

Safe working and operation of nurseries to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread

The following document has been informed by the relevant government bodies as a recommendation of best practice regarding safe distancing and working guidelines to protect your staff.

We strongly recommend that you encourage your staff to follow these guidelines.



The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) has developed and issued this guidance in line with current government advice. The HTA assumes no responsibility or liability for any harm that comes to any member of staff or member of the public following the reopening of your premises, regardless of whether you have followed the guidelines or not.

Social distancing advice to support nurseries developing safe working practices to reduce Covid-19 spread.

It is essential that all businesses carry out a full risk assessment of their entire premises before any reopening takes place, and again before working at increased capacity with more workers on site.

If you have fewer than five workers, or are self-employed, you don't have to write anything down as part of your risk assessment. As an employer you must consult your workers on health and safety. Talk to them about how you will manage COVID-19 risks and involve them in the decision-making process. By involving staff in making decisions you make it clear that you regard their health and safety as important. You are obliged to consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if not available, by the representative chosen by the workforce. (As the employer, you cannot be the person who chooses that representative.)

Each business is responsible, not only for providing a safe working environment with safe systems of work, but also for providing adequate information, supervision and training to ensure that all workers are aware of current safe distancing advice and that any risk to them is kept to a minimum.

Please be aware that in the update of 11th May, the Government has stressed that they will be tightening up penalties for any individual or business not operating within the guidelines. Local authorities will be tasked to monitor for compliance and any venue or business which breaches the law will be given a fixed penalty notice and a prohibition notice. They have stated that businesses continuing to contravene the law will be closed down. If fines are not paid, businesses and individuals may also be taken to court.

The information below outlines current safe distancing advice and safe working practices to mitigate risk from and reduce the spread of Covid-19. It is also important to check for advice updates on the relevant websites, details of which are given at the end of this document.

For those nurseries offering on-site retail facilities, please also refer to the [HTA Safe Trading Guidance](#) for guidance on operating the retail side of your business.

Transport to and from site

The responsibility to provide a safe working environment which prevents or mitigates risks to the safety of staff extends not only to the working environment but also to travel to and from work:

- Staff may travel together in one car but only if they are all resident in the same household or other accommodation.
- Staff should not be travelling with people living in a different household or accommodation.
- Where minibuses are used, they must not be used to transport individuals from more than one household/other accommodation. The only exception to this could be where 2m social-distancing can still be achieved between each household and between the passengers and the driver. This may mean leaving seats vacant.
- All vehicles must be well ventilated, with the windows open and occupants should face away from each other to reduce the risk of virus transmission.
- If private vehicles are used by people from several different households, they must be cleaned regularly with standard cleaning products. Particular care must be taken when cleaning door handles, window-switches, steering wheels, etc.
- Do not swap workers between nurseries or nursery sites.
- When staff arrive (and leave) the premises they must observe social distancing guidelines.

On Arrival at Work

- Plan so that arrival and departure times are staggered, so reducing staff-to-staff contact and crowding into and out of the workplace.
- Provide alternatives to touch-based security devices e.g. keypads.
- Briefings should be kept to a minimum, involve the minimum possible number of staff and be held outside or in a very well-ventilated room, where possible.
- Brief each member of staff about the social distancing requirements
- Outline all additional hygiene measures ie:
 - Wash hands frequently with soap for 20 seconds.
 - Sanitise hands regularly using an alcohol-based viricidal hand gel.
 - Hand washing/sanitizing is essential on arrival at work, before and after using public transport, and before and after eating or drinking, sneezing or coughing.
 - Do not touch the face.
 - No hand shaking or other body contact.
 - When sneezing or coughing use tissues or, if unavailable, cough/sneeze into the elbow. Dispose of tissues properly.
- Describe the symptoms of Covid-19 to staff and make clear the latest government requirements for self-isolation IF they have Covid-19 symptoms or share accommodation with someone who has.
- Remind staff that they should only come to work if they are well and if no-one in their house/accommodation is unwell or self-isolating.

- Make sure you are aware of any employees who are in an at-risk group with designated underlying health conditions and act on this information (for current guidance on shielding see [Useful Links](#) at end of this document).
- Determine how to segregate newly arrived staff, both in the workplace and in work-provided accommodation.
- Contact your local GP to determine the process should an unregistered worker, who is not registered with a local GP surgery, require medical attention.
- Keep records of Coronavirus training given to staff, including the date, full name, information given.

In the Workplace

- Plan so that the minimum number of workers needed are at work in order for the business to still operate safely.
- Consider installing additional hand-washing and hand-sanitizing stations and keep these supplied with soap, water or alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Hand sanitizer is only effective on hands/surfaces which are visibly clean i.e. not soil/compost covered, so if no soap and water is available, it may be necessary for workers to use hand wipes before using the sanitizer.
- Disinfect frequently-touched points regularly e.g. light switches, machinery switches, door handles, keypads, vending machines, handrails.
- Regularly disinfect all equipment used by multiple workers.

- Check that sanitizing materials used are capable of killing viruses and certified as being effective against enveloped viruses such as coronavirus. Products labelled as EN 14476:2013 standard indicate that they have been tested against certain coronaviruses (although not necessarily the one responsible for COVID-19).
- Domestic bleach is also known to kill similar viruses and is believed to be effective for up to 24 hours.
- Provide disposable paper towels and tissues for staff use, together with bins designated for their disposal.
- Minimise contact with surfaces where possible e.g. by ensuring that all non-fire doors are kept open.
- Where possible ensure tables, benches and pallets are laid out to allow 2m separation – for example staff stack their trays on pallets positioned 2 metres from the bench/table/belt, then the member of staff carrying out quality control or next stage of the process can step forward and take the trays.
- Create physical shielding mechanisms e.g. Perspex barriers between workers. If none are available, use material to hand e.g. use Dutch trollies covered with cling-wrap. Any barrier used should be cleaned regularly with a suitable disinfectant.
- Where staff cannot reliably adhere to the social distancing rules, consider using members of the same ‘household’ to carry out these tasks.
- Where needed, PPE must continue to be worn in line with current guidance. Any PPE used must be used in accordance with the manufacturers’ instructions and replaced/disinfected as necessary. Incorrect use may increase the risk to workers, for example if contaminated gloves are used, they pose a higher risk than properly washed/sanitized hands.
- Use of PPE is not a substitute for social distancing practices, and this should be pointed out to staff.
- Any worker choosing to wear face-coverings should be supported by their employer. They should be reminded to use their chosen face covering according to the manufacturer’s instructions, thoroughly wash or sanitize their hands before putting on a face covering and after its removal; and they should be reminded not to touch their face covering when wearing it as this could cause contamination, and to change it should it become damp or if they have touched it. They should also be reminded that they must still observe social distancing and other guidelines.
- As far as is feasible, keep workers working together in groups which are as small as possible (cohorting).
- Plan work to minimise contact between workers and avoid any skin-on-skin or face-to-face contact. Whenever possible, staff should work side by side or facing away from each other as opposed to face-to-face.
- Each morning a designated supervisor should ask each member of staff if they are symptom free. The supervisor will have responsibility for the monitoring of all staff and ensuring that, if there is any doubt as to their fitness, they leave the workplace.
- 2m social distancing MUST be observed for ALL work processes and in both outdoor and indoor locations whenever possible.
- For certain tasks e.g. heavy lifting the 2m rule may create a health and safety issue and, in these circumstances, use members of the same ‘household’ to carry out the task.

- If it is not possible to follow social distancing guidelines for a given activity, then you must consider whether that activity is essential for the work as a whole to continue. If that work is essential, then all possible mitigating action must be taken so that the risk of Covid-19 transmission is reduced.
- Identify situations where workers need to directly pass things to each other, e.g. shared tools, materials, plants, and work out how to remove any need for direct contact, e.g. by the use of drop-off points or transfer zones.
- Ensure adequate supervision so that the 2m rule is adhered to, this should be the job of designated supervisor(s).
- Use suitable tape or other material/rope barriers to mark out 2m distances in areas where this is needed.
- Ensure all workers wash or sanitize their hands each and every time that they get into or out of enclosed machinery (e.g. excavators, tractors, forklifts with cabs).
- The windows/vents of any enclosed machinery or other enclosed space should be kept open to allow ventilation. The internal surfaces of cabs, door handles etc should be cleaned regularly, particularly when the machinery is used by more than one operator.
- Keep movement around the site by staff to a minimum, restricting access to some areas, encourage use of telephones (where feasible).
- If there is an emergency (e.g. an accident, fire, a break-in) staff do not have to observe the 2m rule if it would not be safe to do so. Anyone who has given assistance to others should always ensure they wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after the event.

- Ideally communal areas such as staff tea rooms, canteens etc should be closed, or a system of staggered break times introduced so that it is easier to practice social distancing when breaks are taken. Staff must not be allowed to congregate at break times. Consider the use of safe outdoor areas for breaks.

Polytunnels and Glasshouses

- Consider installing additional pop-up hand sanitizing and hand washing facilities, bins etc.
- The social distancing rules must be maintained. If necessary, use revised working practices, shift working etc to allow this.
- In cases where social distancing cannot be maintained, consider the use of physical shielding barriers/screens.
- Whenever feasible all vents must be open so that maximum air movement occurs, this is particularly important if workers are unable to maintain the correct social distancing.
- PPE should be considered (see [In The Workplace](#) section)
- General guidance (see [In The Workplace](#) section)

If a member of staff falls ill

- They must be moved safely to a designated recovery area/caravan and isolated for a minimum of seven days whilst recovering.
- Where necessary seek advice from the local GP and/or arrange safe transport to doctor/hospital.
- The designated care person must use full PPE and the patient must sit/lie on the rear seats of the vehicle i.e. observing the 2m rule if possible.

- A barrier should be installed before commencement of the journey and this should not restrict the driver's vision.
- After being used to transport a sick person, the vehicle must not be accessed or used for 72 hours. Following this period, it must then be deep cleaned by an operative wearing full PPE and following current guidelines.
- Other workers sharing the same accommodation must also be isolated for a minimum of 14 days.
- No-one should enter the infected person's living quarters for 72hrs, then it should be deep cleaned using suitable disinfectant by an operative wearing suitable PPE. Any communal areas used by this person should also be deep cleaned according to the current guidance.
- Remove all communal towels and tea towels, instead providing single-use, disposable towels and a suitable place for their disposal.
- Produce a rota for use of shared facilities to prevent cross-contact between caravans and allow for social distancing.
- Where washing or changing facilities or lockers are provided, give clear guidance on use and cleaning of these facilities to ensure that social distancing can be observed and also that personal belongings are removed.
- Thoroughly clean all surfaces in communal cooking areas between use by each group, using a suitable viricidal disinfectant.
- Every two hours thoroughly clean all potential hand-contact surfaces in communal toilets and washing facilities using a viricidal disinfectant. This must include door handles, door locks, flush handles, taps etc.
- Ensure staff only consume food within their own accommodation area, not in communal areas.

Accommodation

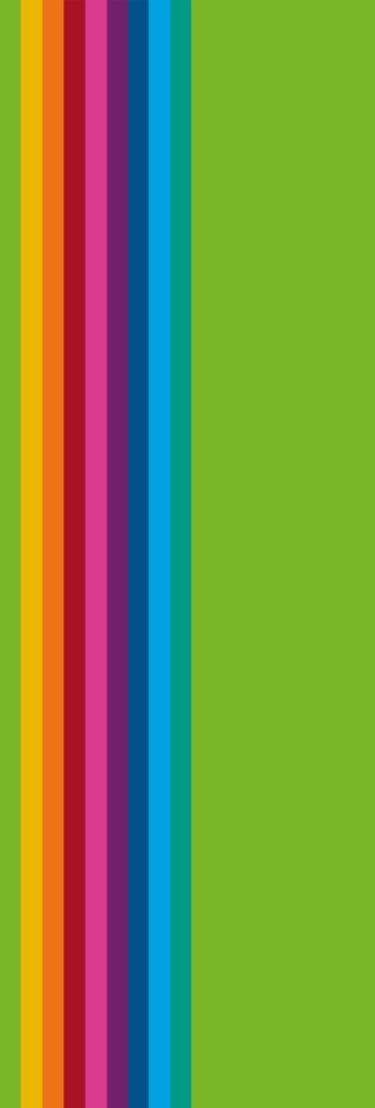
- Workers living in one caravan should be treated as one household/family
- Work out how best to segregate newly arrived staff:
 - New workers must not be housed in caravans with existing workers unless they have already been at the nursery for a minimum of one full week.
 - It is essential that staff from a given caravan do not have any social interaction during or outside of working hours with other caravans.
- Staff social rooms, tea rooms etc must remain closed, access can only be given to cooking and laundry areas. In any communally used areas you should:
 - Provide adequate handwashing facilities and suitable alcohol-based hand sanitizer. NB this must be a product which specifies viricidal activity, not just bactericidal.

Deliveries to the Nursery

- Check that all signage and markings for pick-up and drop-off collection points and procedures are in line with current guidelines and are easy to interpret.
- Where possible minimise any unnecessary contact at nursery entry points, packhouses etc
- Consider how you can reduce the frequency of deliveries or collections, e.g. by ordering larger quantities less frequently.
- If feasible and safe, use single workers to load/off-load vehicles. If more than one worker is needed, use the same pairs of workers.
- Encourage drivers to remain in their vehicles where this would not compromise their safety and existing safe working practices.

This document was informed using information from sources listed below.

- > <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>
- > Updates on safe working practices will be available at <https://www.gov.uk/workingsafely>
- > <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-individuals-and-businesses-in-scotland>
- > <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>
- > <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-business-and-employers>
- > <https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice>
- > <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>
- > <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>
- > <https://www.nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides/self-help-guide-coronavirus-covid-19>
- > <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>
- > <https://hta.org.uk/coronavirus-latest-information-and-advice/suppliers.html>
- > <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb961bfe90e070834b6675f/working-safely-during-covid-19-construction-outdoors-110520.pdf>
- > Scottish Government Horticulture, Fruit & Vegetable Industry Sector : Social Distancing Advice to Support Stakeholders Development of safe working practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19
- > UK Government : Working Safely during coronavirus (COVID-19): Construction and other outdoor work
- > UK Government : Guidance for Employers and Businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19)
- > UK Government : Social Distancing in the Workplace during coronavirus (COVID-19) : sector guidance



Please note – Given the multi and varied nature of nursery enterprises, it is the responsibility of all businesses to carry out their own risk assessments in relation to everything contained within this document.

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We'll get through
this together