

## **Guidance for Managers –**

# **Individual Risk Assessments for Employees in At Risk Groups including Vulnerable Groups - COVID-19 who are working outside their home**

### **Introduction**

**This guidance is to be used to risk assess each employee who is working outside their home during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

It is recognised that the COVID-19 outbreak has created anxiety for our employees and so we seek to take a collaborative approach and engage individuals in the risk identification and management process to go as far as possible to alleviate their individual concerns. Managers should have a supportive conversation with the employee, allowing the employee to participate openly and honestly about any underlying health conditions and other risk factors that may increase their risk to COVID-19 and discuss ways to mitigate and reduce the risks. We know that based on clinical evidence that there are some additional risk factors for certain people linked to ethnicity, age, gender and underlying health conditions which could increase their vulnerability to infection or adverse outcomes from COVID-19. These are termed as 'at risk' groups. As such an individual risk assessment should be completed for these employees as well as others who fall outside these groups, who may raise concerns.

### **Purpose of an individual risk assessment**

The purpose of an individual risk assessment is to identify any additional risk factors for our employees who may be more vulnerable to catching and/or having a more serious reaction to the COVID-19 virus. It aims to provide the opportunity to include any mitigation to these additional risk factors. This is further to the more general COVID-19 risk assessments you will have undertaken for your teams at the start of the outbreak as lockdown was implemented and services reconfigured to continue where necessary.

The intention is to continue to follow our key principles of adhering to national guidance as it is published, to operate within the framework of our existing policies and procedures and to work to understand the anxieties of individuals wherever possible, even where the relevant risk factors may not be present. This is in recognition of the fact that the current position continues to be unprecedented and this has created many new challenges and concerns for our workforce.

## The Individual Risk Assessment Process

The risk assessment process should be in 2 phases –

### 1. Employees identify if they consider they are potentially at higher risk;

It is the responsibility of managers to make sure that specific control measures have been considered and were relevant incorporated into their operational risk assessment for individual employees in 'at risk' groups. An initial identification process should take place with each employee to understand their potential individual risk. Managers should be sensitive to the concerns of employees and the impact of the increased risk on the employee's health and wellbeing.

It is important that employees identify all the relevant information so that it can be taken into account when identifying risks and mitigations. During this process, employees should identify themselves to their manager to highlight any potential risks to health due, for example, to their ethnicity, age underlying health condition or pregnancy.

This should also cover any high risks for people they live with. Employees should prioritise and participate openly and honestly in a risk assessment discussion with their manager. The manager and employee will develop the operational risk assessment that considers any increased risk levels and highlight what additional/specific controls are required for this individual employees to reduce the risk of COVID when undertaking their duties to an acceptable level.

The individual element of the operational risk assessment does not require the details of the employees specific risk factors, it only need to identify that the individual is in a "at risk" group and the specific controls measures that must be implemented. Details of any conversation related to an employee's risk factors can be recorded within supervision or 121 records as these are private correspondents between employee/manager. Employees should follow the arrangements made and let their manager know if their circumstances change. Managers should review and raise actions in the risk assessment as part of the regular supervision or 121 sessions.

Employees who are classified in the Extremely Clinically Vulnerable Group **must work from home** and not go into the workplace.

Employees who are classified in the Clinically Vulnerable Group and employees over 60 years of age, are at higher risk of illness from COVID-19. For these groups an individual risk assessment should be carried out to enable appropriate controls to be put in place in line with Covid-19 secure guidelines, to enable them to undertake their role.

### 2. The Manager to assess the risks associated with those individuals and identifying actions with the employee to minimise the risks

The "At Risk Employee Group" guidance in Appendix 1 set out below should be used in conjunction with the risk assessment processes to assist manager when considering individual employees risk factors and what additional/specific controls measures may be required. For further guidance on undertaking COVID risk assessments click [here](#), for general guidance on undertaking risk assessment click [here](#).

*The above two stage process should not be a one-off process and Managers should regularly review the assessment as part of supervision/121's so that the employee can make the manager aware of any changes and to enable the management of risk with the employee taking into account any new evidence on risk factors.*

The process does not lead to an 'absolute' outcome, but is intended to provide support to –

- manage the process of undertaking risk assessments to identify those employees who may be more vulnerable to infection or experiencing significant health challenges as a result
- have sensitive, one-to-one conversations with employees, to acknowledge concerns, discuss the options available and agree any next steps
- identify and implement ways of mitigating the risk to these employees within the context of their role and the setting

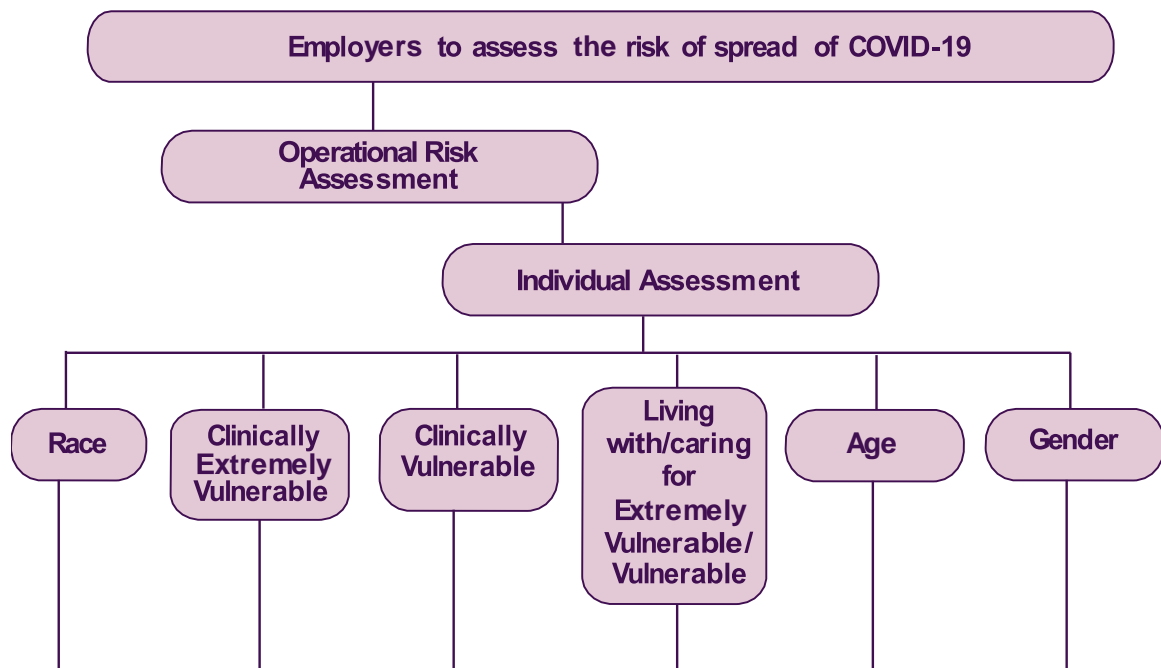
The individual risk assessment should be:

- An extension to your existing workforce/operational risk assessment and management processes. A generic operational risk assessment can incorporate specific requirements/controls for an individual "at risk" employee.
- Examples of existing workforce and workplace risk assessment templates are available and include a section where specific controls for individual "at risk" employees can be recorded.  
<https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/172/coronavirus>
- Please note that this **does not** mean a completely new Risk Assessment needs to be completed for every employee for any operations they will be undertaking. What **does** need to be completed are additional specific risk controls this employee will also need to implement/follow in addition to the existing controls for non-vulnerable at risk employees which are set out within the existing generic operational and/or building specific risk assessment.
- PHE guidance on [COVID-19 infection prevention and control](#), which should always be followed
- See government guidance following the pausing of shielding  
<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>

[protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19#what-will-change-from-1-august](#)

If Managers have any questions about the health and safety risk assessment, they should contact the [corporatehealthandsafetyandlincolnshire.gov.uk](#) If guidance is required about employment related issues concerning individuals, the Manager should contact their HR Advisor.

This flow chart will help you see the steps your employer should be taking to reduce the risk of COVID-19 for BAME, over 60 and other vulnerable groups.



## Appendix 1 - Individual COVID-19 risk assessment: At Risk Employees Groups

This risk assessment guidance is based on the *Department of Health and Social Care COVID-19: Adult Social Care Risk Reduction Framework: Assessing and reducing the risk to your workforce (June 2020)*;

This information should be used when reviewing operational risk assessment collaboratively between line manager and individual. It will help to ensure that whatever is reasonable has been done to make sure the employee is safe.

"At Risk Groups"	
<p><b>Clinically Extremely Vulnerable/Clinically Vulnerable</b></p> <p>Employees identified as clinically extremely vulnerable must work from home and not go into the workplace. Employees sharing a household with someone identified as clinically extremely vulnerable or providing caring responsibilities should only attend the workplace where strict social distancing is adhered to.</p>	<p><b>Age:</b></p> <p>Increasing age is a known risk factor. Those age 60 or older are at an increased risk. This should be considered alongside underlying health conditions or other risk factors.</p>
<p><b>Underlying health conditions including:</b></p> <p>Respiratory diseases, e.g. asthma, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</p> <p>Hypertension</p> <p>Cardiovascular Disease</p> <p>Diabetes Mellitus</p> <p>Chronic Kidney Disease</p> <p>Very obese (BMI 40 or above)</p> <p>Clinically Vulnerable</p> <p>A risk assessment should be completed for all employees identified as clinically vulnerable.</p> <p><i>Employers must do everything they reasonably can to keep employees safe and should be made aware that refusal of home working for a disabled person may amount to unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act.</i></p>	<p><b>Pregnancy:</b></p> <p>All pregnant women should have a workplace risk assessment. Specific guidance on Covid19 and pregnancy can be found in guidance set out <a href="https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/751/q11-appendix-1-model-expectant-mother-risk-assessment">https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/751/q11-appendix-1-model-expectant-mother-risk-assessment</a></p> <p>Women &gt; 28 weeks pregnant or have underlying condition should be recommended to stay at home.</p> <p>Women &lt; 28 weeks pregnant should only work in direct care roles where risk assessment supports this.</p>
<p><b>Ethnicity:</b></p> <p>The latest evidence shows those of a BAME background who were diagnosed with COVID-19 had up to two times an increased risk of death than white</p>	<p><b>Sex:</b></p> <p>The latest evidence shows working age males diagnosed with COVID-19 are twice as likely to die as females The reasons for this difference are</p>

<p>ethnic groups. The exact reasons for these differences are not yet known. However the statistical fact must be considered when managers are conducting the risk assessment. Failure to do so is failure to carry out a complete and sufficient risk assessment.</p> <p><i>This risk assessment should be carried out for BAME employees and employees who live with a person from a BAME background and take into account other factors such as what work they do, age</i></p> <p><i>and underlying medical conditions</i></p>	<p>unclear and does not diminish in any way the risks faced by women,</p>
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### **Guidance – Completing Individual Risk Assessment**

Certain factors have been associated with individuals being more vulnerable to severe disease or dying from COVID-19.

Managers should make employees aware of the need for individual control measures to be incorporated into their operational risk assessments and employees should identify themselves to their manager to highlight any potential risks to health due for example to their ethnicity or pregnancy.

Managers must risk assessment and identify specific controls for all of their workers who have identified themselves as being at greater risk. Those at high clinical risk should be supported to continue to follow current advice to protect their health.

<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#what-will-change-from-1-august>

Managers are responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are carried out and steps are taken to minimise the risk to employees.

Whilst this framework focuses on reducing the risk for employees with potential risk factors, there should be awareness that those who are not at high risk may have other health concerns or anxieties that should be addressed, and these should be addressed below.

It should not necessarily be assumed that an employee, even with identified vulnerabilities, working with the public will be at the greatest risk. This depends upon the extent to which the risk of exposure is controlled.

If an employee is identified as being at higher risk, a one to one conversation should be used to identify how risk could be reduced, and this should be detailed in Risk Assessments. This should be handled in a sensitive manner, taking into consideration the employee's mental health and wellbeing.

What is practical and preferable will be specific to the workplace and individual but might include;

- Redeployment to another location where the risks are lower, or to work remotely where possible.
- Adjustments to work arrangements - for example reviewing shift patterns or the use of public transport.
- Ensuring staff are supported to follow PHE guidance on reducing workplace and workforce risk.
- Further advice and support, for example through HR or Occupational Health
- Obtaining health and wellbeing support, see [link](#) to the GEORGE Health and Wellbeing Advice page.

### **Additional Guidance for risk assessment of employees from a BAME Background**

Emerging evidence that is currently being reviewed by Public Health England shows that the black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities could be disproportionately affected by COVID 19.

To enable managers to complete this risk assessment there are additional key questions that you should explore to further protect BAME staff and their families. The risk assessment should be a meaningful conversation and exploration for the risk factors and perception of the employee. Where there is agreement that the risk factors can be mitigated to everyone's satisfaction, no change is needed. However, where it is clear there are increased risks for an employee, the line manager must provide support and make necessary adjustments to mitigate those risks. Please seek advice from Occupational Health.

#### ***Key questions***

- Do you have any underlying health conditions (even those that you consider minor); you may not be taking medication for these but you are being monitored by your GP?
- What is your age?
- Gender at birth (males higher risk)
- Are there any religious observances that may impact on your ability to work when wearing full PPE for long periods (as a line manager you may need to make reasonable adjustments in this period)?
- How many family members do you have in your household? What are their ages and do any have underlying health conditions

- Does your home support self-distancing guidelines?
- Have you been able to be mask fitted and found a suitable mask fit and been provided with the appropriate mask?
- If you have facial hair for religious reasons, are you aware that it will affect your mask fit? If you feel unable to shave your beard during this period of time, have you been supplied with a hood or offered alternative work?