

All Food and Drink

Last update: 22 Dec 2020

2020 Bulletins

COVID HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE – LOCKDOWN 3

Posted on: 22 December 2020

RENEWED RISK ASSESSMENTS

“Existing measures (e.g. social distancing, ventilation, hand hygiene and mask usage) remain important, but given the increase in risk associated with the new variant, strengthening the measures taken may be needed”

This means that:

- Risk assessments need to be reviewed and revised – the risk has increased (as virus is more infectious), so the full set of measures now need to be implemented to the fullest.
- The risk assessment will look similar – risk ratings should be higher numbers; colours switch from yellow/orange to red; list of measures should be longer and more detailed.

Many essential workplaces will have these in place but to remind everyone, in particular those measures in bold which are likely to be more relevant to factories.

Measures 1

- Every worker who can work from home must do so



- All Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (Shielding) workers must remain at home
- Standards of ventilation should be the highest achievable as per HSE/CIBSE/REHVA requirements
- Social distancing must be rigorously adhered to in all areas including communal areas, common parts and canteens.

Measures 2

- Welfare facilities must be provided to ensure that hand washing can be maintained.
- Hygiene standards must be the highest achievable in terms of cleanliness and frequency of cleaning
- Teams should be organised into the smallest units possible to minimise cross-exposure. Workers should remain in these teams with no intermingling as far as possible.
- Working patterns should be organised to minimise numbers in the workplace to fewest needed at any given time.

Measure 3

- All requirements for PPE and face coverings must be met in full, with access to supplies as needed.
- Every worker who is in a group identified at being at higher risk from Covid-19 (older workers; pregnant workers; BAME workers; disabled workers; workers with underlying health conditions) should be individually assessed and suitable additional measures implemented.
- All workers who are required to self-isolate must be able to do so without fear of any detriment – loss of pay; loss of holiday; disciplinary action.

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION



- Workplace Inspections, floor walks etc., daily if possible
- Daily H&S Meetings on performance and local infection rates
- Full Consultation on all Covid matters
- Facility Time/Time Off with Pay for these activities.
- Effective communication will be key to managing this period of high risk, and consultation structures will help to aid this.

Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

Noticeboard Bulletin – 24-07-2020



Posted on: 24 July 2020

Dear GMB Member,

Government Communication

We are writing to update you on developments relating to GMBs call for the Government to meet with Unions in the Food and Drink Industry.

The Government department, DEFRA, have written to GMB offering to convene a meeting so that issues with CV19 can be raised directly with them.

This is the first time there has been a meeting specifically for the food and drink industry and is a welcome step towards an ongoing dialogue.

We would encourage Reps and Activists to pass on any contributions to your local officers so that we can ensure that industry issues are fully raised.

Hospitality Industry Restarting – Potential Capacity Issues



We know that many companies are running at very high capacity at present during the lockdown, and with hospitality businesses come back on-stream, we are concerned that this could create capacity pressures in some producers.

We would encourage Reps and Activists to monitor social distancing measures that have been previously introduced.

GMB notes that Government advice is only guidance, and that regular health and safety assessments need to be conducted.

This has two purposes, first to maintain pressure on employers not to water down any measures and two it can help to identify liability in the event of any future outbreaks.

Please ensure that you have checked out the health and safety hub below for resources to support workplace assessments.

Shielding Employees – Return to Work

Now that the Government is advising that they can return to work, it is important that individual risk assessments are carried out, particularly for any BAME members.

Work has been undertaken by our Health and Safety Department to develop a specific risk assessment for these members as they are increasingly being asked to return to work, or face staying at home with no pay in some circumstances.

You can find the BAME members risk assessment via the link to the GMB website here

Individual risk assessments will be crucial to identifying safe return plans, and reminding employers of their duty of care. For general information and guidance around risk assessments you can visit GMB's Make Work Safe Hub on the website here

Lastly stay safe and well.

Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

Noticeboard Bulletin – 21-05-2020



Posted on: 21 May 2020



Dear GMB Member,

GMB's position on safe working

GMB's position on safe working in food and drink manufacturing remains the same despite the new Government guidance:

All close working in a factory and production workplace should require PPE, so GMB does not support the new Government guidance.

GMB is extremely disappointed in the guidance, which so far is the only definitive guidance published from the Government, because these guidelines substantially water down guidance GMB has negotiated or developed in the absence of clear advice from the HSE

PPE

The Government guidance is totally inadequate on the provision of Personal Protective Equipment.

Section 6.1. explicitly states: "Additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not beneficial".

GMB have repeatedly requested both BEIS and Public Health England publish the scientific advice from SAGE that supports this position, but they continue to refuse.

However there is a growing body of evidence that strongly suggests that people can have CV19 **and pass it on at close quarters before they have symptoms**, meaning workers will unknowingly attend work with no symptoms but will be contagious.

If workers cannot achieve a 2m social distance in a production factory then the only possible ways to reduce the risk of transmission is to eliminate it by not performing the work, or by the provision of personal protective equipment.

Face-to-Face Working

The Government Guidance states:

"if people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment."

Allowing small cohorts of workers to be exposed to CV19 risk so others are not is not a meaningful control measure and is utterly unacceptable.



Given that many employers have admitted they find the basic risk assessment process overly complex, the idea that they will be able to perform a detailed COSHH assessment on the transmission risk of CV19 at close quarters is nonsensical.

Therefore without PPE there is no way to avoid this exposure risk.

Next Steps

If members are aware that their employer is trying to water down standards, then please do the following:

- Ask the Company for a copy of the risk assessment for your factory, and or specific area of work;
- Ask your fellow colleagues to join GMB and stand together to protect all your health and safety and;
- Contact your local GMB Officer.

For more information and guidance on COVID-19 please visit our hub [here](#)

Please continue to monitor our Food and Drink Industry Network page for further updates [here](#).

Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

Food And Drink Update And Industry Demand



Posted on: 6 April 2020

Dear GMB Member,

Food and Drink workers are on the frontline working to feed the nation, during the Coronavirus 19 ("CV19") pandemic, and GMB are calling on all food and drink employers to play their part too, by implementing agreed standards, that keep you safe at work and protect against the spread of the CV9.



Some food and drink employers have already stepped up to the plate, actively working with GMB representatives to agree safe working practices and sickness policies that set the standards required to keep you, your families and your communities safe and well, during this worrying and unprecedented time.

Unfortunately, that's not the case in all workplaces with GMB members telling us that a number of employers across the food and drink industry are not providing PPE, implementing social distancing and the changes required to set safe working standards. The government have designated food and drink workers as key workers, and it is the employer's responsibility to ensure you are safe in carrying out your duties.

It's time for all employers to raise their game and quickly. It's no use employers offering to donate food and drinks, support volunteer and charity efforts, if they don't keep you safe and continue to implement SSP, reduced sick pay and sanctions for being sick or absent due to CV19.

Your health, safety and well-being remains the top priority for GMB, whether that's PPE, safe working practices or sickness policies that don't penalise you when you're sick or absent due to CV19.

That's why GMB

- Continues to press Government and Employers for full pay from day 1 for all CV19 related absences
- Are having discussions with the Food and Drink Federation on industry standards and guidelines
- Are writing to the Big 6 retailers to ask them to require supply chains to meet our standards

GMB are calling for

- Any required PPE identified via a risk assessment
- Agreed measures with local Reps in place to ensure social distancing across site
- Full pay from day 1 for any CV19 related absences
- Regular and rigorous CV19 testing
- Suspending absence management policies and any potential sanctions



- Individual Risk Assessments, for workers with underlying conditions
- Increased cleaning and hygiene regimes

Eamon O'Hearn

GMB National Officer

