

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

We are aware of our legal responsibility to protect employees and contractors and clients and anyone else on the premises from risks to their health and safety. We have carried out a specific risk assessment for the Covid-19 virus to review the risks to health and safety created by the pandemic and to determine what measures can be taken to minimise them.

To avoid the risk of infection and to inform our decisions and control measures to minimise the risk of exposure to Covid 19 we are following the Welsh Government guidance re the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2-5) (Wales) Regulations 2020, and the Office and Contact Centres: Coronavirus Workplace Guidance (as amended) and all later guidance which sets out the legal requirement to - undertake a specific assessment of the risk of exposure to coronavirus at our premises (and consult persons working on the premises in doing so); to take all reasonable measures to maintain 2 metre distancing between all persons on or while waiting to enter the premises; to ensure that other reasonable measures are taken to minimise risk of exposure to the virus, in particular by limiting close face to face interaction and by improving hygiene; to provide information to those entering or working at the premises about how to minimise risk on premises or anywhere where working, and the other reasonable measures to take.

The main objectives of our risk assessment is to support a reduction in face-to-face interaction, maintain a 2 meter distancing, promote the use of PPE and to enhance hygiene. We seek to reduce the risk of the infection to the lowest level reasonably possible by regular communication and information, risk assessments and mitigation strategies.

Assessment completed by: Clive Thomas – Managing Partner

Date last updated: 1/02/2021

Date of next scheduled review: 1/03/2021

Risk title	Description & consequence	Mitigation	Action by who and by when?
Spread of COVID-19 in the firm	<p>This will result in multiple individuals (partners, associates and staff) becoming infected and possibly seriously or fatally ill</p> <p>Vulnerable workers could be worst affected</p>	<p>A Questionnaire was sent to staff re health to establish any higher risk issues</p> <p>Individually risk assessment carried out re vulnerable workers inc pregnancy</p> <p>We are continuing to manage numbers in our offices at any one time by use of a rota and by continuing to offer home working and flexible working</p> <p>We eliminated all unnecessary travel - HoDs risk assess any requirements to travel to ensure safety</p> <p>Desks/chairs removed where necessary to encourage physical distancing</p> <p>Social distancing measures in communal areas. Staff discouraged from congregating in rooms, reception or kitchen areas,</p> <p>Use of PPE and Perspex safety screens – staff provided with KeyTool & masks.</p> <p>Staff required to wear masks at all times when away from their desks.</p>	<p>In the light of the Wales going into Alert Level 4 from 20/12/2020– we have advised all staff (and clients via the website) that our offices are closed to the public - we will keep all of our offices open with a skeleton staff on a rota in Pontypool and Cardiff due to the need to provide conveyancing services and Wills and probate service in particular from those offices, with the remainder of staff working remotely from home. The Newport office will be in the main a post only office.</p> <p>We have advised staff of the increased risk of infection presented by the new variant Covid and that the guiding principle remains that if they can work from home they should - but if, due to business need, they are required to work in the office from time to time we will ensure that they are kept as safe as possible using the mitigation measures we have put in place.</p>

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		<p>Wall mounted body thermometer at each office for staff, clients and visitors to use on arrival</p> <p>Noone with possible Covid symptoms, or who has been in contact with those who have had a positive test result, are allowed to come to work within self isolation period.</p> <p>Enhanced cleaning regime, including for toilets, and frequent touchpoints such as door handles, light switches, reception area using appropriate cleaning products and methods</p> <p>We have raised hand washing awareness</p> <p>Sanitation products (hand sanitiser, cleaning wipes) widely available</p> <p>Communication and awareness-raising - Reminding everyone of the public health advice and office rules through supervision, emails, posters, leaflets and other materials made widely and prominently available</p> <p>Use of red wristband - We have introduced a red wristband system in Pontypool for those who feel vulnerable or uncomfortable in the presence of other staff in the office due to Covid risk and want others to be mindful of this and always ensure distancing. It seems to have worked well and we will now roll that out to the other offices</p> <p>We have emphasised that all shared desk space must be cleaned after use and provided anti bac wipes for cleaning</p> <p>Cardiff Office –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning increased to extra day to clean desktops, keyboards and phones and a supply of blue cleaning rolls and Dettol spray available for cleaning of and shared desk space after use. • photocopier in meeting room moved to the reception area. <p>Pontypool office Staff reminded to–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear masks when they leave their room are moving around the office. • Use the key tool provided when using the copier 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the number of journeys to use the copier printing to as few times as possible • Those on the Middle floor to use top floor kitchen to make teas/coffee instead of Family room due to space • “Gents” to be used by ladies if “ladies” is occupied, and it is free - a new open/closed toilet sign put in place. <p>Headsets provided for reception in Pontypool to avoid contamination from reception phone.</p> <p>In the light of the new variant we have reinforced the need to follow all of our rules and as it may be more infectious we have also reminded staff to avoid transmission by contact by wearing gloves and avoiding touching surfaces that may be contaminated</p> <p>Track and trace QR Code available on premises</p>	
<p>Spread of COVID-19 to clients or visitors</p>	<p>This will result in multiple individuals (partners, staff, visitors/clients and contractors) becoming infected and possibly seriously or fatally ill</p>	<p>No Face-to-face meetings unless urgent - conference calls to be used instead</p> <p>Clients required to wear masks when entering the premises</p> <p>Clients required to use the body thermometer on arrival to ensure under 37.8 degrees</p> <p>Upper limit on meeting numbers determined by available meeting room size</p> <p>Meetings staggered so no congestion possible</p> <p>Seats removed from meeting rooms to ensure physical distancing</p> <p>Enhanced cleaning regime, including before/between/after each individual meeting</p> <p>Hand sanitiser available on entering and leaving the premises and each meeting room.</p> <p>Sanitation products (cleaning wipes) available in the meeting rooms.</p>	<p>Offices closed to the public</p>

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		<p>No refreshments offered inside meeting rooms</p> <p>Pre-meeting notification (if possible) sent to all attendees asking them to stay away if feeling unwell</p> <p>Clients not allowed into the reception area and visitors may not wait there either.</p> <p>Where face to face meeting required - time limit of 15 minutes preferred</p> <p>All clients needing to attend the Pontypool office to be sent a video confirming the health and safety system we are adopting</p> <p>Track and trace QR Code available on premises</p>	

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<p>COVID-19 case (suspected) in our offices</p>	<p>This may result in the individual staff member experiencing medical distress on-site and could increase the risk of onward transmission of the virus among other people with whom the individual has been in proximity</p>	<p>If anyone becomes unwell with a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of sense of smell in the workplace, they will be sent home and advised to follow the stay at home guidance</p> <p>Everyone in the relevant office to be informed and establish whether any other staff have symptoms</p> <p>Majority of people instructed to work from home</p> <p>Reemphasise that no-one feeling ill is allowed to come to work</p> <p>Maintaining up-to-date contact information (including emergency contacts) for all partners and staff</p> <p>Record keeping on who is in and where in the office on a given day to aid potential contact-tracing efforts and processes</p> <p>Noone with possible Covid symptoms, or who has been in contact with those who have had a positive test result, are allowed to come to work within self isolation period</p> <p>Track and trace QR Code available on premises</p>	<p>We have added a requirement to wear gloves when passing files and documents between staff</p>
<p>COVID-19 transmission via communal resources or areas</p>	<p>This may result in increased risk of transmission, including to/from clients and visitors</p>	<p>Staff required to use the body thermometer on arrival to ensure under 37.8 degrees</p> <p>Marketing material (brochures and literature), newspapers and magazines removed from client reception area.</p> <p>If advised that a member of staff or visitor has developed COVID-19 and was recently on the premises the management team will seek advice, identify people who have been in contact with them and take on any actions or precautions.</p>	<p>Staff advised of the increased risk of the new variant of Covid</p>

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COVID-19 transmission via mail/packages	This may result in increased risk of transmission by handling of objects	Hand sanitation to be used after handling all incoming mail and courier packages or gloves to be worn	
Mental health problems and poor wellbeing	This may result from increased stress caused by home-working and the lockdown, potential bereavements, increased caring responsibilities, elevated incidence of anxiety and depression associated with isolation, concerns about personal and family circumstances and job security	<p>Signpost to LawCare resources and the Law Society's mental health resources</p> <p>Raised awareness on any Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offering access to additional resources and support</p> <p>Adjust policies around home working and leave-taking to support working parents</p> <p>Regular internal communications from senior leadership emphasising self-care and regular and inclusive communication. The emphasis should also be on honesty and transparency about the difficulties the firm is facing and how to best manage these together.</p> <p>Regular communication of mental health information and an open-door policy for those who need additional support</p> <p>Regular Monday motivation message</p> <p>Assurance given over measures taken to protect employees' health and safety</p>	
Ergonomic injuries	Staff may suffer ergonomic issues due to lack homeworking constraints meaning that they do not have as appropriate work equipment eg desk, chair as in the office. More difficult to perform workspace risk assessments at arms length in respect of home working.	<p>Risk assessment questionnaires sent to all staff.</p> <p>Any issues raised followed up and actioned.</p> <p>Risk assessment of those who may become vulnerable due to pregnancy or due to a disability</p>	
Public transport virus transmission	Crowded and unsanitary conditions on public transport services	<p>Individuals who cannot travel safely to/from the office will not be required to do so.</p> <p>Office hours amended to allow individuals to utilise less congested public transport.</p>	
Safety and security at building entrance	There is a risk that staff and visitors may come within physical distancing guidelines when waiting or entering the premises.	<p>Staggered arrival times for visitors.</p> <p>Signage and 2m stickers</p>	

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		Cameras at Pontypool office to allow receptionist to monitor situation and ensure individuals are allowed in only when route is clear.	
COVID-19-related stigma and harassment	Risk that there is an increase in targeted harassment or stigma directed at individuals who have been ill or are from a specific ethnic background	<p>Reporting channels to permit investigation and where proven appropriate misconduct procedures followed</p> <p>We promote inclusion as one of our core Values</p> <p>Watkins and One promotes positive messages around diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Partners and managers to offer support to staff who are affected by COVID-19 or have a family member affected</p> <p>Review the organisation's bullying and harassment policy and remind managers of it</p> <p>We provide information to staff about COVID-19 to dispel myths</p> <p>We ensure senior figures in the organisation show support about values and diversity and inclusion</p>	
Non-compliance with government regulations	Risk that a member of the firm ignores firm's guidance	<p>We communicate the regulations and importance of adherence to the rules</p> <p>Strict enforcement of office rules</p>	All staff advised of current regulations in Wales.