

Consensus statement emphasises importance of COVID-19-secure workplaces

Public Health England (PHE), Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM) have issued a [consensus statement](#) on the best approach to reduce occupational risk for workers including those of ethnic minority groups.

The statement recommends implementing and reinforcing existing HSE, government and specific industry guidance, workplace procedures and systems which help mitigate the risk of exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) for all workers.

The statement adds that actions targeted at the entire workforce, rather than solely at ethnic minority groups may help reduce the risk of stigmatisation and opportunity inequalities at work.

Some staff may be at greater risk of infection or more severe illness from COVID-19 due to factors such as age, sex, deprivation, obesity or diabetes and the statement recommends that individual discussions, where appropriate, should take place as part of a wider workplace risk management strategy.

Professor Kevin Fenton, Regional Director, PHE London, said:

We know that some workplace settings can be a risk for transmitting COVID-19 and comprehensive guidance for a wide range of sectors is available. PHE has worked with the HSE and FOM on a consensus statement that stresses the importance of implementing effective risk management strategies in the workplace for all workers, which will help keep people safe at work and reduce the spread of the virus.

Rick Brunt, Head of Operational Strategy, HSE, said:

Responding effectively to disparities is an instrumental part of the mission of keeping people safe amid the risk of coronavirus – one we have a deep commitment towards.

This consensus statement underlines that the critical need for good risk management and detailed risk assessment, as well as open dialogue with workers, to make a COVID-secure workplace has not changed.

We understand the continuing challenge to ensure this message reaches those it needs to. We urge both employers and employees to

use existing guidance and materials to help them reduce the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Dr Anne de Bono, President of FOM, said:

Assessment of both workplaces and workers underpins occupational medical and health practice. Safe systems of work, including appropriate control measures and protection for staff alongside safe deployment, with adjustments to individual work duties when necessary, maintain good work and good health in all sectors.

Dr Shriti Pattani, Chair of the NHS Health at Work Network, commenting on the consensus statement, said:

COVID-19 has brought new risks for NHS staff, particularly those with increased vulnerability to this infection. Occupational health services in the NHS are providing the strategic advice and workplace and individual assessments which contribute to risk reduction, safer working and better patient care.