**NLHSG COVID-19 Update No 1 Friday 27th March 2020**

Mon 23rd March, the Prime Minister made a bold move in order to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus by placing the UK on lockdown for a minimum of 3 weeks. People in Britain are allowed to leave their homes for only very limited purposes - such as shopping for basic food necessities; for one form of exercise a day; for any medical need; and to travel to and from work when absolutely necessary.

**Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19**

The World Health Organization has set out guidance on how businesses and employers can help to stop the spread of the new coronavirus disease.

**Prevention of the Coronavirus in the Workplace**

Guidance stresses that employers should start taking precautions measures now, even if COVID-19 has not arrived yet.

* Make sure all of your workplaces are clean and hygienic.
* Surfaces and objects, desks, tables, telephones and keyboards need to be wiped with disinfectant on a regular basis
* Promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors and customers when entering or leaving a building.
* Alcohol hand gel should be placed at entrances such as reception and in other key locations Make someone responsible for checking these frequently and refill when required.
* Display posters promoting the need for effective hand-washing
* Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash hands with soap and water and the facility to dry their hands with paper towels. Fabric towels should be removed.

Further information for employers can be found at: <https://www.shponline.co.uk/asia/coronavirus-advice-for-employers/>

**Extension of MOT due dates for light vehicles**

Government has announced that from 30 March 2020, it intends to extend MOT due dates for cars, motorcycles and light vans by six months. Legislation will be introduced on 30 March and will come into immediate effect for 12 months, following a short consultation with key organisations, including the FTA.

**MOTs due before 30 March**

If a vehicle’s MOT is due before 30 March, and it will need to be used for the reasons described by Government, then it still needs to be tested and an MOT certificate issued.  The Department for Transport has issued additional [guidance](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/aFZCCyojrHrNpBAhDoIS7) about what to do if a vehicle’s MOT due date is up to and including 29 March 2020.

**MOTs due on or after 30 March**

Government intends that a relevant vehicle will be automatically given a six-month MOT exemption. This will extend the current MOT expiry date by six months. This is the approach that has been taken for heavy vehicles’ three-month extension, and members have reported the change has taken place on the vehicle record automatically as expected.

The government is allowing MOT centres and garages to remain open, therefore you can still take a vehicle to get an MOT if the vehicle is needed for specific activities. The FTA is seeking further clarification on the definition of these activities. (I will update this guidance in the next bulletin).

For the members that operate goods vehicles there has also been a 3 month MOT extension granted, further information specifically for goods vehicles can be found on the link <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-mots-for-lorries-buses-and-trailers>

One point to note from the extensions that have been granted to vehicle MOT’s, is that vehicles **MUST** be kept in a legal, roadworthy condition

**Responding to COVID-19 – What does your organisation need to do to stay on the right side of the criminal law?**

**Protecting your Employees – Risk Assessments**

As the Pandemic spreads and further guidelines are given for people with underlying health conditions, employee to self-isolate (even without any symptoms) or being requested to work from home where possible, resources in the workplace will be reduced. Have you thought about reviewing your current Risk Assessments and operating procedures?

The Management of Health and Safety in the Workplace Regulations 1999 places a duty on employers to carry out ‘suitable and sufficient’ Risk Assessments and as we are all aware Risk Assessments should be reviewed when significant changes are made to operations, with the current situation and a depleted workforce this would be deemed as a significant change therefore a requirement to review and where necessary amend your documentation and adapt new working procedures. As a reminder the revised Risk Assessments should be briefed out to personnel and made available for future reference.

Other aspects that you may need to consider are employees that are now lone working – do you have suitable communication methods in place. Further information can be found using the link below <https://www.shponline.co.uk/legislation-and-guidance/responding-to-covid-19-what-does-your-organisation-need-to-do-to-stay-on-the-right-side-of-the-criminal-law/>

**How Employees Can Work from Home Safely**

Home Working is considered to be low-risk similar to that of a small office environment and the main risks arising from working at home is the use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and workstation set up. Following these few guidelines will minimise the risks.

**Routine -** All personnel should start and finish work at their normal time in line with your normal working hours to maintain a healthy work-life balance whilst working from home.

**Work Environment -** Find a space away from the main home areas and avoid working from bedroom areas. Try to minimise disruption to the home environment, especially where there are young children and others in the home.

**Workstation / Desk Set Up -** Ensure that you have sufficient workspace in which to work from, you have a comfy chair, preferable with lumbar support and arm rests. Ensure there is sufficient lighting and does not cause glare on the screen

**Posture / Breaks -** It is important to take regular breaks away from the workstation. Best practice suggests taking a break of at least 5 minutes long, 30 minutes will prevent injuries from poor postures. Get up from the workstation, stretch, walk and get some fresh air.

**Breaks -** Meals and snacks should be eaten away from the work station.

While the current situation is challenging for the management teams in organisation your staff will also be under a higher level of stress, worrying about their own health, their children or that of elderly relatives who they are unable to see. Staff management is highly important at the best of time and more so at a time like this, keep in regular communication with your staff, know the signs when people are struggling and provide them with details of organisations they can contact to talk through their concerns.

Government advice:

   <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

     <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

 [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-coronavirus-information-service-on-whatsapp?](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/zZ8ICGv05S1J8Mxu7gpnw)

NHS advice:  <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

Advice for travellers:  <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/advice-for-travellers>

NHS 111 on line advice: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19> or Telephone 111