



**Standard Infection Control
Compliance Code**

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Contents

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Responsibilities	3
2.2 Headteachers	3/4
2.2 Employees	4
3.0 Personal Health Protection Behaviours	4
3.1 Sickness absence and behaviour policies	5
3.2 Stay at home	5/6
3.3 Changes to Test Requirements	6
3.4 Close contacts of a Positive Case	6
3.5 Hand and Respiratory Hygiene	6
3.6 Cleaning the space and things around you	7
3.7 Ventilation	7
4.0 Other Measures	7
4.1 Vaccination	7
4.2 Face coverings	7
4.3 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	7
5.1 Individual Risk Assessments	8
5.1 Pregnancy	8
5.2 Adjustments that may be considered appropriate (excluding pregnancy)	9
5.3 Reasonable Adjustments	10
5.4 Other	10

1. Introduction

We are learning to live safely with COVID-19 and there remains a Public Health expectation for organisations to reduce the spread of respiratory infections in the workplace. This Compliance Code applies to the behaviours required of us all in order to manage all respiratory infections.

COVID-19, along with many other respiratory infections such as influenza (flu), can spread easily and cause serious illness in some people. You may be infected with a respiratory virus such as COVID-19 and not have any symptoms but still pass infection onto others.

The risk of catching or passing on COVID-19 is greatest when someone who is infected is physically close to or sharing an enclosed and/or poorly ventilated space with other people. When someone with a respiratory viral infection such as COVID-19 breathes, speaks, coughs or sneezes, they release small particles that contain the virus which causes the infection. These particles can be breathed in or can come into contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth. The particles can also land on surfaces and be passed from person to person via touch.

The public health protection and safe behaviours outlined in this document should be adopted by everyone to reduce the risk of infection. These include:

- staying at home if you are unwell with symptoms of a respiratory illness, including COVID-19 or you have tested positive for COVID-19
- letting fresh air in if meeting indoors
- cleaning the space and things around you regularly
- washing or sanitising hands regularly and following advice to “Catch it, Bin it, Kill it”
- getting vaccinated if you are eligible

These measures are particularly important to protect those who are at a higher risk if they catch COVID-19. You won't always know you are interacting with someone at high risk, so it is important that we all follow these behaviours consistently. They will also help to:

- protect yourself and others around you
- maintain your service provision

Headteachers, managers and employees can be confident that they are managing the risk proportionately if the requirements that are outlined in this guidance are followed.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Headteachers

- ensure employees, students, and parents are aware of the safe working arrangements in place and their responsibilities to protect theirs and others respiratory wellbeing
- ensure employees, students and pupils follow the requirements regarding staying away from the setting when appropriate to do so, as outlined in this guidance
- Identify employees who are at higher risk if they are infected and undertake an individual risk assessment, as appropriate. Individuals who are at higher risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 may be eligible for treatments if they become unwell.

- ensure employees, students and pupils are provided with hand sanitiser where appropriate
- ensure employees are provided with PPE and cleaning materials where this is required for their role
- investigate reported incidents of occupational exposure to COVID-19

2.2 Employees

- follow the safe working arrangements that have been put in place to protect the respiratory wellbeing of yourself, your colleagues and students.
- do not come to work if you are unwell with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including COVID-19 (described in this guidance) and you have a high temperature (or you have a positive test for COVID-19)
- follow the COVID-19 testing section in this guidance
- go home if you become unwell with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including a high temperature while you are at work and notify your manager
- request an individual assessment from your manager if you are at higher risk of serious illness, as outlined in this guidance
- support keeping equipment and premises clean as outlined below
- complete an incident report form if you contract COVID-19 as a result of exposure to a known positive case as part of your role.

3. Personal Health Protection Behaviours

WNAT is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of everyone at work; ensuring that good public health protection behaviours are facilitated and supported contributes to that aim. It is important for our health and wellbeing that we learn from world events such as the Coronavirus pandemic and continue to adopt and practice good infection control behavior.

Respiratory viral infections are a significant cause of ill health. In most cases they result in relatively mild symptoms and are indistinguishable from each other. However, in more vulnerable individuals the outcomes can be more serious requiring medical intervention and they may have more lasting effects. Respiratory viruses have common transmission routes (airborne, droplet and contact, both person to person and surface) although the relative importance of each will vary from virus to virus. These common routes mean that the action we need to take to minimize transmission is the same: fresh air, personal hygiene and cleaning.



We all have a responsibility to prevent the transmission of respiratory viruses to protect people at higher risk and to help ensure we can continue to deliver our services.

3.1 Sickness absence and behaviour policies

All settings should have in place a sickness absence policy that outlines how they will manage sickness absence. This should set the expected response of employees, students, and parents to illness, including respiratory illness. See WNAT Sickness Absence Policy

Settings should also consider how they will deal with behaviour by students that does not align with their policy. This should be included in the setting's behaviour policy. If a parent or carer insists on a child with symptoms attending your setting, where they have a confirmed or suspected case of an infectious illness, you can take the decision to refuse the child if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other children and staff from possible infection.

Settings should communicate their expectations to students and parents in the usual way.

3.2 Stay at home

The simplest way to prevent transmission of a respiratory illness is to limit contact with other people. When you have symptoms of a respiratory illness you are highly likely to be infectious. When you are coughing and sneezing you produce droplets and aerosols that land on surfaces, are breathed in by others or you pass on through touching surfaces and people.

We all need to take time to rest and recover when we are ill. If you are unwell with symptoms of a respiratory infection (see below), including a high temperature, you should stay at home and avoid contact with other people until you feel well enough to resume normal activities and no longer have a high temperature. You should report your absence in the usual way.

If you are well enough to work, you should work from home until your active symptoms subside, if you are able to do so. If you are not able to work from home because of the role that you carry out but are well enough to work, managers need to decide if it is safe for you to return.

Symptoms of COVID-19, flu and common respiratory infections include:

- continuous cough
- high temperature, fever or chills
- loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell
- shortness of breath
- unexplained tiredness, lack of energy
- muscle aches or pains that are not due to exercise
- not wanting to eat or not feeling hungry
- headache that is unusual or longer lasting than usual
- sore throat, stuffy or runny nose
- diarrhoea, feeling sick or being sick

The stay at home approach for students and pupils

Respiratory infections are common in children and young people, particularly during the winter months. Attending education is hugely important for children and young people's health and their future.

As with employees, children and young people should remain away from their educational setting while they are unwell with symptoms of a respiratory infection and they have a high temperature. They can go back to the setting and resume normal activities when they no longer have a high temperature and feel well enough to attend. If their symptoms are mild, such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, but they are otherwise well and do not have a temperature, they can continue to attend.

3.3 Changes to test requirements

Testing is no longer a requirement for most people and is no longer free. LFD testing is only required in specified circumstances, for example, if you have a health condition which means you're eligible for COVID-19 Treatment.

If you do take a test and have a positive result you should stay away from work for a minimum of 5 days after the day you took the test. After 5 days you can return to work if you feel well and do not have a high temperature.

The approach for children and young people

It is recommended that children and young people are not tested, unless required by a health professional. Nevertheless, if you are informed they have undertaken a test and received a positive result, they should remain away from setting for at least 3 days. After this time, if they are well enough to do so and do not have a temperature, they can return.

3.4 Close contacts of a positive case

Please follow the current government guidance.

3.5 Hand and respiratory hygiene

Keeping hands clean through regular and thorough washing or sanitising should be part of everyone's normal practice.

Employees and students should:

- thoroughly wash hands with soap and water regularly following the NHS guidance below. In particular you should clean your hands after using the toilet, before eating and drinking, after playtime or breaktime and after coughing or sneezing.
- it is expected that readily accessible hand washing facilities will be available in setting whenever it is needed, but if this is not the case alcohol-based hand sanitiser can be used. Headteachers should consider when it would be appropriate to provide hand sanitiser to encourage hand hygiene, e.g. on trips to areas where washing facilities are not available.
- Catch it, Kill it, Bin it - covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing and put used tissues in the bin straight away (or put them in your pocket until you can dispose of them). Always perform hand hygiene afterwards.

3.6 Cleaning the space and things around you

Settings will have a cleaning schedule in place. We all need to take responsibility for supporting regular premises cleaning by disinfecting shared workspaces and equipment (such as those in staff rooms or shared vehicles and specific work-related equipment) even if cleaning is not a formal part of your role.

It is good practice for shared equipment to be cleaned after each use, particularly items shared by many different users. Your setting will inform you of the areas where this has been identified as being required and should provide you with the appropriate equipment and instruction to do so.

3.7 Ventilation

Adequate ventilation reduces the number of small particles of viruses (aerosols) in the air, therefore helping to reduce the risk of aerosol transmission. Aerosols can remain in the air after a person with a respiratory virus has been in the same area for some time. Airborne transmission is considered to be a significant transmission route for COVID-19 and other respiratory infections such as influenza. Some research shows that being in a room with fresh air can in some cases reduce the risk of airborne transmission of COVID-19 by over 70%. Therefore, everyone should make sure indoor spaces have a direct supply of fresh air.

Employees may be required to support adequate ventilation controls by opening windows, ensuring ventilation remains working, such as keeping windows and trickle vents open or switching on air conditioning manually. This includes maintaining ventilation in shared vehicles, either by air conditioning or opening windows.

4. Other Measures

4.1 Vaccination

People at greatest risk of serious illness from COVID-19, including care home residents, over 65s and frontline health and social care workers, are eligible for an autumn vaccine booster.

COVID-19 can be more serious for pregnant women. The antibodies your body produces in response to the vaccine can also give your baby protection against COVID-19. Evidence shows that most pregnant women with COVID-19 who need hospital treatment or intensive care in the UK have not been vaccinated.

4.2 Face coverings

The wearing of face coverings is not a mandatory requirement due to the impact to education. However, face coverings can be worn as a personal choice but individuals should be informed of the potential restrictions.

4.3 Personal protective equipment (PPE)

The majority of employees do not need additional PPE to protect against respiratory viruses.

5. Individual Risk Assessments

Most people previously considered vulnerable are now considered to be at no substantially greater risk than the general population and they are advised to follow the same infection control behaviours as everyone else. There is a smaller number of people that do remain at higher risk of serious illness and therefore some colleagues will continue to need individual risk assessments to be in place due to personal factors that may increase their risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19 or other respiratory viruses.

The standard risk assessment template can be used to record this.

Individual risk assessments should be completed for anyone who:

- may be eligible for COVID-19 treatments if they become unwell.
- is pregnant
- has been advised by their medical practitioner to take particular precautions to protect against respiratory infections

Although risks will also be reduced by any personal immunity acquired through previous infection and/or vaccination an individual risk assessment is still required in these circumstances.

Headteachers may not know if an employee falls into an at-risk group. Therefore, managers should take a proactive approach and ask staff to inform them if they consider themselves to be at higher risk or if they have any concerns they might be.

Managers must ensure that individual risk assessments are reviewed at appropriate intervals, for example, where there is an increase (or decrease) in viral prevalence, because of a change in work activity or a change in health condition. Conversations should not be a single, point in time discussion, but ongoing.

All conversations must be undertaken in a sensitive and considerate way. For some employees the conversation may be very difficult and they may not have widely discussed the issues raised previously, if at all. Managers must ensure there is enough time to have the conversation at a pace and in a way that works for the employee.

Managers also need to make sure that colleagues' mental stress is not increasing over time and changes may be needed because of changes to their physical health. While the risk assessment will focus on the factors affecting physical safety, managers should also consider psychological safety. In this case a stress risk assessment may be the most appropriate tool to use.

Where students are identified as being at higher risk these principles for individual risk assessment can also be applied.

5.1 Pregnancy

Separate guidance on general considerations for pregnant employees is provided in the WNAT New and expectant mothers compliance code

5.2 Adjustments that may be considered appropriate (excluding pregnancy)

Anyone requiring an individual assessment will have received specific guidance from their medical practitioner as to the appropriate control measures. These should be included in the risk assessment.

In addition, as a result of the conversation with the employee, a number of measures may be considered appropriate to manage the risks. For employees who are eligible for COVID-19 treatment, it may not be appropriate for them to work in a frontline role. This may be a permanent or temporary requirement, for example, depending on treatment cycles or viral prevalence. Examples include:

- ensuring employees do not work with households or individuals known to have active symptoms of viral infections
- alteration of duties to enable all or the majority of the role to be undertaken at home
- alteration of duties or work location to enable less close contact with others, such as working in an area that is separate from other people or working with a limited number of people
- identify where pupils cannot follow infection control measures, for example, those who are less able to follow hand and respiratory hygiene measures fully and altering duties so the employee does not work with them
- wearing a face covering and asking others to do the same where close contact is necessary, if appropriate in their role

Where employees are not in the at-risk groups identified but are concerned about being at work, the manager should have a comprehensive discussion with them about:

- the general arrangements that have been put in place to manage the risk
- how arrangements will be monitored to ensure that they are being implemented
- the concerns that the employee has

Managers should be sensitive to the fact that some employees and students will have previously required an individual risk assessment and may be anxious that this is no longer the case.

5.3 Reasonable adjustments

There may be some colleagues who haven't previously needed any specific adjustments but the current situation means they now do. For example, some conditions may result in a weakened immune system, leaving the person more vulnerable to getting an infection. Some people may have difficulties with using personal protective equipment or interacting with people who do, where it is required, and those with a mental health condition may feel increased levels of anxiety and stress. This should be assessed and explored as part of the individual risk assessment process where this applies or separately where it does not.

5.4 Other

If employees live in a household with someone who is at higher risk and are concerned that work will increase the risk to themselves and thereby to their household, managers should discuss these concerns. Strict adherence to the guidance will help to minimise the risk but colleagues may need support to feel less anxious.

If a colleague has any other concerns that are not included in the above managers should discuss these and consider if any adjustments or supportive measures would be appropriate.