

Dear Business Owner,

You will by now be aware that England has moved into Step 4 of the Government's Roadmap on 19<sup>th</sup> July. This marks the end of national restrictions and the full reopening of our economy. However, the Covid-19 pandemic is not over and infection rates within Essex are continuing to rise, especially amongst younger age groups.

Until now, the rules regarding how we all respond to the threat from Covid-19 have been prescriptive, national laws imposed on businesses and individuals. From the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 this will change to a system where the responsibility for determining what controls to put in place lies with each individual business, allowing you the flexibility to tailor the measures you adopt to the particular circumstances of your operation.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> July the Government published revised guidance to help you with this process

[Working Safely During Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): guidance from Step 4](#)

I would draw your attention specifically to the requirement that all businesses should develop an outbreak management plan and nominate a single point of contact within the business to keep up to date records of cases, follow up actions and co-ordinate with external agencies about outbreaks.

It would be useful if you could provide the Council by way of an email to

[testandtrace@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:testandtrace@colchester.gov.uk) with a direct dial telephone number and email address for your nominated co-ordinator so that we can reach the correct person quickly if necessary in the future.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that transmission of the virus is predominantly through aerosol dispersal within poorly ventilated indoor spaces rather than people touching surfaces previously contaminated by an infected person. As such consideration of ventilation within your premises should be at the forefront of your risk assessment controls. More specific information is contained within the following publications:

[Ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of coronavirus](#)

[HSE - Ventilation and air conditioning during the coronavirus pandemic](#)

With this freedom comes a significant responsibility as it is now solely down to you to choose what measures you put in place to protect your staff and customers whilst continuing to trade successfully. Some businesses may choose to keep many of the measures that were previous mandatory as they consider them useful controls. Others may remove, change or add new controls as they see fit. What is not an option is simply doing nothing. There is plenty of advice available to help you to put safe controls in place.

The key to getting this balance right is the use of a systematic Risk Assessment. The HSE have published revised detailed guidance on the factors that you should consider when undertaking your Risk Assessment. [Making your workplace COVID-secure](#). If you take the time to read and apply this guidance to your business, you can be confident that you are doing all that is necessary to keep your staff and customers safe. It should be noted that if you have five or more employees, it is a legal requirement under Health and Safety legislation to have a written Risk Assessment. If your business has less than five employees I would strongly advise you to continue with a written Risk Assessment during the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.

The relaxation of the current restrictions will inevitably result in an increase in community transmission of Covid-19 and figures from UK Public Health Security show that infection rates in

this area are increasing rapidly, with the more infectious Delta variant being prevalent. It is therefore highly likely that you will experience both staff and customers who contract Covid-19 in the coming months.

It is important that you develop robust procedures if you suspect a positive case has entered your workplace to identify and remove any close contacts quickly to prevent onward transmission within your workforce. Staff absences due to self-isolation pose a significant ongoing risk to your company's effectiveness and productivity so it is in your financial interest to do all you can to keep Covid-19 out of your workplace. If multiple cases are linked to your business, someone from the Licensing, Food and Safety Team or from the Essex and Southend Contact Tracing Service (ESCTS) will be in touch to undertake a workplace assessment to determine whether an outbreak management response is required.

Whilst most staff who develop symptoms of coronavirus will feel unwell and choose to self-isolate independently, identification and exclusion of asymptomatic cases can be more challenging. We would recommend that businesses advise all their staff to undertake twice weekly Lateral Flow Tests to identify individuals who are carriers of the virus, but not unwell.

All individuals can now request free packs of LFTs for personal use online at the following website: [order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests](https://www.order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests.gov.uk) alternatively LFTs can be collected from many pharmacies and some libraries in the District. To find your most convenient collection site please visit [maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/](https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/) and enter your postcode.

It is important that anyone taking an LFT reports the result to [gov.uk/report-covid19-result](https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result)

The legal requirements regarding self-isolation remain in force after 19<sup>th</sup> July. If you suspect that any of your staff have been in close contact with a positive case, either at work or socially, it is important that they stay at home. The current advice is for close contacts to arrange a PCR test if they develop a new continuous cough, a high temperature, or a loss of, or change in their normal sense of smell or taste. Contacts without these symptoms can also arrange a PCR test. Information on PCR testing is available at [NHS Test and Trace in the workplace](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus/pcr-testing-workplace)

Although the legal requirement for staff, visitors and customers to check-in at your establishment using the NHS Track & Trace App (or equivalent written records) has been removed, you are strongly advised to continue using existing systems on a voluntary basis as it will provide you with the information necessary to assist in any subsequent outbreak investigation.

Your industry trade body has useful information on their website [UKHospitality.org](https://www.ukhospitality.org) You are advised to check the FAQ section periodically as they update their advice regularly.

If you have any questions, we are here to help and support you. Please contact Licensing, Food and Safety at [Licensing.Team@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:Licensing.Team@colchester.gov.uk)

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your business all the best as the economy tries to regain strength after what has been a very difficult period. Thank you for all of your efforts to keep staff and customers safe thus far, and please remember, the legal restrictions may be ending but the pandemic certainly is not, so please take care.

Yours sincerely



Jon Ruder  
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