

RISK ASSESSMENT: WORKING SAFELY ON THE PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK

Scope of Assessment

1. COVID-19 is a public health issue and because it is so widespread, there are implications for the workplace; in managing the risk, the Houses of Parliament (HoP) are following the “[plan, do, check act](#)” approach described in our safety management system.
2. Our risk assessment was initially published on 29th May 2020; and has been regularly updated to ensure the key control measures to reduce the risk of transmitting the coronavirus remain relevant. Other, task specific risk assessments have been produced to ensure the general actions identified here become sensible and practical working arrangements.
3. Information and guidance from **Public Health England** and the **Health and Safety Executive** informs our decisions and risk control measures. Specific reference materials used to assess COVID-19 related risks include:
 - [Coronavirus – social distancing](#) Cabinet Office
 - [Working Safely during Coronavirus \(COVID 19\)](#) Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
 - [Protecting Workers Health during the extended COVID-19 outbreak](#) British Occupational Hygiene Society
 - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance](#) Gov.UK
 - [Making Your Workplace COVID secure](#) Health and Safety Executive
 - [COVID-19 Risk Assessment Guidance](#) Institution of Occupational Safety and Health

Understanding the spread and control of COVID-19

4. A new, more transmissible variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is widespread in the UK. This means that our control measures must be more stringently applied and everyone on the estate must be diligent if we are to reduce physical transmission by all routes – close-range, airborne, and via surfaces. By protecting the potential routes of entry into the body promoting social distancing, good personal hygiene practices and cleaning regimes we can effectively minimise any potential for infection and [guidance from the Health and Safety Executive](#) sets out how this can be achieved.
5. The majority of the parliamentary estate follows the 2m rule - people cannot reach each other and therefore cannot spread infection by direct touching and allows space for exhaled droplets to dissipate, reducing the likelihood of inhalation. Areas which operate at 1m+ are clearly marked and have additional mitigations to prevent exposure.

Plan and Do

6. Managing the COVID-19 risk is an organisational challenge so collaboration is key, and the Speakers of both Houses have stressed that the safety of all those on the parliamentary estate is a top priority. The overarching principles running throughout our arrangements are;
 - a. the COVID-19 health and safety requirements of any activity must not be compromised at any time. If an activity cannot be undertaken safely, for example due to an inability to implement social distancing etc, it should **not** take place;
 - b. teams and offices will review their work activities to ensure that social distancing requirements can be met and there are adequate hygiene arrangements;
 - c. personal responsibility: everyone must play a part in preventing the spread of the virus and make great efforts to keep themselves safe and well, while observing Public Health England advice to maintain social distancing and good personal hygiene standards *and*
 - d. there is adequate record keeping without unnecessary bureaucracy.
7. We are a “[Covid Secure Workplace](#)” and regularly review arrangements to make sure everyone can work safely on the parliamentary estate and the Boards of both Houses are kept informed of progress and performance in the usual way.

Assumptions

8. This assessment **assumes that people working at the Houses of Parliament follow PHE/HSE advice and the policies of both Houses** by;
 - not returning to the parliamentary estate if they;x a [close contact](#); or any of their household tests positive for coronavirus until it is safe to do so as per the Public Health England/NHS advice,
 - following NHS advice and isolating at home if they have symptoms of COVID-19, only returning to work when PHE/NHS advice says it is safe to do so, *and*
 - preventing the spread of the virus and make great efforts to keep themselves safe and well, while observing government advice - “hands-face-space”.
9. This assessment addresses the risks and controls necessary to ensure **everybody on the parliamentary estate can work safely**. Task specific assessments ensure the actions/risks and control measures highlighted in this document become operational. As per the HSE guidance, these may not be recorded on a separate risk assessment form – minutes of meetings, emails and/or procedures are an equally valid way of identifying and actioning a risk.

Check and Act

10. Our COVID Operations Group oversees implementation of our risk mitigations and liaises with PHE and HSE regularly. High level policies and procedures are kept under review by workstream leads and the Parliamentary Safety Team provide independent assessments of how well the risks are being managed on the estate.
11. Teams and Offices ensure the “normal” safety and health risks continue to be effectively controlled during the coronavirus outbreak.
12. The Parliamentary Safety Assurance Board discusses the efficacy of the arrangements for the prevention and slowing of the spread of COVID-19 on the Parliamentary Estate at each meeting and receive a monthly update from the Head of Parliamentary Safety.
13. The assessment is regularly reviewed by the Head of Parliamentary Safety to ensure it reflects the ongoing assessment of risk made by the COVID-19 Group*. Significant changes are circulated to managers and safety representatives for comment.

**This group considers the possible exposure routes to the virus of all those working on the parliamentary estate, what (high level) administrative controls are required to control the risk and whether the mitigations are working.*

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Parliamentary Safety Team have worked with the COVID Group to produce a risk assessment which addresses how the Houses of Parliament will restrict the transmission of the coronavirus in the workplace. Fundamentally, this has involved planning how work can continue on the parliamentary estate whilst following the government guidance on working safely during the outbreak. Poor COVID secure behaviours of people on the parliamentary estate will lead to increased risk of transmission, so teams and offices must check that arrangements are working at the local level, in addition to monitoring by the Covid Operations Group and the Parliamentary Safety Team.

As control measures are introduced to cope with COVID-, Teams & Offices must review existing (business as usual) risk assessments to ensure that changing any work patterns/procedures etc. do not cause new or increased safety risks.

Hazard: Spread of COVID-19 through contact and airborne transmission on the parliamentary estate.

Risk Controls: **Measures in place** The risk control measures to slow/stop the transmission of COVID-19 are in place and kept under review.

Measures in progress The risk control measures to slow/stop the transmission of COVID-19 have been agreed and are being put in place.

Measures required Further risk control measures are required to slow/stop the transmission of COVID-19,

Situations where transmission of the virus is possible.	Who could be at risk?	Actions/risk controls required to control the risk	Risk Lead	Risk
<p>1. Any person working on the estate in any capacity could transmit the virus if they are infected. Some people are asymptomatic. <i>Arrangements are in place to minimise the risk*, including</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ identification of essential workers ▫ procedures for staff staying at home ▫ support for people who are vulnerable/shielding or have such persons in their household 	All persons on the estate.	<p>Limiting the overall numbers on-site is a key part of our approach as a COVID-19 secure employer. Access is kept under constant review, any changes dependent on operational requirements; information is published on our internal intranet. Members have been asked to limit the number of staff attending the estate.</p> <p>Measures to reduce the footfall on the estate and therefore prevent transmission of the virus include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance on the Estate is based on business need. Passholders only attend the Estate if they're in an essential role that cannot be done remotely, • Following local safety risk assessments ensure that workspaces are as safe as possible. Colleagues who believe themselves to be vulnerable are strongly advised assess their individual risk using the checklist provided on our intranet and discuss the findings with their line manager. House staff in receipt of a shielding letter will not be asked to work on site. • Limiting access to the estate to passholders and those with essential business need. Any changes to access arrangements are announced in regular emails and published on the intranet, Teams and Offices are responsible for ensuring compliance. • Establishing arrangements which allow staff and Members to work remotely; equipment is available to enable colleagues to work safely and effectively at home. The Digital Service has introduced arrangements which enable remote working, including the capability to deliver a virtual/hybrid parliament. <p>We have established measures to identify, manage and control COVID cases, clusters and outbreaks amongst colleagues on the estate, to minimise the possibility of widespread infection and transmission. There are arrangements in place to support the NHS test and trace programme and people can scan QR codes at entrances and exits.</p>	COVID Operations Group Lead: People & Digital Workstreams	Risk
<p>2. Getting in to and leaving work <i>Colleagues using public transport must follow Dept of Transport guidance</i></p>	All persons having to come into work on the estate	<p>The COVID Operational group reviews the arrangements in place to enable people to come on to the parliamentary estate safely. All these measures are kept under constant review and further changes introduced if required. Risk controls include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements to assist individuals to travel to/from the estate (including at off peak times; managers are responsible for ensuring their staff comply with the relevant procedures and Dept of Transport guidance). • Face coverings are available for use on public transport and when moving about the estate. • Entry/exit points are reviewed so that people can keep to the social distancing rules; remedial action is taken to manage queuing at pinch points and changes are made depending on the footfall on any given day. Everyone is personally responsible for maintaining social distancing when accessing/exiting/moving around the estate. • Hand sanitisers are available at entry/exit points. A surface biocide is used and reapplied on high touch areas including security keypads. IHSE is responsible for maintaining the sanitisers, individuals are responsible for using them. • Reduction in the number of supplier deliveries to site, by increasing the size of orders and reducing frequency. 	COVID Operations Group Lead: Access Workstream	Risk
<p>3. Wellbeing <i>A range of support and resources are available with details on the Health and Wellbeing pages of the intranet.</i></p>	All persons working from home Persons who are essential workers All persons on the estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues continue to adapt to changes in the way we work across parliament. Health and Wellbeing support is available to those who need it, • There is a risk assessment tool to help parliamentary colleagues identify if they are at higher risk of developing serious symptoms if they come into contact with COVID-19. • Information on managing the risks to wellbeing and how to access support is available on the intranet, covering wellbeing at home, health and safety when working from home and wellbeing support. Managers keep in regular contact with people working from home to discuss their wellbeing and helping them to feel they are still part of the workforce. • The Health and Wellbeing Service develops policy and central arrangements; line managers have a duty to make sure their staff are aware of the facilities available and whether working from home or from the parliamentary estate, self-care is incredibly important. Individuals should keep speaking to their line manager about any issues they are having, and everyone is encouraged to support colleagues and look after themselves during the coronavirus outbreak) 	COVID Ops. Group People workstream	Risk
<p>4. Work Area <i>The COVID Operations Group identifies what needs to be generally done in our workspaces to ensure people can follow the "hands, face, space" instructions (see also Risk 7,8 and 9)</i></p>	All persons working or visiting the parliamentary estate	<p>One of the main ways to assist social distancing is to reduce the number of people who are physically present on the Estate (See risks 1,5&6). Anyone who can work from home continues to do so. Restrictions on access to the estate remain until Public Health England and/or the Health and Safety Executive advise otherwise. (see risks 5 and 6): all measures are kept under review as the footfall varies across the estate. Further changes will be introduced when required.</p> <p>The priority of the House Service remains the safety of all those on the estate, and ensuring we remain COVID secure. Colleagues on the estate must observe social distancing rules and avoid crowded areas as far as possible. Banners, signs, posters and floor roundels have been distributed to remind people to keep apart (see also risk 5). The majority of the estate accommodates a 2m social distancing requirement. Measures are in place to assist Members in the Chamber, voting lobbies and committee rooms.</p>		Risk

All persons using the estate are responsible for complying with the social distancing arrangements

5.	<p>(cont.) Teams and Offices must ensure local, task specific assessments are completed, and risk controls followed in practice,</p>		<p>(cont.) The Accommodation/Facilities teams have re-organised the working space on the estate so that people can maintain 2m social distance. Local assessments will determine where specific changes need to be made, those who work in each area have been involved in introducing risk controls, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ physical re-arrangement of workspaces to keep people 2m apart and avoiding working face-to-face working, ▫ floor marking and signage reminds people keep their distance, ▫ doors are held open where possible to reduce contact and maintain social distancing (where fire precautions allow). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where it is not possible to keep a 2m physical distance, the following risk controls have been introduced, determined by local assessment; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ reduction of the number of people in the work area (see risk control 1), ▫ introduction of one-way system and screens to create a physical barrier between people and/or rearranging work to allow people to work side by side, ▫ wearing of face coverings. • Local, task specific assessment of risk address the way in which teams and offices are to ensure suitable social distancing during the working day. Risk controls include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ minimal numbers of staff on the estate at any one time – providing a core service using shifts or flexitime, where necessary, ▫ not undertaking any non-essential physical work that requires close contact between people unless there is a local assessment of potential risk and suitable control measures introduced, ▫ restricting rotation between jobs and equipment/establishing bubbles or cohorts. ▫ introducing rotas/shift patterns and stagger breaks so that rest rooms/catering venues do not become over-crowded and ▫ scheduling work to limit the number of people needing to be in an area of the estate to complete a task at a given time. This may involve using alternative or additional accommodation. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Local Managers are responsible for ensuring the risk is minimised at a local level (as per the safety policy supplement PS2 Safety Risk Management)</i> <i>Members are responsible for ensuring that their staff can maintain social distancing in their offices</i></p> <p>On rare occasions where it is not possible to maintain social distancing (for a short period), in line with PHE guidance local risk assessments will introduce controls which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ enable people to work side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face, ▫ keep the activity time involved as short as possible where face-to-face contact is unavoidable. <p>Work must be stopped if the above cannot be accommodated. Teams/Offices can consult with the Parliamentary Safety Team if there is reason to believe that ceasing a specific activity may have a wider safety impact OR the activity is forms part of a statutory requirement)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Managers are responsible for ensuring the risk is minimised at a local level or stopping the work activity if it cannot be accommodated.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping the work area clean The frequency of cleaning in common areas has been increased, with particular attention on touchpads, door handles, lift buttons and surfaces in higher footfall areas. Supplies of cleaning materials are available for people to use during the day – sanitation stations are located at various points on the estate. Teams and Offices need to look at how frequently any other equipment needs to be cleaned and include this in local procedures. • Team Meetings/Briefings/Committees etc. As a risk mitigation, the number and duration of all meetings and briefings in person are limited. To minimise the risk of spreading coronavirus, where it is not possible to hold a meeting virtually, the Chair of the meeting must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ limit the number of attendees, ensuring only essential people attend and ensure that the numbers of people do not exceed the room capacity, ▫ hold the meeting in a suitable location, allowing attendees to observe social distancing and ▫ ensure any meeting room / location is well ventilated, cleaned before and after the meeting and any windows are opened to allow fresh air circulation. If it has been agreed that the meeting/committee can go ahead at 1m+ distancing, face coverings will need to be worn as per the local, task specific assessment of risk. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>The meeting Chair is responsible for ensuring that social distancing rules are complied with during the meeting or stopping proceedings if they are not.</i></p> 	<p>COVID Operations Group Lead: Estates and Facilities Workstreams</p>
6.	<p>Moving around the estate The parliamentary estate is large, and the COVID Operations group has considered the types of “customer journey” which might be taken on the estate.</p>	<p>All persons working or visiting the parliamentary Estate</p>	<p>The “rules” for moving around the estate have been widely published by the Communications team (see also risk control 4 and 6). The following risk controls have been introduced and will be kept under constant review by the Covid Operational Group. Further changes are introduced as required;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-way systems, physical protections, and social distancing reminders have been installed across the estate, • details of open catering venues on the estate, available search points, open buildings etc are published on the intranet, • users of the estate are encouraged to make only essential trips within buildings; staff and contractors must wear face coverings in communal areas and when moving about the estate, • tape and roundels have been put on flooring to help people keep their distance and all lifts have signs stating maximum occupancy. • where relevant, the number of people in high traffic areas including lifts, corridors, entry and exit points has been reduced and clearly advertised. • queue management arrangements are in place in high footfall /congested areas including catering venues, • behavioural campaigns are delivered through communications to encourage all persons to follow the “rules”. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>All persons using the estate are responsible for complying with the arrangements for moving around the estate</i></p>	<p>COVID Operations Group Lead: Estates and Facilities Workstreams</p>
7.	<p>Common Areas including canteens, toilets, showers, and changing facilities have been reviewed to make sure that they can be used safely, social distancing “rules” are clearly displayed, and the areas are cleaned and ventilated</p>	<p>All persons working or visiting the parliamentary Estate</p>	<p>In addition to the risk controls in 4-8, common areas have;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extensive signage and markers to ensure social distancing measures are followed and face coverings worn in communal areas, • increased cleaning regimes and provision of hand sanitiser/ sanitation stations across the estate, • queue management arrangements in catering areas, reception desks and anywhere else people may queue for a service or to get assistance, • protective screens at catering tills and reception areas, with changes to furniture arrangements to ensure people can sit at a distance; catering venues are “card only” • guidance for the use and cleaning of rest areas, toilets, showers, and changing facilities. <p>All these measures are kept under constant review as the footfall varies across the estate and further changes will be introduced when needed. Colleagues speak with their line manager if they have any concerns or questions.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>All persons using the estate are responsible for complying with the arrangements</i></p>	<p>COVID Operations Group Lead: Estates & Facilities Workstreams</p>

8.	Good Hygiene, cleaning and Ventilation <i>Helps with infection control in our buildings</i>	All persons working or visiting the parliamentary Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Health England advises people at work to wash their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds (or using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water is not available) and posters have been put up to increase awareness of good handwashing technique. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> there are sufficient handwashing facilities across the estate that provide running water, soap, hand driers and/or paper towels; soap, hand towels and hand sanitiser stations are replenished daily by Service Delivery, and a contact number provided if more is needed. hand sanitiser has been provided where there is no easy and rapid access to washing facilities, including entry and exit points; cleaning materials are provided for occupants to use on their desks and immediate work areas (supplementary to formal “out of hours” cleaning) PHE and industry guidance on how to handle goods, merchandise and materials is followed. The ventilation systems are maintained and serviced in line with industry best practice and legal requirements. Mechanical ventilation has been switched to fresh air only meaning there is no recirculation of air from the indoor environment All windows should be opened when rooms are occupied. Air circulation is further increased by using a desk fan. The risk of transmission through the use of desk fans is extremely low providing there is good ventilation in the area it is being used, preferably provided by opening the window. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>All persons using the estate are responsible for maintaining good hygiene habits</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>All people must keep windows open if they are not in a space which has mechanical ventilation</i></p>	COVID Operations Group Lead: Estates and Facilities	
9.	Information and guidance <i>It's a major challenge to support and communicate with all colleagues during the coronavirus outbreak, but all users of the estate must know and understand the COVID security arrangements in place.</i>	All persons working from home All persons working or visiting the estate	People will not be able to work safely if they are unaware of the arrangements which must be followed when at work. Central communications are issued by email on a regular basis and are published on the intranet. Line managers are responsible for following the HoP arrangements for ensuring staff without easy access to the intranet have the information they need to keep safe. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make sure that everyone is kept informed of the risks; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> people are provided with information on risk assessment, procedures, guidance and/or ways of working which have been introduced centrally as well as local arrangements, line managers share this information before their staff return to work, in a format they will understand, this information is shared with visitors, customers or contractors, where required Managers should make sure that their staff are aware of the support that is available, such as the Health and Wellbeing Service, HR hotlines, and Employee Assistance Programme. The Parliamentary Safety Team can also be contacted for specific work-related guidance which has been benchmarked with leading sector and industry groups. Trade Unions can also help. 		COVID Operations Group Lead: People workstream
10.	Personal Protective Equipment Face coverings See also risk no.2	Health and wellbeing team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of PPE to protect against COVID is guided by advice from Public Health England. The only work on the estate that requires respiratory protective equipment against the coronavirus is undertaken by the occupational health team, or persons cleaning an area where a known case of COVID has been identified. This is kept under regular review. Staff who normally wear PPE use to protect themselves at work, for example those exposed to dusts, will continue to do so. Staff, contractors and non-direct employees of either House or the Digital service must wear a face covering when moving around the estate or when in a communal area, such as catering venues. Non-pass holder visitors are provided with disposable facemasks to wear during search and screen at entrances to the Estate, and when moving around the estate or in catering facilities. Colleagues are reminded that some people may be exempt from wearing face coverings for health or disability reasons. 		
General <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIRE SAFETY ARRANGEMENTS will be maintained during the outbreak IN AN EMERGENCY – such as an accident, or during a building evacuation. people on the parliamentary estate do not need to maintain social distancing if it would be unsafe.; 2m distancing and the wearing of face coverings must be observed when returning to the building. More information on evacuation during the Covid outbreak is on the intranet. 					

Risk Owner: Clerk of the House & Clerk of the Parliaments

Action Owner: Chair, Covid Operations Group

Risk assessor: Head of Parliamentary Safety

Peer Reviewer: Safety Compliance and Culture Manager