



COVID-19 SECTOR ADVICE CARD

Designed for managers and employees to guide action to prevent the spread of COVID-19; to support workplace communications and training; and take action in the event of an outbreak

Last updated: 09 September 2020

SECTOR

The business sector covered in this card is: Food Manufacturing and Processing.

THE KEY GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR THIS SECTOR IS [FOOD STANDARDS SCOTLAND'S COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS AND THEIR EMPLOYEES](#).

This guidance should be followed **at all times** to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19 in food manufacturing and processing environments. These businesses should also refer to

[Scottish Government manufacturing sector guidance](#). It should be used to support, not replace, discussion with your local authority or NHS board Health Protection Team.

Additional information (Click on the link below to go to the guidance)

- [Scottish Government route map- information about easing the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions](#).
- [Public Health Scotland COVID-19 guidance for non-healthcare settings](#).
- [Food Standards Scotland risk assessment tool for food business operations](#), and [Food Standards Scotland checklist on re-starting food business operations during COVID-19](#).
- [Coronavirus support for businesses in Scotland: Find Business Support](#)
- The fair work [statement](#) and compliance agreement
- For workplaces without union representation, union health and safety representatives will be available upon request to support the development of workplace risk assessments. For businesses/organisations wishing to use this service, please email safety@stuc.org.uk
- [Scottish COVID-19 Workbook](#)

Prevent the spread of COVID-19 - Food Manufacturing and Processing

General guidance to prevent spread of COVID-19:

- Carry out a **risk assessment** to review existing Food Safety Management System (**FSMS**) and Health and Safety (**H&S**) procedures against Government advice on COVID-19 to identify whether there is a need to implement any additional hygiene, infection prevention and control, and physical distancing measures. [Food Standards Scotland Risk Assessment Tool](#) is a useful resource to document measures undertaken.
- Ensure procedures for recording **evidence** to demonstrate that measures for preventing the spread of COVID-19 are being implemented and monitored in addition to existing Food Safety Management, Health and Safety, and Infection Prevention and Control Procedures.
- Ensure **effective hand hygiene** measures are implemented by staff through the provision of hot water, suitable soap, paper towels and hand sanitiser at every entrance to food production and communal areas and at appropriate points within these areas.
- Review **cleaning and disinfection procedures** to ensure they are sufficient for controlling the potential spread of COVID-19. Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection at all workstations, public/communal areas, common touch points and surfaces at an appropriate frequency.
- Implement measures for maintaining **2 metre physical distancing** across all areas of the business, including on-site, food production lines and communal areas. In areas where this cannot be achieved, alternative effective solutions must be implemented to achieve physical separation e.g. reducing line speed, using 'fixed teams' or 'partnering' systems to enable the same groups of employees to work together on the same production lines, introducing shift patterns, constructing screens between work stations.
- Ensure appropriate use of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** and **face coverings**. Wearing of face coverings/visors (following risk assessment) should be considered where physical distancing is difficult and there is no risk to food safety. Appropriate training on correct use is essential.
- Develop a rota system for staggering breaks to control the number of people using communal spaces and corridors at any one time. Ensure communal areas such as staff rooms, changing areas, toilets and smoking areas have adequate space to enable physical distancing.
- Implement appropriate measures to **minimise external visitors** to the premises, and to ensure any essential visitors are screened to minimise any risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Ensure managers **support employees and do no incentivise staff** to work when they are feeling unwell. Encourage all staff who are able to **work from home** in doing so and provide them with the necessary support. Review **work from home** policies and provide necessary support to those who can. Identify and support those who **should not attend** the workplace (e.g. as shielding, other health issues or those who have been advised to stay at home). Determine those who may need to be offered different roles to ensure they are not placed at increased risk.
- Implement procedures to **isolate and remove symptomatic individuals** from the workplace, ensuring employers and managers understand their obligations with respect to [Scotland's Test and Protect Strategy](#).

Workplace Communications & Training - Food Manufacturing and Processing

All managers and staff should be aware that the following should be addressed to produce a COVID-safe working environment.

- Consult with **staff**, including trades unions where relevant, to ensure **policies and procedures** include COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigations.
- **Put in place training programmes which will ensure that all employees understand the measures needed to control the spread of COVID-19.** Training should cover effective hand washing technique and respiratory hygiene, physical distancing and proper wearing of PPE/face coverings.
- **Ensure staff training is carried out regularly to ensure there is an up to date awareness of the measures needed to control the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, and to update on any procedural/regulatory changes.** Managers should also implement procedures for monitoring adherence and refreshing training where needed. Ensure COVID-19 policies and procedures enable managers to engage appropriately with ethnic minority employees on their health status, circumstances and support needs.
- Display posters to remind **staff not to congregate** in communal areas such as canteens, arrival and entry areas, staff rooms, wash areas/hygiene stations and corridors.
- Implement appropriate measures to **communicate site policies on physical distancing and screening** to essential visitors (e.g. delivery drivers, maintenance crews, cleaning personnel etc.), to ensure they do not present a risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Ensure all **staff understand government guidance and are aware of their responsibility** to control the spread of COVID-19 in their workplace, and are aware of their responsibility to **stay at home** and follow government advice one self-isolation if they are unwell or any of their household are symptomatic.
- Ensure managers **monitor the health of their staff** in relation to COVID-19 and are maintaining records of shift workers and customers to support contact tracing.
- Ensure **managers and staff understand their obligations** with respect to [Scotland's Test and Protect Strategy](#) and that staff are clear on how to access testing. Measures to include ensuring all staff comply with the requirements of Test and Protect and are encouraged to report to their managers when they are experiencing symptoms.
- Ensure **all staff are clear** that if they become unwell whilst at work they should return home and seek testing.
- Ensure that **staff are clear** on what is expected of them should a work colleague become unwell on site.

Action in the Event of an Outbreak – Food Manufacturing and Processing

Immediate action

If there is **any** suspicion that there may be a cluster of cases in your workplace or setting, the most important thing you can do is to contact your local NHS Board Health Protection Team (HPT) early.

Do not spend time trying to work out what you should do yourself. Your HPT will be happy to advise you on what to do.

It is very important that the expert HPT be advised as early as possible of a possible problem so they can assess the situation and offer you advice.

When should I suspect an outbreak?

An outbreak should be SUSPECTED if there are:

- Two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the setting within 14 days
or
- Increase in background rate of absence due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

A suspected outbreak should be reported to the local HPT who will undertake a public health risk assessment to determine whether there is an outbreak.

Note that settings with increased rates of respiratory illness should also be alert to the possibility that this could be due to COVID-19 and contact their local HPT for further advice.

How do I contact the local HPT if I suspect an outbreak?

- **Immediately** inform your local NHS board HPT, using the local contact details found [here \(click on link for relevant no.\)](#): _____
- Ensure the workplace has a nominated point of contact to liaise with the Health Protection Team

What else should I do if I suspect an outbreak?

- Continue to follow the measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Implement your COVID Business Continuity Plan (if available).
- Your local Health Protection Team will conduct a rapid investigation and undertake a risk assessment. You will need to work with them to do this. The HPT will advise on the most appropriate actions to take.
- Cooperate with your local Health Protection Team who will undertake a risk assessment and conduct a rapid investigation. They will advise on the most appropriate action to take.
- Depending on the risk assessment outcome, the Health Protection Team may establish an Incident Management Team (IMT) to help manage the situation.
- The IMT will lead the Public Health response and investigations, and will work with you to put appropriate interventions in place and advise/support communication processes.

What interventions might be put in place to control the outbreak?

Your Health Protection Team and Incident Management Team will work with you to identify the appropriate measures. The first step is to review implementation of core standard preventive measures and to ensure that they are in place and effective.