



Work, Social Distancing and the Prime Minister's Statement – FAQs

30 Mar 2020

Updated: Friday 7th December 2020

The rules on Social Distancing have changed a few times since it was first introduced in March 2020.

As of the 7th December 2020, the guidance now states that you should stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors). GMB believe that social distancing should be at least 2 metres where possible because the further people are from each other, the less the risk of transmission of Covid.

GMB endorse the principles behind social distancing and urge everyone to follow Government advice. Hundreds of thousands of GMB members are engaged in the frontline of the fight against the virus. We owe it to all of them and everyone else working on the frontline to keep to the rules and stay home as much as possible to reduce the spread of the virus.

Information on how to sufficiently ventilate the workplace and any indoor area is now included in the Government Social distancing guidance updated on 7th December. [You can find this here.](#)

GMB is receiving many questions from members about whether or not they should be going in to work. We are clear that nothing has fundamentally changed, and that **where workers can work from home they should continue to do so.**

Where they must return to work, risk assessments must be in place and protective measures implemented before the return to work; and PPE must be provided, especially when the “1m plus” approach is being taken. More information on risk assessment and PPE can be found elsewhere in the Coronavirus Hub.

My employer is refusing to allow me to work from home even though I know it is perfectly possible for this to happen

Your employer is directly ignoring Government advice that **everyone** who can work from home should do so and this applies to all 3 tiers in England, all 5 tiers in Scotland and to everyone in Wales and Northern Ireland. Take this up with your employer and enlist the help of your GMB workplace rep if they continue to refuse to allow it. Your employer is placing you and everyone around you at unnecessary risk if you can work at home but are not being permitted to do so.

You can find the [Government advice here](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

My employer is carrying on with pretty much business as usual. Staff are being called in and we are continuing to work as if nothing has happened

Your employer must ensure that the requirements of social distancing are adhered to as far as they possibly can, and that the work is risk assessed ([see our separate guidance here](#)). Every employer must assess the risk of COVID exposure and enact the requirements of government advice. Talk to your GMB workplace rep or Officer if you are being compelled to go to work and your employer is not adequately protecting you.

I have been contacted by the NHS and told I am at risk due to a pre-existing health condition. Should I go to work?

As of 3rd December in England, Wales and Northern Ireland there is no longer a National shielding programme. If the shielding programme is reintroduced (Nationally or locally), you should be at home until you are advised that you no longer need to shield. When shielding is in place, it covers all workplaces.



In Scotland, shielding advice depends on your tier level, guidance can be found here.

Guidance for England can be found here

Guidance for Wales can be found here

Guidance for Northern Ireland can be found here

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable workers should have individual risk assessments, in consultation with occupational health professional if they have underlying health conditions. They may need to be redeployed away from working directly with the public, or be provided with personal protective equipment for their job role.

I am a key worker and live with an at risk person

There should be a risk assessment carried out by your employer that is specific to you and your circumstances and appropriate measures implemented to protect you from becoming infected and/or passing on the virus.

My boss is claiming that my work is essential but I don't agree with that decision

The Government has issued guidance on which workplaces have to close – if your workplace is one of these then it has to close. Your employer is likely to get a visit from the enforcement agencies.

You can access this [Government advice here](#)

Other workplaces may still operate but it can't be business as usual. [See our separate advice](#) about safe working and social distancing.