

COVID-19 Risk Assessment for Law Firms

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Risk title	Description & consequence	Mitigation
Spread of COVID-19 in the firm	<p>This will result in multiple individuals becoming infected and possibly seriously or fatally ill</p> <p>Vulnerable workers could be worst affected</p>	<p>Most directors and staff (where possible) to work from home.</p> <p>Where work has to be done at the office, take steps to review work schedules including start and finish times to limit the number of people in either office at any one time to, where practical, an upper occupancy limit of one person only.</p> <p>To prepare for clients attending at the Benfleet office and more staff being required we have a sneeze shield in the Benfleet interview room and sneeze shield roller blind in Benfleet reception. We have 'social distancing' signs around the reception area in both offices and awareness-raising posters throughout both offices including hand washing awareness posters.</p> <p>The upper occupancy limit in Benfleet is two clients and 1 member of staff in the interview room with the double doors open and one other member of staff in other parts of the office.</p> <p>Face shields are available where other shielding not available and masks for clients and staff where they feel necessary including running errands outside the office.</p> <p>Once we have seen how things work in Benfleet then look at how we can open up Billericay office and what 'sneeze shields' are required and what other requirements as it is a shared office. Until then clients will not be seen in Billericay.</p> <p>Enhanced cleaning regime, including for toilets, kitchen cupboards and frequent touchpoints such as door handles, light switches, reception area using appropriate cleaning products and methods.</p> <p>No staff feeling ill will be allowed to come to work or clients who say they have symptoms or have visible symptoms will be allowed to enter the building.</p> <p>All members of staff to have their own cup/mug/glass and only use these. Refreshments will not be offered to clients.</p> <p>Hand sanitiser is available on every desk and at the entrance of both offices, all sinks have ample supply of soap along with paper towels for hand drying. Providing cleaning wipes/spray and paper towels are available on each desk for phones, keyboards, desks to be cleaned down at the end of each day.</p>
Spread of COVID-19 to clients or visitors	<p>This will result in multiple individuals (partners, staff, visitors/clients and contractors) becoming infected and possibly seriously or fatally ill</p>	<p>Face to face meetings are discouraged with virtual conference calls to be used instead wherever possible. Face to face meetings to be available to those clients who do not have access to the means to have a virtual meeting. These are generally the more vulnerable and elderly so extra care must be taken.</p> <p>Upper limit on meeting numbers determined by available room size – no more than two clients in Benfleet interview room with the double doors open and meetings to be staggered so there is no congestion in reception.</p> <p>'Sneeze Guard' fitted for the Benfleet interview room.</p> <p>Enhanced cleaning regime, including before/between/after each individual meeting.</p> <p>Sanitation products (hand sanitiser, cleaning wipes) available inside each meeting room.</p>

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		<p>No catering/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>Physical distancing in place in reception/waiting area.</p> <p>1-hour upper limit on meetings strongly advised and communicated.</p> <p>Keeping the door locked and asking clients to ring the doorbell when they arrive and to wait outside until other clients have left the reception area or until 5 minutes before their appointment.</p>
<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.</p> <p>Partners and managers to increase the frequency of contact with those they supervise during this time.</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 directors 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>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>Marketing material (brochures and literature), newspapers and magazines have been removed from client reception areas.</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 ask the local public health authority for advice, identify people who have been in contact with them and take on any actions or precautions.</p>
<p>COVID-19 transmission via mail/packages</p>	<p>This may result in increased risk of transmission by handling of objects</p>	<p>Cleaning protocol is in place for all incoming mail and courier packages.</p> <p>Staff advised to clean any mail/post items delivered to their desks (wipes/spray and paper towels have been provided) and to wash hands after opening the post.</p>
<p>Mental health problems and poor wellbeing</p>	<p>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> <p>Staff members of BAME background may feel more uncomfortable coming back into the office</p>	<p>Signpost to LawCare resources and the Law Society's mental health resources.</p> <p>We have provided an increased volume of guidance materials and resources.</p> <p>We have adjusted policies around home working and leave-taking to support working parents.</p> <p>We have 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>We have regular communication of mental health information and an open-door policy for those who need additional support.</p> <p>We provide assurance over measures taken to protect employees' health and safety.</p>

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Ergonomic injuries	<p>Insufficient chairs, screens, footstools, desks etc. may be available in the office as a large proportion of these could have been taken home by staff]</p> <p>It may be difficult to perform workspace risk assessments whilst maintaining physical distancing or if people sit in different locations each time they are in the office</p>	<p>Virtual self-administered workplace risk assessment module to be made available.</p> <p>Where possible, staff have been asked to take their more portable ergonomic equipment (such as keyboards, wrist supports or mice) with them when working between the home and office.</p>
Public transport virus transmission	Crowded and unsanitary conditions on public transport services	<p>Individuals who feel that they cannot travel safely to/from the office will not be required to do so.</p> <p>We have introduced an interest-free loan/subsidy scheme that makes buying a bicycle very cost-effective and provide ample space for cycle storage on-site.</p> <p>If staff members need to travel (for example to courts or to do site visits) they should not share vehicles or taxis, unless suitable distancing can be achieved.</p>
Car/bike park virus transmission	Narrow spaces in the firm's carpark or bicycle storage area may elevate the risk of person-to-person transmission	Ensure only 1 person out of their car in the car parks at any time.
Safety and security at building entrance	There is a risk that individuals waiting for extended periods of time at building entrances due to physical distancing experience adverse weather-related health impacts or could be subject to opportunistic crime/harassment	<p>Staggered arrival times for those attending the office should limit congestion.</p> <p>Staff encouraged to arrive early before temperatures rise.</p>
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>We have clear reporting channels to permit investigation and where proven appropriate misconduct procedures followed.</p> <p>Partners and managers offer support to staff who are affected by COVID-19 or have a family member affected.</p> <p>We have reviewed the organisation's bullying and harassment policy and reminded staff of it.</p> <p>We have signposted colleagues to facts about COVID-19 to dispel myths.</p> <p>We ensure senior figures in the organisation issue and support messages about values and diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>Reminder training on unconscious bias.</p>
Non-compliance with government regulations	Risk that a member of the firm ignores firm's guidance	<p>Communicate the importance of the adherence to the rules.</p> <p>Stricter enforcement of rules against people continuing to attend the office while feeling unwell.</p>