

HEALTH AND SAFETY COVID 19 RISK ASSESSMENT AND SAFE RETURN TO WORK FOR RAYDEN SOLICITORS

Covid-19 is an illness that is currently a global pandemic that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a virus called Coronavirus. Symptoms can be mild, moderate, severe or fatal in certain instances.

The below is our **Assessment of Risk** for dealing with the current Covid-19 situation in the workplace and to ensure the safety of our staff and visitors. We recognise that as an employer, we have a legal responsibility to protect our staff and others that may potentially visit our offices from risk to their health and safety as a result of mitigating against the risk of COVID 19. We aim to set out below what we believe is all reasonable and practical steps that we can possibly take to minimise against this risk, fully recognising that we cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID 19.

The risk assessment takes into consideration all of the risk mitigations steps we will take in all of our current offices namely:

The Limes
Verulam Heights (VH)
Berkhamsted (Berko)
Beaconsfield (Becs)
Hampstead

This risk assessment is also carried out having due regard to specific landlord guidance/risk assessment for those premises where we operate using shared premises/shared communal spaces, namely VH, Hampstead and Becs. Where appropriate those additional Landlord Risk Assessments will be annexed and form part of our overall risk assessment as we will aim to work collaboratively with each of the Landlords to ensure consistency and co-operation when managing shared common areas.

The below risk assessment has been drafted following official government guidance published on 11th May 2020 and has been subsequently updated, which guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

Subject to the aforementioned government guidance on which this risk assessment is based, we will also follow instructions from authorities in the event of any new local restrictions that we may be subject to from time to time.

Rayden's duly appointed Representative, as appointed by staff is Alaine Sellers.

If you wish to raise any concern in relation to this risk assessment or generally in relation to health and safety and your safe return to work during COVID 19, you can contact Alaine Sellers: AS@raydensolicitors.co.uk in the first instance.

You can also contact HSE either by using their contact form on their website <https://www.hse.gov.uk/> or by phone: 0300 003 1647.

Our Core Objectives

Our main objective is to reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures in the following order:

1. Increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning;
2. Make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option subject to operational and business critical requirements having due regard to the latest government guidance which directs that as from 1 August 2020, this may be working from home, or within the workplace if COVID-19 secure guidelines are followed closely
3. Where home working is not possible either because of operational need or where otherwise approved by a Partner, make every reasonable effort to comply with social distancing (2m apart wherever possible) or 1m with further risk mitigation measures where 2m is not viable (which include but is not limited to further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning, keeping the activity time involved as short as possible, using back to work working (rather than face to face and use fixed team partnering);
4. Where social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, we will consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate. If so, we will liaise with our Representative to take all mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission;
5. Keep face to face activity time as short as possible and to make provision for time for cleaning surfaces between each use;
6. Use back to back, side to side or diagonal positioning of desks where possible instead of face to face;
7. Reduce the number of people each person has contact with by using “fixed teams” or partnering wherever possible;
8. Consideration of those individuals within the firm who are especially vulnerable. From 1 August 2020, clinically extremely vulnerable individuals, who were previously advised to shield at home, can go to the workplace based on operation and business critical needs, as long as it is COVID-secure, but should carry on working from home wherever possible.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed	Controls Required	Additional Controls
<p>Spread of Covid-19 Coronavirus and to ensure that we operate a safe work place for all those who return to work during this pandemic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Staff • Visitors to our premises including but not limited to clients, counsel • Cleaners • Third Party Contractors/Our Outsourced Providers • Vulnerable groups Elderly, Pregnant staff, those with existing underlying health conditions • Anyone else who physically comes in contact with any member of our staff in relation to our business 	<p><u>Hand Washing</u> Hand washing facilities with soap and water/hand sanitiser will be made available in all offices, at point of entry as well as in toilets that are non-communal, in kitchens and meeting rooms.</p> <p>See hand washing guidance. https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/</p> <p>Drying of hands with disposable paper towels.</p>	<p>Display posters reminding employees to wash their hands for 20 seconds and the importance of proper drying with disposable towels. Also reminded to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and to avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands.</p> <p>All staff and visitors to any of the offices will be required to sanitise their hands once they enter the respective office and a designated sanitisation area per office will be set up for ease of use on entry into the office.</p> <p>There will be signs in all offices to remind staff of the importance of frequent hand washing.</p> <p>Visitors will be sent a PDF document prior to visiting an office, which will be by appointment only and which will contain some basic guidance as to our handwashing/sanitisation requirements when visiting any of our offices. This will be sent together with the applicable site guidance. On entry, the visitors will be directed to the hand sanitisation station per office and led to the applicable meeting room.</p> <p>Paper towels will be supplied in all offices to be used in conjunction with no touch pedal bins.</p>

		<p><u>Cleaning</u> Frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly particularly in areas of high use such as door handles, light switches, reception area using appropriate cleaning products and methods.</p>	<p>Prior to initial reopening of any of the offices after lockdown, each office will undergo a thorough clean conducted by our regular cleaning companies.</p> <p>Our cleaners will continue to clean our offices either daily or at least three times per week, paying particular attention to surfaces that are high touch points such as door handles, keyboards, work surfaces, light fittings, keypads where applicable etc.</p> <p>In addition, regular cleaning products will be made available in all offices, together with wipes for desks and keyboards to ensure that staff can clean their desks before and after each day of use, as well as to facilitate cleaning in common areas such as kitchen facilities and or/meeting rooms that they may have used from time to time. Staff are requested to ensure that they keep clear workspaces at the end of each day.</p> <p>To help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) there will be signs/signposting in all offices to reminding everyone of the public health advice in relation to cleaning.</p> <p>There is adequate provision for disposal arrangements on a daily/few times per week basis for each of our offices.</p>
		<p><u>Social Distancing</u> Social Distancing with a focus on reducing the number of persons in any work area where possible, including arrival and departure times</p>	<p>Signage to remind staff and visitors of the importance of social distancing both in the workplace and outside of it.</p>

		<p>to comply with the 2-metre (6.5 foot) gap or 1 m with additional risk mitigation measures as recommended</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-after-4-july.</p> <p>Taking steps to review work schedules/operational need including start & finish times where possible/ working from home etc. to reduce number of staff on site at any one time.</p> <p>Consideration of fixed teams or fixed partnering to mitigate against the risk of exposure to more colleagues than is necessary</p>	<p>Staff will be encouraged to open windows and doors where possible to increase ventilation within each office.</p> <p>Additional risk mitigation measures where 2m distancing cannot be maintained will include but is not limited to further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning, keeping the activity time involved as short as possible, using back to work working (rather than face to face and use fixed team partnering</p> <p>The Partner for each office will work out, based on operation or business need which of their staff will be required to attend any of the offices in person or which members of staff will be able to work from home for any given period of time. Arrival, departure and break times will be staggered wherever possible. Each office will have its own internal return to work plan or schedule.</p> <p>To regulate the number of people per office as well as to mitigate against the risk of cross contamination between various people within the firm, we will operate social distancing using fixed teams or fixed partnering such as Team 1 and Team 2 per office per week. The aim here is to ensure that Team 1 will work in the office during week 1 whilst Team 2 will work from home and then for week 2, Team 2 will attend the office whilst team 1 will work from home. The Partners for each of our offices will manage who will form Team 1 and Team 2 etc. The Partners may also in exceptional circumstances, based on operational need approve a member of the team to attend a specific office who</p>
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		<p>Redesigning office layout per office to ensure social distancing of 2m is maintained wherever possible</p>	<p>would not ordinarily be part of the scheduled team to be in the office. This will have to comply with our design/layout and maximum occupancy guidance as set out below and will need Partner approval.</p> <p>The Partners have carried out a review of all office lay outs and has redesigned desk lay out in all offices such that it will follow the 2m social distancing requirement wherever possible and where this is not possible then they will follow 1m with additional risk mitigation measures already referenced earlier in this risk assessment. For example in offices that usually accommodate 6 desks, only 3 of these desks will be occupied at any one time ensuring that there is a distance of 2m between each desk and also ensure that people are not face to face. In offices where there are usually 4 desks, only 2 of these desks will be occupied at any one point, with staff sitting diagonally opposite each other maintaining 2m distance. Each office has its own lay-out/return to work plan.</p> <p>Desks will be assigned to specific individuals and no sharing of desks will be permitted generally. Hot desking will not be allowed under any circumstances during this period of the management of the Pandemic. There will also be no sharing of pens or writing pads. Staff are encouraged to use their own staplers, hole punch etc. but where this is not possible for e.g. in our bundling room, there will be wipes to ensure that these items can be cleaned before use every time.</p>
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		<p>Assessment of meeting room facilities</p>	<p>Clients will be encouraged to have their meetings remotely using our call or video conferencing options wherever possible.</p> <p>Face to Face appointments for meetings in any of our offices will only be offered where a remote meeting is not possible or it is in the client's best interest to have a face to face meeting in one of our offices.</p> <p>Any client visitors will only attend one of our offices and by appointment only.</p> <p>Fee Earners will encourage clients to attend the meeting on their own, wherever possible, so as to minimise the number of people in the office at any given point and to maintain the 2m social distancing requirement or 1m with additional risk mitigation measures where 2m is not viable.</p> <p>Clients will be sent a PDF document highlighting our hand washing/sanitisation, the collation of personal details using the lawful bases of legitimate interest as part of the NHS Test and Trace Service in England), members of the public wearing face masks when visiting any of our offices unless one of the exemptions as per government guidelines apply, prior to visiting any office.</p> <p>On arrival they would follow the sanitisation process which will be clearly sign posted in all offices and this will be on entry.</p> <p>Regarding proposed meeting room layouts and client staff positioning etc., each office has its own plan/layout.</p>
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		<p><u>Entrances</u> Use of keyless fobs where possible as opposed to keypads.</p>	<p>To mitigate against the need for constant wiping down of keypads, our staff will use keyless fobs wherever possible.</p>
		<p><u>Wearing of Gloves and Face Masks</u> Our Risk Assessment does not identify wearing of gloves or face masks as a requirement of the job and will not be supplied by the firm.</p>	<p>Staff to be reminded that wearing of gloves is not a substitute for good hand washing.</p> <p>If staff choose to wear face masks, this will be at their own discretion and guidance.</p> <p>Staff members who are scheduled to attend court or tribunals in person will be required to use face coverings as per HMCTS guidance.</p>
		<p><u>Symptoms of Covid-19</u> If anyone becomes unwell with a new continuous cough, high temperature or anosmia in the workplace they will be sent home and advised to follow the stay at home guidance as per current government guidelines. This</p>	<p>Internal communication channels including calls, emails, slack channels and cascading of messages through line managers and HR will be carried out regularly to reassure and support employees in as far as possible.</p>

		<p>is applicable for both individual staff members who have symptoms of COVID 19 as well as those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms, as they would then need to self-isolate.</p> <p>Line managers will maintain regular contact with staff members during this time.</p> <p>If advised that a member of staff or public has developed Covid-19 and were recently on our premises/one of our offices, HR will contact the Public Health Authority to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and will take advice on any actions or precautions that should be taken.</p>	<p>Line managers and HR will offer support to staff who are affected by Coronavirus or has a family member affected.</p>
		<p><u>Work related travel</u></p> <p>The objective is to avoid any unnecessary work travel and keep people safe where they do not need to travel</p>	<p>There will be no inter office travel during the management of the COVID 19 pandemic.</p> <p>Staff will be encouraged to avoid use of public transport where possible and drive, cycle or walk if that is a possibility. If there is possible alternative and public transport has to be used, then staff should follow the necessary government guidelines that may be in place from time to time.</p>

		<p>The management team will support this initiative by suspending the usual parking rota per office and people will be able to park wherever they deem it safe to do so.</p> <p>Where more than one member of staff needs to travel together, they will be reminded to maintain the required social distance and not sit face to face when travelling.</p> <p>No fee earner should travel with a client in their personal vehicle.</p> <p>Where staff members are required to attend court in person, then prior to such attendance, staff will be reminded to read the applicable risk assessment for the specific court and the related precautionary measures they would have in place. This is regularly updated by HMCTS. Staff are reminded to wear face masks when attending court or tribunals as per HMCTS guidance.</p> <p>Staff are reminded that most court hearings are being carried out remotely during this time and a face to face hearing will only go ahead if the court directs that it is the only option in a given case. Partners, Line Managers and Head of Risk will support staff in risk assessing any such required attendance as the safety of our staff will always remain a priority.</p>	
		<p><u>Vulnerable or Clinically Vulnerable Staff</u> Our objective is to protect any member of staff that is vulnerable or clinically vulnerable</p>	<p>We recognise that vulnerable members of staff such as those that may be pregnant or those that may have a pre-existing condition, such as Asthma or those who may be clinically vulnerable and hence shielding are more prone and at a higher risk level of severe illness should they contract the COVID 19 virus.</p>

			<p>HR together with Partners/Line Managers will identify those individuals and assess, based on business and other operational need, when they will return to the office following COVID 19 secure guidelines and when they will work from home during this pandemic.</p>
		<p><u>Mental Health</u> The Partners and Head of Mental Well Being will promote mental health & wellbeing awareness to all staff during the Coronavirus outbreak and will offer whatever support they can to help Reference - https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/ www.hseni.gov.uk/stress</p>	<p>Regular communication of mental health information and open door policy for those who need support, including Joanna Kay as Head of Well Being as well as Kayleigh and Lehna being our Mental Health First Aiders.</p> <p>The form of support could be anything from initial advice to telephone support as well as signposting and directing any member of staff for further external professional guidance, which may be needed in certain circumstances.</p> <p>Staff are constantly encouraged via on-going well-being initiatives on our well-being slack channel. This is designed to support all those working from home to stay connected with the rest of the team.</p> <p>The management team have loaned office equipment to staff wherever needed. An interest free loan for the purpose of purchasing office equipment to work from home has also been made available to all staff.</p> <p>We will continue to promote sound mental health and well-being through various appropriate training methods.</p>

			<p>Partners will have weekly office meetings to ensure that all staff members feel connected, cared for and that they have a work life balance.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged to have regular catch ups with each other via video or telephone calls</p>
		<p><u>Accidents Security and other Incidents</u></p> <p>The objective is to prioritise safety during incidents that take place with any member of staff or visitor during this period.</p>	<p>In an emergency situation for e.g. a workplace accident, incident or fire, staff and visitors will not have to adhere to the 2m social distancing requirement if it would be unsafe for them to do so.</p> <p>Staff will be immediately reminded following such accident, incident or fire to sanitise and wash their hands.</p>