

Orkney Islands Council



COVID-19 Guidance and Working Procedures for Staff

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
1.1. COVID-19.....	4
2. COVID-19 Precautions.....	4
2.1. Individual staff precautions	4
2.2. Face Coverings	5
3. Working in Council Offices.....	5
3.1. Risk Assessments.....	6
3.2. Meetings.....	8
3.3. Staff interactions	8
3.4. Post Room	8
3.5. Building precautions.....	9
4. Service User Meetings and Home Visits.....	9
4.1. First Contact.....	9
4.2. Carrying out visits.....	10
4.3. Home Care or Personal Care visits.....	10
4.4. Personal Protective Equipment.....	10
4.5. Shielding	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.6. Waste.....	11
5. Work activities – no person to person contact	11
6. Schools and Nurseries.....	12
7. Waste Collection Services	12
8. Pool Vehicles	12
9. Advice on what to do if someone (staff member or young person) show any symptoms of COVID-19.....	12
10. Cleaning and Disinfection	14
11. Testing for Covid-19	14
Appendix 1: – Best Practice - Putting on and removing PPE.....	15
Appendix 2: Cleaning and Disinfection (Non-Health Care Setting).....	17
Stop the Spread	17
Cleaning and Disinfection	17
After Cleaning and Disinfection.....	17

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1. Introduction

This guidance has been produced to provide staff with the information on work procedures and precautions to take during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This guidance covers working in Council Offices, meeting service users or undertaking visits to service users at home and the collection of waste by waste operatives.

This guidance will be under constant review and if you print it off, you should already consider it out of date.

1.1. COVID-19

The spread of COVID-19 can be controlled by a combination of good personal hygiene, cough and sneeze hygiene and physical (social) distancing. The details of these controls can be found on the from the [NHS inform website](#) or [Health Protection Scotland website](#).

2. COVID-19 Precautions

2.1. Individual staff precautions

All individual staff members should ensure that they carry out the following steps whether they are home-working, working in the community or within the Council Offices:

- Wash hands regularly.
- Wash hands with soap and water; or use alcohol hand sanitizer where available before eating and drinking, and after coughing, sneezing and going to the toilet.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wherever possible, avoid direct contact with people that have a respiratory illness and avoid using their personal items such as their mobile phone.
- Follow the [NHS inform website guidance](#) if you or someone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Cover the nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing the nose. Dispose of all used tissues promptly into a waste bin. Then wash your hands and if facilities are not available use alcohol-based hand rub. If there are no tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.
- Ensure that the windows are open or ventilation system in your office is operational to ensure maximum fresh air ventilation within your work area.
- Separation distances of a minimum of 1 metre between people should be maintained and direct person to person contact such as shaking hands should be avoided.

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2.2. Face Coverings

On 7 October 2020, the First Minister announced a further range of measures surrounding tackling the virus. This included the wearing of face coverings within business premises. On 6 August 2021, the legislation pertaining to the mandatory wearing of face coverings in certain premises and public transport was updated in line with the arrangement for being beyond level 0.

The wearing of face coverings is mandatory within communal areas of workplaces where there are no barriers or where physical distancing cannot be maintained. This is in place across the whole Council estate. Therefore, you should wear a face covering when you leave your desk and move around the building.

The Scottish Government have produced guidance on the wearing of face coverings. They note:

There is no evidence to suggest there might be a benefit outdoors from wearing a face covering unless in a crowded situation.

Physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene are the most important and effective things we can all do to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions.

A face covering can be any covering of the mouth and nose that is made of cloth or other textiles and through which you can breathe.

Religious face coverings that cover the mouth and the nose count as face coverings for these purposes.

When applying or removing the covering, it is important that you wash/sanitise your hands first and avoid touching your face.

After each use, you must wash the face covering at 60 degrees centigrade or dispose of it safely.

There are some exemptions to the wearing of face coverings, and these are highlighted in the Scottish Government guidance which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-use-of-face-coverings/>

For those staff members who are required to use a face covering in the course of their duties, the Council will provide face coverings.

Note: Where PPE has been provided for use as detailed in 4.4. below this must be used, face coverings are not a substitute for approved PPE.

3. Working in Council Offices

Scottish Government [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): returning to offices](#) states

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“a gradual return to offices can now begin however home working will continue to be an important mitigation for controlling the virus and we would ask that businesses still support employees to do this, where possible and in consultation with employees”.

Each workplace will have its own unique circumstances but some of the issues that they may want to consider when prioritising staff to return include, but not limited to:

- those who would benefit from a return to work on mental health or disability grounds
- those who have less appropriate settings for working at home
- those who need to be in the workplace for priority business reasons
- those who are new to the organisation and require training/mentoring (and those required to support this)
- those who would benefit most from collaborative working in person
- sufficient provision of first aid and fire safety duty holders”.

Where the work cannot be done from home then physical distancing of 1m should be followed. Individuals who are at increased risk of infection are advised to follow the physical distancing advice stringently and this must be taken into consideration.

All staff in the workplace are advised to undertake 2 lateral flow device (LFD) COVID-19 tests a week, even if they are non-symptomatic. Further information is available in section 11 below.

3.1. Risk Assessments

Prior to reintroducing staff to the workplace or recommencing work streams a risk assessment must be undertaken.

Regulation 4 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 states that where an employer implements any preventive and protective measures they shall do so on the basis of the principles of prevention. This is also known as the hierarchy of control. This hierarchy is simplified to:

- **Elimination** - Redesign the job or substitute a substance so that the hazard is removed or eliminated. In this case, non-essential staff to remain working from home.
- **Substitution** – Replace the material or process with a less hazardous one.
- **Engineering controls** – Engineering controls are a good way of controlling hazards at source. Enclosures, barriers, guards and insulation. Fixed ventilation. Anything that can be designed and built to make the work environment safer. This type of control usually provides a safer environment for everyone, rather than an individual.
- **Administrative controls** – Sometimes, it's not possible to reduce the risk any further by changing the equipment or substance. But the employer can still reduce the time people are exposed, through work patterns, monitoring and

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supervision. Safe systems of work like permits to work can be used for high-risk activities. Training and inductions can be carried out to raise awareness. Regular, scheduled activities can be used to maintain safety. Like inspections, testing, good housekeeping and cleaning.

- **Personal protective clothes and equipment** – It might be the least effective on the list but where risk remains, PPE can be a good way of protecting individuals. This can be seen through the wearing of Type II surgical face masks by Care Staff.

A risk assessment should be conducted that considers the Scottish Government priorities above, the hierarchy of controls, the following aspects and the outcome should be documented:

- Is the task being done essential?
- Is it essential that the task is done now or can it be deferred?
- Can the task be done in a different way so that a minimum of 1 metre distance can be maintained?
 - Yes – do this and document a justification that describes why the process has changed from usual practice, making sure your usual Health and Safety considerations are applied.
 - No – then adapt the task to ensure physical distancing is adhered to as far as possible and document this.
 - ❖ Minimise the time spent at less than 1 metre.
 - ❖ Maintain a minimum of 1 metre distance for breaks and lunch.
 - ❖ Maximise the distance; where a 1 metre distance is not possible, ensure that people stay as far away from each other as is safe and feasible.
 - Make environmental changes to minimise contact; using physical barriers,
 - markings or changing placement of equipment or seating (e.g. a screen between staff and customers, or tape markings on the floor to show the 1 metre distance required).
 - Consider changes in working practices (e.g. stagger times at which work is done or breaks are taken; restructure work flows to allow for physical distancing to be implemented).
 - Explore, where possible, how digital processes or systems may replace the need for face-to-face discussion
 - Ensure that good hygiene practices and all infection prevention and control measures are implemented fully.
 - Communal spaces within buildings such as kitchens, staff rooms and toilets should, where possible, be well ventilated. They will also have restrictions on the number of people able to attend at one time. This will have been put in place by the building manager

Building managers and line managers must have revised workplace risk assessments in line with the information above **as well as** personal risk assessments for staff who have to return to work in the workplace which includes completion of the [COVID age calculator](#). The Scottish Government guidance and forms for personal risk assessments can be found [here](#).

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Once the personal risk assessment has been completed the line manager should discuss the general controls that are in place within the workplace to ensure that physical distancing and ventilation measures can be maintained as far as is reasonably practicable.

This part of the guidance is for staff members who are continuing to work in Council buildings during this stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted that working within Council buildings should be an exception as most staff member should still be working from home, where possible. Guidance on COVID-19 precautions in non-health care settings is available from [Scottish Government "Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer businesses and workplaces"](#).

3.2. Meetings

All meetings should be carried out over the telephone, Teams, etc. Face to face meetings should only be undertaken as a last resort.

If a meeting has to be held face to face it should be conducted in well ventilated open areas (not in confined offices/rooms) where a person to person separation distance of a minimum of 1 metre can be maintained.

There should be no physical contact between those attending the meeting.

Meeting rooms may be available for staff to use as offices to ensure physical distancing when they are within the Council Offices. Staff who wish to use meeting rooms as office space should contact the Service who hold the responsibility for the room to ensure that it is acceptable.

3.3. Staff interactions

Staff should always follow the guidance listed in 2.1 and 2.2 above. In addition, when working in Council buildings staff should carry out the following steps:

- If you share your desk in a job share situation, ensure that all hand contact surfaces (keyboard, phone, desk, drawer handles, etc.) are cleaned prior to changing over.
- Cut down on the amount of paper copies being sent between offices. If a document needs a signature, send it via e-mail. Print it, sign it, scan it and e-mail it back or use an electronic signature.
- Ensure that windows are open to increase the fresh air ventilation within the workspace.

3.4. Post Room

Current understanding is that for most soft surfaces the virus contamination levels will have decreased significantly after 72 hours. Where the materials have been left untouched for 72 hours or more before staff need to touch the materials the risk is negligible this includes post.

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- Where it is not possible to wait the 72-hour period before undertaking the tasks the only risk would be due to contamination of hands and then touching face (mouth/nose/eyes in particular).
- Staff should wash their hands after dealing with the mail and avoid touching their face.

3.5. Building precautions

The corridor doors within the building are now being held open by Doorguard devices which close automatically on the actuation of the fire alarm. The doors should be open by the first person in that area and closed by the last person to leave. This is to reduce the amount of hand contact surfaces that are being touched (e.g. door plates, door handles).

Enhanced cleaning schedules is being undertaken within Council facilities.

Ensure any crockery and cutlery in shared kitchen areas is cleaned with warm general-purpose detergent and dried thoroughly before being stored for re-use.

Alcohol based hand sanitiser has been placed at all entrances and exits to the Council Offices and other Council buildings. Other precautions such as minimising the number of people allowed in kitchens, lifts and toilet facilities have also been enacted to ensure physical distancing is achievable.

Within individual offices, managers should ensure that staff can work a minimum of 1 metre away from colleagues.

4. Service User Meetings and Home Visits

This part of the guidance is intended for use by managers and their staff who have received a request to meet a service user or visit service user in their home or business premises during the current phase of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Where possible visits will be replaced with phone calls, skype chats, e-mailed pictures, etc.

If you require to meet a service user within School Place, then follow the guidance in 3. above.

It is for line managers to ensure that none of their staff are taking unnecessary face to face meetings or home visits.

4.1. First Contact

On first contact with a service user who is requesting a repair or visit it should be ascertained whether they, or anyone in their household are:

- Symptomatic of the disease and are self-isolating, or
- Have been advised to self-isolate due to Test and Protect.

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GDPR rules still apply during this period and we must ensure that we are recording the information we need properly and holding securely and that we are not holding personal details such as medical history that we do not need.

4.2. Carrying out visits

If anyone within the household is symptomatic or self-isolating then the visit should be postponed until such times all household members have left self-isolation.

When carrying out visits to a household during this phase of the pandemic, the use of PPE is not required. Staff should always follow the guidance detailed in 2.1 above. Separation distances of a minimum of 1 metre between people should be maintained and direct person to person contact such as shaking hands should always be avoided during the visit.

If the service user does not follow the physical distancing guidelines, then the staff member should give one verbal warning and then if the issue persists the staff member should leave.

Where the visit is absolutely vital, cannot be postponed and members of the household are either symptomatic or self-isolating then PPE (see 4.4 below) should be worn. If the occupier is observing self-isolation/physical (social) distancing it should still be possible to do the job by allowing the occupier to go into different rooms/maintain physical distancing rules.

When undertaking revisits to the property, you must ensure to check the health status of the people you are visiting before each visit.

Where the appropriate PPE is not available, or staff have not been trained in its use the visit should be delayed until such times as the issue has been resolved.

4.3. Home Care or Personal Care visits

Home Care and personal care visits are carrying on during the COVID-19 pandemic. At all times the advice within the Health Protection Scotland "COVID-19: Guidance for Domiciliary Care" should be followed, it is available [here](#).

This guidance is regularly updated; therefore, managers and their staff should always access it from the internet rather than printed or saved copies to ensure that they are following the most up to date advice.

4.4. Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is only required when you are visiting a household where they are in self-isolation due to someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 (group "a" above). You must wear PPE even if they have not been tested. PPE is particularly important for those staff members carrying out personal care functions such as Home Carers and Care Home staff.

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Currently, the PPE required is:

- Disposable latex/latex free gloves.
- Disposable apron.
- Disposable fluid resistant (Type IIR) surgical face mask.

Hands should be washed with soap and water after all PPE has been removed.

Where someone is coughing and there is a risk of splashing to the face, the use of a full-face visor /goggles should be considered, and risk assessed.

Prior to undertaking a visit to a symptomatic household, all Orkney Islands Council staff, (apart from those who are social care workers who have similar training and guidance in place already, with employees who work in a care environment receiving training directly from NHS Orkney's Infection Control Team) must undertake the **COVID-19 Wearing Infection Control PPE Safely** course on OIC iLearn. An offline version of this material is available to any staff who have no access to a computer via their manager. [The direct link to the course is here](#). A further visual guide on donning and doffing PPE can be found in Appendix 1.

4.5. Waste

Dispose of PPE and personal waste (e.g. used tissues and disposable cleaning cloths) securely within disposable bags. When full, the disposable bags should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. These bags should be stored for 72 hours before being put out for collection. Other household waste can be disposed of as normal.

5. Work activities – no person-to-person contact

The COVID-19 risks for staff where there is no person-to-person contact is low, however activities such as handling open waste (e.g. going through fly-tipped waste), carrying out housing inspections of empty properties or dealing with a deceased persons belongings for whom no burial arrangement have been made could introduce the risk of contact with materials contaminated with the virus. Current understanding is that for most soft surfaces the virus contamination levels will have decreased significantly after 72 hours.

Where the materials have been left untouched for 72 hours or more before staff need to touch the materials the risk is negligible.

Where it is not possible to wait the 72-hour period before undertaking the tasks the only risk would be due to contamination of hands and then touching face (mouth/nose/eyes in particular).

The employment of single use disposable gloves, backed up with good personal hygiene, will prevent risk of infection. After removing disposable gloves (turning them inside out as you take them off) wash hands or as minimum use anti-viral/anti-bacterial hand gel/wipes.

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6. Schools and Nurseries

All settings should rigorously observe the usual safe hygienic practices normally associated with regulated childcare settings. This will ensure a good foundation of 'good practice' on which any additional steps can be built.

Educational settings should follow up to date guidance from local authorities and Scottish Government. The Scottish Government have produced a collection of guidance around Education and Children, available from the Scottish Government website, that includes the following guidance:

- [COVID-19: re-opening schools guide](#)
- [COVID-19: residential childcare](#)

7. Waste Collection Services

The Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum have produced "COVID-19 and Waste Management Activities" Guidance. Managers and staff within Roads and Environmental Services are to follow this Guidance, which is regularly updated, link below – highlighted as Info Note 13.

https://wishforum.org.uk/?page_id=198

At present, we are continuing to limit the number of personnel in bin lorry cabs. Staff members should continue to wear face coverings when in the cab, keep windows open to increase fresh air ventilation, maintain as much physical distancing as possible and maintain the increased cab cleaning regime.

8. Pool Vehicles

The surfaces within pool cars and other vehicles that are used by more than one driver can be contaminated with the virus. All vehicles should have available alcohol or soap-based cleansing and/or wipes available for all surfaces which should be cleaned periodically throughout the day and especially at the end of each shift. Cleaning should pay particular attention to hand contact surfaces such as door handles, hand holds/rails, dashboards, steering wheels, hand-brake levers, gearbox and other controls and indicator stalks.

9. Advice on what to do if someone (staff member or young person) show any symptoms of COVID-19

Make sure that all staff and individuals in your workplace / organisation, including children and young people, know to inform a member of staff or responsible person if they feel unwell. Staff members need to inform their line managers that they are unwell and leaving work.

The symptoms are:

- New continuous cough; or

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- Fever; or
- Loss of / change in sense of smell or taste.

Everyone, including health and social care workers, should self-isolate if they develop a new continuous cough or fever or loss of/ change in smell or taste until they can arrange for a PCR test via NHS Orkney.

Even if they have mild symptoms they should go home as soon as they notice symptoms and self-isolate. Children and young people should be collected by their parent/guardian. The parent/guardian may need to be reminded about the 10 from the onset of their child's symptoms and until they no longer have a fever, and 14-day isolation periods.

If they are so unwell that they require an ambulance, phone 999 and let the call handler know you are concerned about COVID-19.

Whilst you wait for advice or an ambulance to arrive, the child, young person or staff member should be isolated behind a closed door in a well-ventilated space, such as a staff office or meeting room, that has been previously identified.

The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze, and then put the tissue in the bin. If no bin is available, put the tissue in a bag or pocket for disposing in a bin later. If you don't have any tissues available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

For very young children and vulnerable young people, a responsible adult should be there to support the individual, while maintaining a minimum of 1 metre distance.

Once a possible case has left the premises, the immediate area occupied by the individual e.g., desk space, should be cleaned with detergent and disinfectant. This should include any potentially contaminated high contact areas such as door handles, telephones, grab-rails. Once this process has been completed, the area can be put back into use.

Any public areas where a symptomatic individual has only passed through (spent minimal time in) e.g., corridors, not visibly contaminated with any body fluids do not need to be further decontaminated beyond routine cleaning processes.

10. Self-isolation

The Scottish Government guidance with regard to self-isolation has changed over the course of the pandemic and may change as they continue to respond to the current state of the pandemic. Up to date information on self-isolation can be found at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Test and Protect](#).

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11. Cleaning and Disinfection

Cleaning and disinfection advice for non-health care settings can be found at **Appendix 2**, for Social or Community Care and Residential Settings follow the procedures and specific guidance for your workplace. Check with your line manager for the latest advice.

12. Testing for Covid-19

Anyone in Scotland who is showing symptoms of COVID-19 can be tested through UK Government Testing sites. Further guidance on eligibility and access to testing is available on [NHS Inform](#) and the Scottish Government [website](#).

The Scottish Government are advising everyone, even those with no symptoms, to undertake two Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests every week and to report the results via the website.

Free LFD tests can be ordered from [here](#) and will be sent direct to your home.

N.B. Testing appointments will be prioritised for key workers and their household members. Further advice on NHS Inform as well as advice to support them returning to work where it is safe to do so.

If you or any family member is symptomatic of COVID-19 call 01856 888211 to book a test at the NHS Orkney Assessment Centre.

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Appendix 1: – Best Practice - Putting on and removing PPE

Use safe work practices to protect yourself and limit the spread of infection.

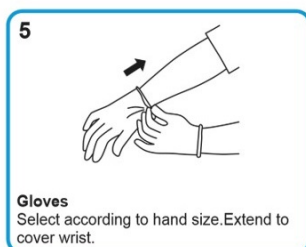
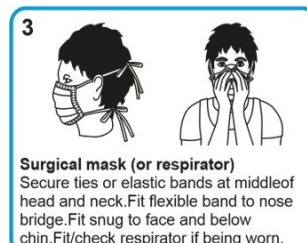
- Keep hands away from face and PPE being worn.
- Change gloves when torn or heavily contaminated.
- Limit surfaces touched in the patient environment.
- Regularly perform hand hygiene.
- Always clean hands after removing gloves.

N.B. Masks and goggles are not routinely recommended for contact precautions. Consider the use of these under standard infection control precautions or if there are other routes of transmission.

The type of PPE used will vary based on the type of exposure anticipated, and not all items of PPE will be required.

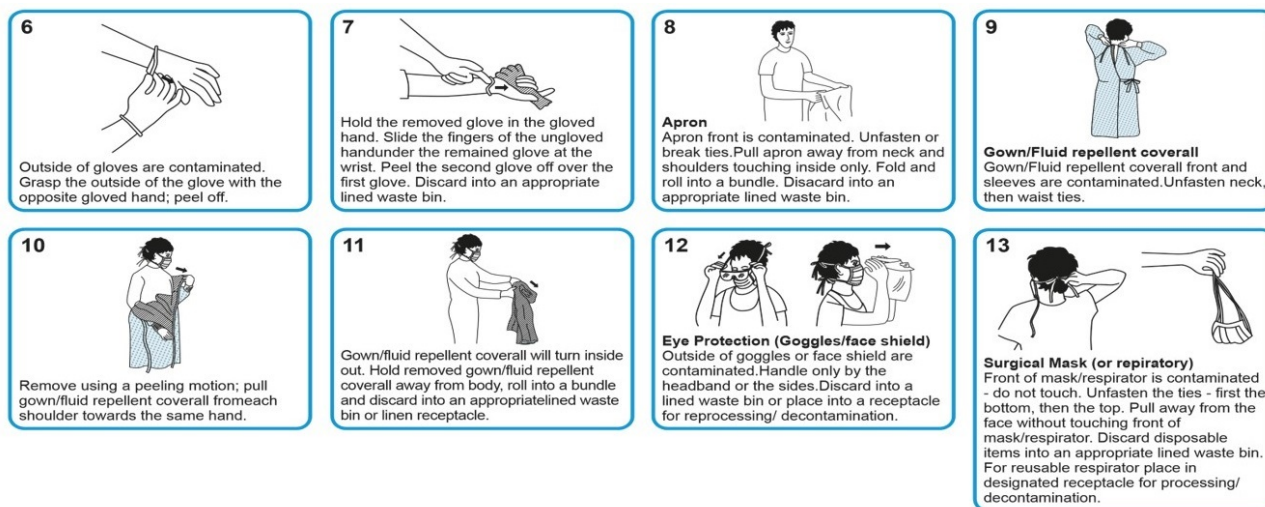
The order for putting on PPE is Apron or Gown, Surgical Mask, Eye Protection (where required) and Gloves. The order for removing PPE is Gloves, Apron or Gown, Eye Protection, Surgical Mask.

1. Putting on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).



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2. Removing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).



Perform hand hygiene immediately on removal.

All PPE should be removed before leaving the area and disposed of as healthcare waste.

Part of the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (NIPCM), available at: <http://www.nipcm.hps.scot.nhs.uk/>.

Produced by: Health Protection Scotland, July 2018.



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Appendix 2: Cleaning and Disinfection (Non-Health Care Setting)

Stop the Spread

Wash your hands more often and for 20 seconds.

Use soap and water and/or a hand sanitiser when you:

- Get home or into work.
- Blow your nose, sneeze or cough.
- Eat or handle food.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away straight away.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Cleaning an area with regular household disinfectant after someone with suspected coronavirus has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

Wherever possible, wear disposable gloves and aprons for cleaning. These should be double bagged, then stored securely for 72 hours then thrown away in the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished.

Environmental cleaning and disinfection should be undertaken using disposable cloths and mop heads using standard household detergent and disinfectant that are active against viruses and bacteria. Follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants. All cloths and mop heads used must be disposed of and should be put into waste bags as outlined below. The person responsible for undertaking the cleaning with detergent and disinfectant should be familiar with these processes and procedures.

The amount of virus living on surfaces will reduce significantly after 72 hours.

If an area can be kept closed and secure, wait until this time has passed before cleaning.

If an area has been heavily contaminated, such as with visible bodily fluids, from a person with coronavirus, consider using protection for the eyes, mouth and nose as well as gloves and apron.

After Cleaning and Disinfection

Wash hands with soap and water, after removing gloves, aprons and other protection used whilst cleaning.

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