**COVID-19
Notice to Self Employed Workers**

**Managing risks related to COVID-19**

This note is to provide advice to our self-employed site workers to help ensure that we can keep our people safe and our sites open for as long as possible.

Clearly these are difficult times and there may come a day when we are asked to go into temporary shut-down, but this would put significant strain on our business and impact all workers. In order to avoid disruption to sites, we are reminding all workers to adhere to the advice below. If someone on site is diagnosed with the virus, not only do you run the risk of infecting co-workers, but it could lead to a site being shut down on a temporary basis - we hope to avoid this scenario if at all possible.

We appreciate that the decision to self-isolate is a particularly difficult decision for those working on self-employed contracts but, where the temptation has traditionally been to “soldier on” through illness, in these unprecedented times, we must ask you to adhere strictly to official advice and ensure that you self-isolate and do not report to site:

1. For Seven Days (from the time your symptoms started) if you have any symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild
2. For Fourteen Days if you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus. In this case then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill.

This is essential to helping us keep sites open and ensuring we keep as many people working and earning for as long as possible.

**Advice on Symptoms**

The symptoms to be alert to are:

* cough
* difficulty in breathing
* fever

If you exhibit any of these symptoms, no matter how mild, please follow the advice above.

**Avoiding Infection**

Public Health England (PHE) recommends that the following general cold and flu precautions are taken to help prevent people from catching and spreading COVID-19:

* cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze. See [Catch it, Bin it, Kill it](https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101/resources/5016)
* put used tissues in the bin straight away
* wash your hands with soap and water often – use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available. See [hand washing guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/866065/Handwashing_techniques.pdf)
* try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell (wherever possible we ask you to avoid physical contact with and maintain 2m working distance from colleagues at all times)
* clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
* do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
* If you are worried about symptoms, please call NHS 111.

**Be vigilant**

If you are concerned about the health of a colleague, we ask you not to confront them directly, but to adhere strictly to social distancing recommendations and report to a supervisor who will take proportionate action. Workers exhibiting any of these symptoms will be sent home.

**What is Self-Isolation?**

The Government has produced advice on self-isolation. It is very important that individuals with symptoms that may be due to coronavirus and their household members stay at home. Staying at home will help control the spread of the virus to friends, the wider community, and particularly the most vulnerable.

Advice on self-isolation is available [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection).

**Claiming Universal Credit if you are asked to self-isolate**

Loss of earnings will clearly be a concern if you are unable to report for work, but the Department for Work and Pensions is making support available to all who are affected by coronavirus. In the Budget it was announced that in light of the current pandemic, the self-employed would quicker and easier access to Universal Benefit (from day one) as a direct response to the Coronavirus and any minimum income threshold will be removed. This link below provides access to the basic information and helpline.

**You can find information on how to make a claim here:** <https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

**Testing and Construction Workers**

Essential workers (this list now includes construction workers and anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus that lives with those identified above) who are self-isolating can now be referred for testing. The employer referral portal also allows employers to refer essential workers who are self-isolating either because they or member(s) of their household have coronavirus symptoms, for testing. It is a secure portal for employers to use to upload the full list of names and contact details of self-isolating essential workers. If referred through this portal, essential workers will receive a text message with a unique invitation code to book a test for themselves (if symptomatic) or their symptomatic household member(s) at a regional testing site.

In order to obtain a login, employers of essential workers should email portalservicedesk@dhsc.gov.uk with:

* organisation name
* nature of the organisation’s business
* region
* names (where possible) and email addresses of the 2 users who will load essential worker contact details
* Once employer details have been verified, 2 login credentials will be issued for the employer referral portal.

Individuals can also book directly a regional test site drive-through appointment or home test kit. [More details available here](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/881043/covid-19-testing-self-referral-portal-user-guide.pdf). Note, home test kit availability will initially be limited but more will become available.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.

It is not necessary to close the business or workplace or send any staff home, unless government policy changes. Keep monitoring the [government response page](https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response) for the latest details.

*This is template advice developed by the FIS. We recommend that your review in line with your own policies and adapt where appropriate to suit your culture.*