



By email

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An important message from Jyoti Atri Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire

As Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire, I am writing to thank you for all the efforts you have made throughout the many months of the pandemic, to reduce the COVID-19 risks in your workplaces.

However, COVID-19 has not gone away, and I am writing today to give you an update on the current situation facing Cambridgeshire. We have a high number of cases of COVID-19, low vaccination coverage in some areas and along with related hospital admissions which are adding to the seasonal and backlog of booked admissions, there is a huge pressure on the local NHS. Consequently, the Government has granted us the status of being an Enhanced Response Area (ERA). This means they recognise the seriousness of the situation that COVID-19 presents in the local area. As part of this, we need communities and businesses like yours to continue to support efforts to lower the risk of transmission to keep our communities safe and to protect working people and businesses, particularly as we move into winter when we have increases in many illnesses.

There are many things I know you are doing, but I would like to encourage you now to revisit these and see if you can increase your efforts. Sadly, locally we already know of cases where businesses have been severely affected by numbers of staff who have become ill or need to self-isolate.

There are some key measures that you can take in your workplace to help reduce the spread of the virus and lessen the risks to your business.

- Review again the staff who work on site. Check that they do all need to be there and if measures can be put in place to help more of them to work effectively from home. This will help to reduce the risk of spreading the infection in the workplace and keep people working.
- Strongly encourage staff to get their vaccinations, this includes both the COVID-19 and seasonal Flu vaccinations.
- Make your workplace COVID-19 safe with effective levels of infection control including good hygiene practices. For more advice visit the Health & Safety Executive website, [Coronavirus: latest information and advice - HSE news](#). In addition, more advice can be found on your local authority website.

- Strongly encourage staff to wear face masks at work, especially if they are working with other colleagues in an enclosed environment.
- Where possible keep work areas well ventilated You can assess the level of ventilation in indoor spaces, as per the [HSE guidance](#). A simple ventilation toolkit to assess the ventilation can found [online](#).
- Promote twice a week lateral flow tests amongst staff to keep the workplace COVID-19 secure. It is important to identify positive cases and ask them to self-isolate if they do not more members of your workforce run the risk of becoming infected and being absent from work.
- Reminding staff to be vigilant on work breaks - transmission occurs when staff relax in smoking areas, canteens, and rest rooms.
- Encourage staff to report breaches of your COVID-19 secure measures in the workplace
- Continuing to reinforce to staff that their behaviour outside work has an effect on how your business can continue to run. Remind them that it is safer to meet people outdoors or in well ventilated indoor spaces. The more people they meet, the higher the risk of catching Covid-19.
- Where it is essential for staff to share transport, remind them about wearing masks, cleaning vehicles, and keeping windows open.

As the Christmas season approaches it is likely staff will be wanting to celebrate either in work or outside of work which will increase the risk of infection spread. It becomes more important than ever to remind staff of these risks and that it is best to avoid large numbers of people gathered in enclosed spaces.

We strongly recommend that you assess the risks of holding Christmas events on-site. You are **legally required** to complete a risk assessment which includes the COVID-19 risks (this can be as part of the normal Health and Safety risk assessment and/or Event Management Plan). If indoors this includes the ventilation assessment of indoor spaces referred to above. Large Christmas events may mean that many of your staff catch Covid-19 and therefore need to be off work.

In addition, we strongly advise that you adopt the following measures if you are holding Christmas events on site.

- a. Use the [NHS Covid Pass](#) system as per Government guidance for events which involve outside guests.
- b. Face coverings to be worn by attendees indoors and in crowded areas outside, on public transport arranged for attendees e.g., coaches, taxis, and/or car sharing
- c. Set up the event to enable social distancing.
- d. If any employee or guest has COVID-19 symptoms, they should not attend.
- e. Recommend that staff and guests' carryout lateral flow testing prior to the event and for 4 - 5 days after the event.
- f. Use the NHS QR code to help trace and stop the spread of COVID-19 if there are external guests.

- g. Undertake regular and frequent cleaning of high frequency touch points.
- h. Promote and provide easy access for regular hand washing and the provision of hand sanitisers.
- i. Keep COVID-19 safe arrangements for any food and drink offered during the event.
- j. Display prominent COVID-19 safe messages, posters etc. reminding attendees to take the common-sense precautions.

Our commitment is to help and support you and your employees to do the right thing – for the benefit of their health and for your business. If you do have any questions, please contact us on workplace.cell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

Alternatively contact your local authority COVID-19 team

COVID19Unit@cambridge.gov.uk
foodandsafety@eastcambs.gov.uk
envhealth@fenland.gov.uk
envhealth@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
env.health@scambs.gov.uk

Sources

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/index.htm>
https://breathefreely.org.uk/ventilation-tool/?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=guidance-push-hse&utm_term=ventilation-tool&utm_content=helex-13-sep-21
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-covid-pass>

Yours faithfully,



Jyoti Atri
Director of Public Health
Peterborough City Council & Cambridgeshire County Council