

Dear colleagues,

## PUBLICATION OF COVID-19 OCCUPATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

1. This letter publicises a single national guidance document on occupational risk assessments for the new risks posed to health and social care staff by COVID-19. This guidance also applies to all healthcare students on placement. The tool will support staff and line managers to understand and carry out effective risk assessments, and to have supportive conversations with staff to agree the best course of action. A link to the guidance can be found here:  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/>
2. This replaces the 'Guidance for health and social care and emergency services workers with underlying health conditions', and the 'Interim Guidance for health and social care employers on staff from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff'. We now know that underlying health conditions and ethnicity, when viewed in isolation, do not accurately predict an individual's vulnerability. Therefore, we recommend that an individual assessment should be carried out by line managers that takes multiple personal characteristics into account.
3. Shielding restrictions will be lifted on 31 July. It is recognised that both staff who had been asked to shield, their employers and line managers need information on how any return to duty can be implemented safely, ensuring that risks to these staff are adequately assessed and managed.
4. The tool is aimed with the individual in mind, to help them to understand their own individual risk factors. The guidance also highlights the responsibilities of the employer to minimise the risks in the workplace, making adjustments where

**DL (2020) 24**

### Addresses

#### For Action

Chairs, NHS Boards and National Health Boards  
Chief Executives, NHS Boards and National Health Boards  
Directors of Human Resources, NHS Boards and National Health Boards  
Medical Directors  
Employee Directors

#### For Information

Council of Deans for Health Scotland  
Medical and Dental Schools  
Directors of Dentistry NHS Boards  
Nursing Directors  
Public Health Directors

### Enquiries to:

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possible, and referring to Occupational Health (OH) as appropriate.

5. The methodology is based on the COVID-19 Age Tool, which has been developed by the Association of Local Authority Medical Advisors:  
<https://alama.org.uk/covid-19-medical-risk-assessment/>
6. It is important that this tool is disseminated to all staff groups, to make sure the right conversations take place for staff regardless of job family or seniority, so that staff are reassured about our approach to risk assessment and what it means for them.
7. For many staff there will be no change. However, for some this might mean a move from shielding to a return to work. Steps taken to ensure that workplaces are COVID-19 secure are key to ensuring safety and reassuring staff and their managers that it is safe to return to work.
8. Pregnant health and social care workers should have already participated in a risk assessment. The position in relation to pregnant workers has not changed with this guidance. Therefore the outcome of previous risk assessment will remain valid, with information on pregnancy outlined in the guidance and tool.
9. Wellbeing support services should also be sought for staff through the National Wellbeing Hub (<https://www.promis.scot>) which signposts staff, unpaid carers, volunteers and their families to relevant services and provides a range of self-care and wellbeing resources designed to support the workforce as they respond to the impact of COVID-19. All Health and social care workers can access mental health support through the national wellbeing helpline, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number to call is 0800 111 4191.
10. The Scottish Government continues to support employers to remove and reduce the barriers faced by disabled staff. This applies in light of Covid-19 and workplace risk assessment. Reasonable adjustments that disabled staff need should always be considered as part of our commitment to removing barriers.
11. Employers must continue to comply with their legal duties to promote a safe working environment (Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)), to prevent discrimination (The Equality Act (2010)), and to minimise exposure to unnecessary risk (COSHH; RIDDOR).
12. This guidance is intended to complement existing occupational risk assessment processes by providing a means of assessing the specific risk of COVID-19 in an occupational context. It does not replace, or exempt employers from their existing legal obligations, but seeks to support employers in meeting those obligations given the new risks presented by COVID-19.

13. The tool will be kept under review and updated to account for newly identified risks. If there are local risk assessment processes already in place, these can still be used as long as they are in line with the latest guidance.
14. The guidance was developed with significant input from Occupational Physicians and has been endorsed by the Clinical Cell (that provides advice to the Chief Medical Officer). There has been consultation with employers, staffside, representatives of the Senior Occupational Physicians Group and a range of other stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



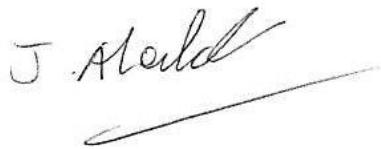
**Dr. Gregor Smith**  
Chief Medical Officer



**Sean Neill**  
Director of Health Workforce



**Professor Fiona McQueen**  
Chief Nursing Officer



**Professor Jason Leitch CBE**  
National Clinical Director