

Other people's homes

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The full chapter from Working Safely on Other People's Homes can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>

Many trades and work activities may start to operate again in people's homes when they are allowed to do so, according to the regulations and Government guidance.

Some of these will be retail activities that sell physical things (e.g. double glazing, fitting for blinds). Others might be to deliver services, such as plumbers, cleaners, carers, hairdressers and electricians. Some types will go only as far as the front door - deliveries, window cleaners etc.

These are all businesses which sell something - whether goods or services - and therefore the majority of this Retail Guide will be relevant.

This is not intended for work in homes that involves health or personal care, nor for nannies who live with a household.

Employment types and 'lone workers'

A large proportion of trades which take place in other people's homes will be by people working alone in the home, i.e. 'lone workers.' Some of these workers will be employees and many will be self-employed.

If you are an employer of a 'lone worker', whether they are your employee or perhaps a contractor, freelancer or self-employed person who is working for you, then you will have already considered the risks in your regular risk assessment. See: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

When working in other people's homes, for COVID-19 reasons, you will have a few additional things to think about and put into place before work starts. You are also responsible for protecting the health, safety and welfare of 'other people who might be affected by your business' so this includes the occupants of the

home that your worker will be working in.

The workers themselves are also responsible for their own health and safety and those who may be harmed by their actions. General guidance for lone workers is here:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/lone-working/worker/index.htm>

A lone worker risk assessment for COVID-19 - working in other people's homes

This can form part of your existing risk assessment for the entire workforce and you can follow the principles and approach described in the main part of this Retail Guide. Having done this and if the work still needs to take place in the home, you need to think about the COVID-19 hazard and how the workers might be exposed to it whilst working there and how you can control the risk.

You need to think about the risks that lone workers will face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them - recognising that you cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.

The occupants

Firstly, you will need to consider the health of the person they are visiting. No work should be carried out in a household which is isolating because one or more family members has symptoms or where an individual has been advised to shield. The only exception to this is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household. This is not explicitly defined in Working Safely but is likely to mean things like a potentially dangerous electrical problem or a structural emergency.

Calling the occupant ahead of the visit will give you the information you need to properly risk assess the work

In a household with someone who is clinically vulnerable but not shielding (e.g. the home of someone over 70), checking ahead will help assess and manage the risk. It is very likely that steps listed earlier, such as distancing, avoiding touching objects and surfaces plus regular handwashing and avoiding face-to-face contact will be needed.

The worker

You will need to consider the health of the worker too - those at risk of severe illness (i.e. those with some pre-existing conditions and 'clinically extremely vulnerable') should not work in other people's homes but should stay in their own homes and work there, if possible. Workers who are 'clinically vulnerable' (e.g. over 70) could be offered the safest roles, i.e. those with more space or simpler tasks to perform and with protection measures in place.

There is additional guidance for workers who are clinically extremely vulnerable, here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#work-and-employment>

Manage the risk

Your risk assessment will inform any required changes to the work activity. This is likely to include things like:

- Maintain social distancing wherever possible. A 2-metre distance is still the goal. But where this is not viable, then 1-metre plus risk mitigation measures, is acceptable.
- Use handwashing facilities in the home if they can be provided safely. Otherwise, carry hand sanitiser. Wash or sanitise hands on arrival/departure and frequently throughout the work activity.
- Reducing the spread of germs when coughing or sneezing by covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands). Bin or flush the tissue and wash hands.
- Clean where you've been, using an appropriate cleaning product (more on this in the cleaning section of the Retail Guide)
- Maintain good ventilation in the work environment by keeping windows and doors open, if possible
- Safely dispose of cleaning materials that you generate - bag it and remove from site, disposing of it appropriately
- Face coverings - continue to use all the PPE that you already need for the job (e.g. helmets, high vis clothing etc). See Retail Guide for further information

Don't forget - if your workers are required to work face-to-face for a sustained period, then risk assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. People are not obliged to work in an unsafe environment.

Other steps to consider

- Involve the workers themselves in this new aspect of risk assessment for lone workers - they are probably best placed to understand the hazard of COVID-19 in a domestic setting and how to manage it
- Call ahead to find out more about the occupants and the job ahead, so you can get the information you need to risk assess the activity and put measures into place. You can also use this call to remind the occupant of social distancing and the hygiene measures they need to put into place before your worker arrives, such as opening doors to minimise the need to touch anything. The call can also identify busy areas in the home and you can plan to avoid or minimise using these

Risk mitigation measures:

- Add extra handwashing and surface cleaning
- Complete the task as quickly (and safely) as you can
- Use screens to separate people
- Match workers to those closest to them to minimise distances travelled
- If two workers are needed in the same person's home at the same time, used fixed pairings
- Use back-to-back or side-to-side working when possible
- Assign equipment to a particular worker and not shared, if possible
- Workers should take their own food and drink and have breaks outside, if possible
- Avoid sharing pens, paper or similar with the occupant
- Collect payment remotely

Communication and preparing for unforeseen events

Your usual risk assessment for lone workers will already have made arrangements for keeping in touch with them for welfare, mental and physical health and personal security purposes. This should now include how they can raise concerns with someone about COVID-19 if something unexpected should happen which worries them and how to handle the event. For example, when arriving on site, one of the occupants is coughing repeatedly - what to say and how to leave the site, without losing the customer for another time.

Delivering to other people's homes

This means as far as the doorstep, not going inside. The objective here is to maintain social distancing and minimising contact during deliveries.

Your risk assessment will identify appropriate steps according to what's being delivered. The key ones are:

- Minimise contact
- Single workers to deliver, or stick to the same pairings if two are needed
- No ringing of the doorbell or physical signing of paperwork or electronic 'touch' devices - use electronic payments and electronically signed documents

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