

# Office Housekeeping and Safety Protocols

Update: April 2022

All staff working in the office should comply with these protocols to ensure good office housekeeping and safety for each other.

On 01/04/2022 the Government removed the remaining domestic COVID restrictions in England including the need to have COVID specific risk assessments. However, there are still steps we can all take to reduce the risk of catching and spreading COVID-19, and East Herts will continue to support individuals through individual risk assessments in relation to specific health issues, along with occupational health advice and support, as we have always done.

To reflect this, these protocols have been revised, in line with the latest government guidelines regarding COVID 19, to provide guidance on good housekeeping, promote good hygiene and office safety to minimise infections: In terms of COVID and infection control the key message is:

- **Get vaccinated**
- **Let fresh air in if meeting indoors, or meet outside**
- **Consider wearing a face covering in crowded, enclosed spaces**
- **And maintain good hygiene practices.**

These guidelines will be kept under review by both management and UNISON (our recognised trade union) and adjusted further if appropriate.

[Please refer to the current government guidance for further information\(link is external\)](#)

The main focus of government guidance regarding working in shared offices emphasises the following:

- Ensure you open windows to **allow ventilation** in accordance with instructions and guidance below:
  - Fresh air and ventilation are key control measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and other respiratory infections in the workplace. Keep

vents open and regularly open windows especially in spaces that are shared with other people. Opening windows (and sometimes doors as well) intermittently, for example for 10 minutes every hour, can be effective at reducing the risk from virus in the air.

(Windows have been signed to remind you to routinely open windows.)

- **Wash your hands and sanitise regularly:**
  - By maintaining good hand hygiene this removes the need to wipe shared equipment e.g. in the kitchen providing you wash your hands or sanitise hands first. You should wash your hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds regularly throughout the day and also make use of the hand sanitiser available if appropriate.
- Also use **hard surface wipes to clean down surfaces** and the workstation you are using before and after use.

It is everyone's responsibility to adhere to these protocols, if you see somebody not following the protocols please remind them of how to follow these protocols. Remember we are one team and should support our colleagues. If you have ongoing concerns regarding adherence to these protocols, please raise these with your line manager or the employee's line manager and/or inform [@Geoff Hayden](#) (as the constant officer on site each day) so that further action can be considered.

## Testing:

The requirement to undertake regular Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) has been removed, track and trace has ceased and testing kits are no longer being provided freely by Government (except to some people in vulnerable categories – see Government guidance for more details).

The revised guidance advises that an individual can choose to take a test when they have symptoms to confirm these as COVID, but this is no longer a statutory requirement.

Therefore, in-line with Government guidance, East Herts do not require staff to test twice a week.

H&S and HR maintain a small supply of LFT kits and these will only be given out, on a limited basis, to select staff to confirm them as negative before visiting vulnerable people in their homes (face masks are also still encouraged in these circumstances).

## Reporting Absence:

The main point to remember is that if you are unwell you should report in as sick and discuss working arrangements in your absence with your Manager – as per the Absence Management Policy Section 9: *Employees must contact their manager by telephone before 9.00am if they are absent from work due to sickness, injury or any other health problem on every day of absence for the first 7 days of absence (employees should not text in or e-mail so they can discuss their absence and arrangements required in their absence).*

If you are unwell but feel well enough to work from home (or if working from home will prevent further spreading of any infection and your manager can

support this), then this can be agreed as a temporary measure. However, it must be kept to minimum and only be an ad hoc arrangement.

Staff are encouraged to rest and recover as appropriate - you can return to work and your normal routine if your symptoms have gone, or if the only symptoms you have are a cough or anosmia (loss of smell), which can last for several weeks. You are expected to maintain your home and office split arrangements as agreed in your individual Blended Working Offer.

## **Access to the office:**

**This will continue to be based on the desk booking system to allow hot desking but in line with guidance the current desk spacing will return to normal.**

- When you come into the office you must book a desk beforehand using the Skedda Desk Booking System.
- You should not come into the office if you have not booked a desk.
- The Skedda booking system will be used to routinely monitor that those employees in the building have booked a desk.
- Please park in your normal parking zone in line with your rota.
- Staff can choose to wear a face mask in the building or in meeting rooms if they wish to.
- Remember to clean your workstation before and after use.

Social distancing guidance no longer applies and the council will be repurposing desks to create a more flexible workspace and allow the potential for tenants to be taken on to support required savings. You should continue using the Skedda Desk Booking System as outlined above. A workstation must only be used by the individual who has booked it in advance using the Skedda desk booking system. You may use different workstations on different days.

If a workstation needs to be shared due to specialist equipment or a program attached to that computer, the workstation should be wiped by the user before and after use.

## **Shared Office Equipment e.g. printers, scanners and stationery:**

- By maintaining good hand hygiene, you do not need to wipe down shared equipment but wipes will continue to be provided so employees can use them.
- Try to only use the equipment in your own work areas to reduce cross use.
- If you require more wipes or sanitiser please email the FM Helpdesk who will arrange for the Caretakers to supply them.

## **Meetings:**

- Keep meeting rooms well ventilated and remember to close the windows after the meeting
- Please maintain good hygiene standards - wash or sanitise hands before meetings and wipe down any shared equipment before and after use.

- Staff can choose to wear a face mask if they wish to - supplies of masks have been provided in meeting rooms.
- Do not share pens or other objects during meetings to avoid preventable cross contamination.
- Please wipe down the room after you have used it, including IT equipment and door / window handles.
- Officers organising meetings in the office are reminded that hybrid meetings can be arranged in meeting rooms with IT / video conferencing equipment.
- Officers attending Zoom/MS Teams meeting in the office may need to use a meeting room with video conferencing facilities to minimise disruption to neighbouring colleagues or because they do not have IT kit otherwise to conduct a virtual meeting.
- Officers are encouraged to use their personal/work mobile phones or tablets (please use the EHC Wifi) at their desks to attend virtual meetings where possible (as long as this does not interfere with colleagues) and to use the smaller meeting/ interview rooms to avoid single occupancy of the larger meeting rooms.

### **General office cleanliness:**

We all want to work in a nice environment so please be considerate and remember to:

- Clean and tidy your workstation at the end of the day
- Close any open windows at the end of the day
- Clean up after using the kitchen – use the dishwashers and don't leave things in the sinks
- Leave the toilets as you would like to find them
- Report any issues to the FM Helpdesk