A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING COVID-SECURE SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK AT THE RSC: OFFICES

INTRODUCTION

The government have announced that from 1 August offices can reopen for all workers with robust risk controls in place to ensure social distancing rules can be maintained. Social distancing rules currently state that individuals, outside of their household bubbles, must maintain a distance of 2 metres from others, or where that is not possible, 1 metre with robust mitigation.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular activity, we should consider whether that activity needs to continue, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between all workers, contractors, freelancers and visitors.

This guidance document is for Heads of Departments and those who manage and maintain our office buildings.

It provides an introduction to general safety considerations in relation to managing a Covid-secure workplace and provides suggestions of risk mitigation measures and safe systems of work to implement into the workplace and during work activity, in line with government Covid-19 guidance and health and safety legislation.

It should be used in conjunction with the RSC's Covid-19 Reoccupation Management Framework and the RSC's Health and Safety Policy.

PRINCIPLES OF RISK CONTROL

The RSC has a duty to carry out an assessment of any foreseeable risk of harm by deciding what may cause the harm and identifying reasonable steps to take to prevent that harm occurring. This is a legal requirement under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations, 1999.

As per the RSC's Health and Safety Policy, Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that suitable and sufficient Covid-19 risk assessments are in place for their department. Producers and Production Managers are responsible for ensuring that production-specific Covid-19 risk assessments are in place. The RSC must consult with union representatives and staff on all Covid-19 risk assessments.

All risk assessments must be written down on an RSC departmental risk assessment form found in the Health and Safety Policy. Covid-19 risk assessments must also be shared on the RSC website / staff intranet (via the Health and Safety Department) so that they are accessible to all staff. Risk assessors may wish to keep their Covid-19 risk assessment on a separate document to their other risk assessments.

The guidance within this document aligns safe systems of work with this hierarchy of risk control: eliminate, reduce, isolate, control, communicate and PPE as a last resort. This hierarchy can be applied to the control of Covid-19 transmission as follows:

ELIMINATE *VIRUS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FROM WORKPLACE*	*Think about how best to prevent the Covid-19 virus from being present in the workplace. Working remotely, restricting people showing symptoms, following major incident plans to isolate unwell persons, and robust cleaning and disinfection of work areas all help.*
REDUCE *POSSIBLE EXPOSURE TO VIRUS*	*Restrict movement, the amount of time in the workplace and how many things people need to touch, maintain social distancing and reduce close contact by forming worker bubbles and ensuring noone is in close contact for longer than a minute or two without protection. Dilute the air with good ventilation.*
ISOLATE *FROM POSSIBLE EXPOSURE TO VIRUS*	*Isolate people from each other through the use of screens, barriers or visors. Allocate areas and zones for specific teams, bubbles or individuals.* *Stop the sharing of equipment and quarantine items that may be contaminated.*
COMMUNICATE	*Write operating procedures, safe systems of work and method statements and train staff on how to follow them. Use signage and verbal instruction.*
PPE	*PPE is not necessary as a suitable control of Covid-19 transmission outside of healthcare settings, except for the adminstration of first aid.* *However, if a risk assessment concludes that the risk of transmission is still high after all other controls are considered, CE-marked FFP2 or FFP3 filtered RPE should be used.* *Face coverings are not classified as PPE, however, anyone who wishes to wear their face covering in the workplace must be supported.*

In line with government guidance, mitigation against the risk of Covid-19 transmission does not include basic measures such as good hand and respiratory hygiene, the compliance with which should be universal and is assumed.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

It is of utmost importance that workers must not be (or feel) forced into carrying out work that is unsafe. Managers must regularly check in with their staff about their health and wellbeing, and provide an opportunity for persons to raise concerns without fear of negative consequences. Where workers can work from home, even for some of their tasks, then they should.

Workers and visitors must not be unduly discriminated by any Covid-Secure measure we put in place. For example, lift access must be maintained for those who are unable to use stairwells.

The RSC must encourage staff to use the NHS Test and Trace Service if they are presenting with Covid-19 symptoms. The service is accessed by calling NHS 119. To assist the NHS Test and Trace Service, the RSC must keep records of staff rotas, visitors and contractors

for 21 days All workers who are assigned to a team bubble must comply with test and trace processes if someone in their bubble is unwell or is in quarantine.

CLINICALLY VULNERABLE WORKERS

Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals have been strongly advised not to work outside the home during the pandemic peak and only return to work when community infection rates are low.

Clinically vulnerable individuals, who are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions), have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing and should be helped to work from home, either in their current role or in an alternative role.

Clinically vulnerable workers who have been shielding, or workers who live with a clinical vulnerable person, must not carry out work that does not enable them to follow social distancing rules. If 2 metres cannot be maintained in the workplace, they can only work at 1 metre distance if there is sufficient mitigation to remove the risk of infection. Any person returning to work after shielding or living with someone who has been shielding must be referred for an Occupational Health appointment before starting work.

FACE COVERINGS

Employers should support their workers in using face coverings safely if they choose to wear one. Face coverings are not classed as PPE and workers and visitors should provide their own if they wish to wear one.

Workers who wear face coverings at work must ensure that they practice good personal hygiene and prevent contamination by safely storing and washing the face covering after use. Specific instructions to be issued include:

- Washing hands thoroughly or use hand sanitiser regularly and before putting a face covering on, after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoiding touching the face or face covering.
- Changing the face covering if it becomes damp or if touched.
- Changing and washing the face covering daily. If the material is washable, wash in line with Manufacturer's instructions. If it is not washable, dispose of it carefully in usual waste containers.

GUIDANCE FOR OFFICES

ELIMINATE *VIRUS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FROM WORKPLACE*	*Think about how to prevent the Covid-19 virus from being present in the workplace. Working remotely, restricting people showing symptoms, following major incident plans to isolate unwell persons, and robust cleaning and disinfection of work areas all help.* • All office-based staff to work from home whenever possible • Consider what activities can take place from home or via online working tools • Use remote working tools to avoid in person meetings

	- Provide hand sanitiser at entry and exit points, in individual rooms and next to multi-user equipment (lifts, photocopiers, store cupboards) - Providing cleaning stations - Carry out frequent cleaning and disinfection of office buildings and external shared areas and touch points
REDUCE *POSSIBLE EXPOSURE TO VIRUS*	*Restrict movement, the amount of time in the workplace and how many things people need to touch, maintain social distancing and reduce close contact by forming worker bubbles and ensuring noone is in close contact for longer than a minute or two without protection. Dilute the air with good ventilation.* - Only those who have to work from offices to be onsite, maintaining social distancing - Restrict maintenance activity to outside of office hours - Work outdoors or hold meetings outdoors, whenever possible - Create rest areas outside - Reduce the size of a group where possible to reduce the number of contact points - Scheduling time between shift changes for thorough cleaning of offices and welfare facilities - Scheduling workers so that there are as few as possible different groups and in as few as possible different spaces - Keep the time of any activity where social distancing cannot be maintained as short as possible - Restrict movement between buildings – consider best location for work that reduces movement - Provide good ventilation and sufficient circulation in indoor spaces by opening windows and doors (not fire doors) or using mechanical ventilation equipment - Provide enough space for staff to be socially distanced from each other and from any other individuals, wherever possible during activity and movement around building - Place desks and seating in such a way to prevent face to face positioning - Avoid hot desking where possible. Where not possible, ensure equipment and furniture disinfected between uses - Adapting work to reduce physical contact and practice social distancing (sharing and collaborating on documents online, using telephones or video conferencing, using online forms) - Reduce amount of printed documentation - Consider a flexible shift pattern so workers can stagger start, finish, and break times - Stagger arrival and departure times to reduce crowding into and out of the premises

	- Provide additional parking or facilities such as bike-racks to help people walk, run, or cycle where possible - Enable a booking system or other approaches to manage demand of spaces, so that no more than the desired number of people are in the building at any one time - Manage occupancy levels and changeover by reducing groups and amending rotas - Remove non-essential common areas - Removing waiting rooms where it is not possible to facilitate social distancing, asking visitors not to arrive ahead of their allocated time slot, and providing clear instruction not to congregate in other areas if waiting - Allocate room capacities, including any welfare facilities and storage areas - Use a 'one in – one out' system for toilet and/ or kitchen facilities - Encouraging persons to bring as few personal items with them to the workplace as possible - Provide a personal locker / storage area for personal belongings - Avoiding sharing pens and other objects - Reduce use of equipment, such as photocopiers, stationery etc, and ensure any that are used are cleaned in between use
***ISOLATE** FROM POSSIBLE EXPOSURE TO VIRUS*	*Isolate people from each other through the use of screens, barriers or visors. Allocate areas and zones for specific teams, bubbles or individuals.* *Stop the sharing of equipment and quarantine items that may be contaminated.* - Allocate personal equipment and stationery - Use a one-way system through building - Use screens to create a physical barrier between people and desks where 2 metres distancing is not possible - Use face shields to create a portable physical barrier where 2 metres distancing is not possible - Provide drop off boxes / areas to enable passing of items and receiving deliveries without close contact - Consider if you can rotate and quarantine shared equipment for 72 hours between uses - Allocate worker bubbles/ cohorts (that maintain social distancing within the bubble) and allocate them their own facilities and work areas

COMMUNICATE	*Write operating procedures, safe systems of work and method statements and train staff on how to follow them. Use signage and verbal instruction.*
	• Carry out building orientation training • Providing floor markings and signage • Manage access to lockers and break areas to allow social distancing • Consider changes in policies to ensure limited time is taken in break areas • Provide information about hand hygiene and where to access facilities safely • Allocate and train 'Covid Marshalls' to help ensuring social distancing and other control measures are maintained throughout the working day
PPE	*PPE is not necessary as a suitable control of Covid-19 transmission outside of healthcare settings, except for the adminstration of first aid.* *However, if a risk assessment concludes that the risk of transmission is still high after all other controls are considered, CE-marked FFP2 or FFP3 filtered RPE should be used.* *Face coverings are not classified as PPE, however, anyone who wishes to wear their face covering in the workplace must be supported.*