk-assessment-example\\_tcm18-77042.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/general-workplace-safety-risk-assessment-example_tcm18-77042.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/general-workplace-safety-risk-assessment-example\\_tcm18-77042.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/general-workplace-safety-risk-assessment-example_tcm18-77042.pdf)





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