

14th April 2020



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Advice for retail shops, supermarkets and convenience stores permitted to operate during the current COVID-19 situation mainly about FITNESS TO WORK and SOCIAL DISTANCING.

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During the current coronavirus (COVID-19) crises some businesses, including those providing essential food and other products to consumers can continue trading, supporting their local communities. *The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Business Closure) (England) Regulations 2020*

Current scientific advice is that it is very unlikely that COVID-19 can be spread through food but it is really important you think carefully about your proposed business to make sure you have controls in place so you can do this safely.

In addition, before you decide to open either for customers to come into your shop, or taking orders for door step deliveries you must first very carefully about how you are going to protect and put safe systems in place so everyone can keep to the advice on social distancing.

This applies to:

- ⊖ Your staff
- ⊖ Your customers
- ⊖ The general public near your customers and your shop.

There is more advice and information about your health and safety responsibilities at the end of this document. Please make sure you read it all.

Fitness to work

First you must make sure everyone working in your business, whether they are preparing, packing or delivering food, are fit to work. The Food Standards Agency's [fitness for work](#) guidance for staff who handle food products provides advice on managing sickness in a food business. Understanding this guidance and applying it on both a personal and business level can help to prevent the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) and help keep you, your business and your food safe.

Managing Sickness

If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in the business or workplace they should be sent home and advised to follow the [stay at home guidance](#). If you or an employee are experiencing symptoms, visit NHS 111 online or call 111 if there is no internet access. In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured, or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.

It is not necessary to close the business or workplace or send any staff home, unless government policy changes. You should keep monitoring the [government response to coronavirus](#) for further updates.

Social distancing (PHE Guidance)

Whether you have decided to operate from your retail shop, or start providing deliveries the advice on social distancing measures applies to everyone.

You need to minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of 2 meters between individuals. **This includes staff working in your business**. It may mean you have to change how you normally work so you can keep everyone safe.

Retail Food Shops: Retail food shops need to help reduce the spread of this virus. This includes avoiding crowding and create adequate spacing between individuals. Effective measures to support this will vary by store and location but could include:

- ⊖ **Buy what you need:** Reminding customers to only buy what they need
- ⊖ **Clear signs:** Use clear signs outside your shop asking customers not to enter the shop if they have symptoms of COVID-19
- ⊖ **Control number of customers:** Work out how many people can safely be in your shop at a time so you can maintain the 2 meter minimum distance between them.
- ⊖ Then regulate entry so that the premises do not become overcrowded
- ⊖ **Use floor markings:** This may be inside the shop area, and may also be needed outside so your customers can safely wait to enter your shop.
- ⊖ **Control the 'flow' of customers around your shop:** It is really important you think about how you can do this particularly in the most crowded or narrow areas of your shop to include serving counters and tills.
- ⊖ It may help to use signs which direct your customers into lanes, and may mean they need to go 'one way' round your shop so that you can do your best to give them space to move round your shop and keep the 2 meter distance
- ⊖ **Talk to your customers – advise them:** Whenever possible, make announcements reminding them to follow social distancing advice and clean their hands regularly. This protects them, and your staff.
- ⊖ **Barriers:** Consider placing plexiglass (or similar) barriers at tills and counters. This can add extra protection for both your staff and customers
- ⊖ **Contactless payments:** Encourage the use of contactless payments where possible, without disadvantaging older or vulnerable customers.
- ⊖ **Hand washing:** Where you do accept cash make sure your staff have access to good sanitizer or hand washing facilities which they can easily access between customers.
- ⊖ **Restocking shelves:** Try to arrange to restock shelving when the business is closed to avoid congestion in the aisles.

Further information on [social distancing and adults who are at increased risk of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) can be found on GOV.UK.

This advice applies to both inside the food business where your customers shop, your stock rooms and in the external public areas where customers may need to queue.

Remember to:

- ⊖ Keep monitoring the number of customers and limit where necessary limit access to avoid congestion
- ⊖ Implement a good queue management systems to limit too many people gathering at entrances, so everyone can stick to the 2 meters distance advice.

All businesses will be different: Your store manager needs to think about this very carefully, and be prepared to change or make improvements to make sure you offer maximum protection for staff, customers and; where queuing is on the public pavement, you must also consider the passing pedestrians and not block their along the street.

Examples of Retailer signage can be found on these links:

<https://www.acs.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-posters-retailers>

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101-coronavirus-/resources/5016>

Food Delivery Considerations

To reduce the number of people coming to your shop, you may consider taking orders and doing some deliveries.

You must not enter customers' properties and should keep 2 meters away from customers when handing over the food.

It is advisable to provide your delivery staff with gloves, or access to effective sanitiser or hand washing facilities. For more information about deliveries, please refer to our advisory sheet dealing specifically with deliveries.

Managing the Health & Safety of your staff

As an employer you have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to protect employees and members of the public from harm within the workplace.

There have been a number of changes in the Health and Safety laws around COVID-19 which make it essential you realise your normal responsibilities to your staff do now extend to affording them protection while they are undertaking work activities.

You are required to introduce the public health social distancing measures to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace and protect your staff and customers.

The best place to start is with doing a 'Risk assessment'. This means stopping to think about how you are working and if you have put safe systems in place to protect the staff and those affected by your actions – so that includes your customers. This means thinking about:

- ⊖ **Number of staff:** You may need to consider a reduction of employees working at one time or agree revised shift patterns with employees, where both parties are in agreement. This is to allow spacing out and retaining the social distancing advice.
- ⊖ **Personal protective equipment:** You may need to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) refer to www.gov.uk for current advice.
- ⊖ **It may not be safe to operate your business:** You may need to close the business where risks cannot be managed or mitigated.

There is a lot of advice available on the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk

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