

COVID-19 Response Plan

COVID-19 Response Plan

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Introduction

The COVID-19 Response Plan outlines the measures necessary for employers to meet the Government's updated [Work Safely Protocol](#) (September 2021). The Protocol reflects the measures outlined in the Government's publication, '[Reframing the Challenge: Continuing our Recovery and Reconnecting](#)'. This includes measures to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace, measures required to facilitate the re-opening of workplaces following closures, and the ongoing safe operation of those workplaces.

The Plan will give an overview of key areas that employers must assess to ensure they meet the measures outlined in the Protocol in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

All workplaces are required to develop a Plan and the use of this guidance and associated HSA checklists are available at hsa.ie/covid19.

The Plan needs strong commitment from management and workers, and should be developed and updated in consultation with workers and communicated to them, once finalised. Consultation with workers¹, supervision, information and clear direction for workers, including those in customer facing roles, is key to ensuring the success of your COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition, information and advice specific to the workplace should also be provided to contractors and visitors.

Note: The Plan is a live working document and it should be reviewed on an ongoing basis and updated to take into account new guidance from gov.ie, hse.ie, hpsc.ie, dbei.ie and hsa.ie

It is important that in following this guidance, your workplace continues to comply with existing health and safety, fire safety, food and building regulation.

¹ and Trades Unions where applicable

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How to use this plan

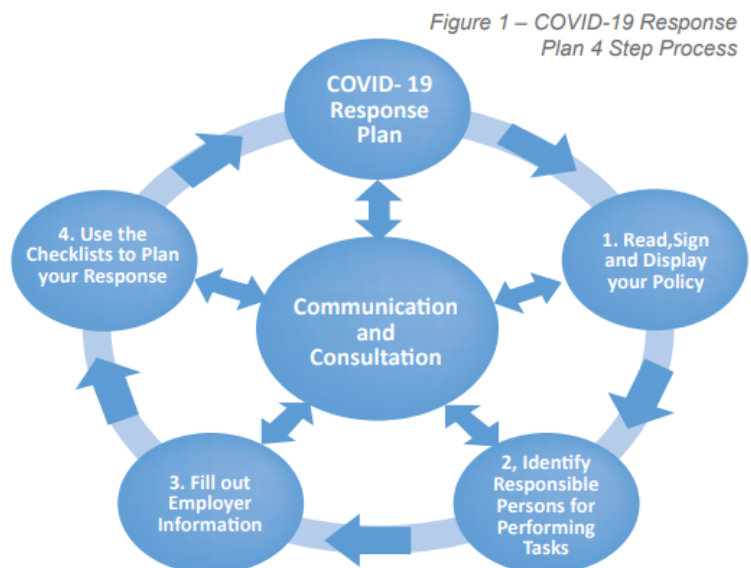
Your COVID-19 Response Plan must detail how your business will put in place infection, prevention and control measures (IPC) to help prevent the spread of COVID -19 in the workplace. The Work Safely Protocol, details what employers and workers must do to control and manage COVID-19 hazards and risks in the workplace. Specific information is contained in the Work Safely Protocol. The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is through prevention measures such as wearing masks / coverings, physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, increasing ventilation and staff themselves deciding to be vaccinated.

The following sections cover key information and guidance that will assist you in developing a COVID-19 Response Plan. Specific checklists are available to aid you further when considering the content of your Response Plan. They are as follows:

- A COVID-19 Policy, which will outline management's commitment to implementing the Plan and associated checklists. The policy must be signed and dated by the managing director and /or business owner.
- Checklist No. 1 - Planning and Preparing (Opening or re-opening the workplace after closure)
- Checklist No. 2 - Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures
- Checklist No. 3 - COVID-19 Induction
- Checklist No. 4 - Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19
- Checklist No. 5 - Cleaning and Disinfection
- Checklist No. 6 - Workers
- Checklist No. 7 - Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
- Checklist No. 8 - Ventilation
- Checklist No. 9 - Returning to the Office
- Checklist No.10 - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs)
- Checklist No.10a - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs) (Workers)
- Pre-Return to Work Form

The Response Plan is a 4-step process (Fig.1).

N.B. The plan is a live document and it is important to keep the plan under review and up to date with Public Health and Government advice, and to follow upon all actions identified, to make sure that they are completed.



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Step 1 - Employer COVID-19 Policy

This COVID-19 Policy outlines our commitment as an employer to implement the COVID-19 Response Plan and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The policy will be signed and dated by the managing director and / or business owner and brought to the attention of our managers, supervisors, workers, contractors, visitors and clients.

COVID-19 Policy Statement

_____ is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our workers and customers. We have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan and have reviewed it in line with the updated 'Work Safely Protocol'. A combined effort by managers, supervisors and workers is required to ensure the success of this plan in preventing the spread of Covid-19 in our workplace. We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and update this Plan in consultation with our workers
- communicate the Response plan to our workers, once finalised
- provide up to date information to our workers on the public health advice issued by HSE.ie, Gov.ie and HPSC.ie
- ensure all workers receive an induction / familiarisation briefing on COVID-19 infection prevention and control (IPC) measures
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and other IPC measures
- facilitate the appointment of at least one Lead Worker Representative, in consultation with our workers and / or representatives
- communicate the identity of the appointed Lead Worker Representative(s) and their role
- keep workers informed about the importance of adhering to hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, and ventilation requirements
- adapt or continue to adapt the workplace to facilitate physical distancing and other COVID-19 IPC measures. In doing so we will ensure that workers are not inadvertently exposed to additional occupational health and safety hazards and risks
- where a Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Testing (RADT) regime is being proposed, discuss and agree in advance, the implementation and administration of any regime with our workers and their representatives, including our Lead Worker Representative(s) and the Safety Representative(s)
- adapt or continue to adapt the workplace to protect workers from COVID-19 exposure to/from others (public, customers, co-workers)
- take into account workers' individual risk factors
- take into account workers' fitness for work following COVID-19 (or a suspected COVID-19 case) absence
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing, and inform workers and others of the purpose of the log
- ensure measures are in place to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace, or an outbreak of COVID-19
- provide clear instructions for workers to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during work
- inform workers that they must stay and home from work and contact their GP if they develop signs or symptoms of COVID-19, or feel unwell, even if they receive a negative test result
- identify a lead person (s) to communicate specific measures to workers whose first language is not English and how often they will be updated.
- ensure contingency measures are in place to address the effects of COVID-19 in the workplace
- continue with the cleaning measures in place and disinfection measures, where necessary.

All managers, supervisors, Lead Worker Representative(s) and workers will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.

Feedback / concerns can be communicated through

Lead Worker Representative(s) **Name (s):** _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

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Step 2 – Persons Responsible for Performing Tasks

We have appointed a suitably trained person(s) to help with ensuring that the Plan is implemented and checklists are completed.

Key personnel are identified who have agreed to take responsibility for carrying out tasks such as:

- role of Lead Worker Representative(s)
- use of checklists to identify any areas for improvement
- regular checks to ensure the Plan is implemented
- review of risk assessments and the safety statement
- renewal of statutory certification, where needed
- training
- reviewing emergency procedures and first aid
- ensuring records and checklists are maintained

We have consulted with the persons responsible for these tasks and have:

- briefed them on the tasks and their responsibilities
- entered their name against the relevant task(s) in the Responsible Persons table (see below) and asked each responsible person to sign to indicate their agreement with carrying out the task.

See Register template for Persons Responsible overleaf.

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Responsible Persons Task Register (Non-Exhaustive)			
No.	Tasks (non-exhaustive list)	Responsible Person(s)	Signature
1	Person responsible for overall implementation of the Response Plan		
2	Appointment and training of Lead Worker Representative (LWR)		
3	Checklist 1 - Planning and Preparing to Return to Work (Opening or re-opening the workplace after closure)		
4	Checklist 2 - Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures		
5	Checklist 3 - COVID-19 Induction		
6	Checklist 4 - Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19		
7	Checklist 5 - Cleaning and Disinfection		
8	Checklist 6 - Workers		
9	Checklist 7 - Lead Worker Representative (LWR)		
10	Checklist 8 - Ventilation		
11	Checklist 9 – Returning to the Office		
12	Checklist 10 - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs)		
13	Checklist 10(a) - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs) (Workers)		
14	Pre-Return to Work forms		
15	Other		
16	Other		

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Step 3 - Employer Information

Employer Name:	
Workplace Address:	
Managing Director / Senior Manager in the Workplace:	
Lead Worker Representative(s) (LWR):	
Type of Business:	
Number of Workers* (including full-time, part-time, contract and agency):	
Phone:	
Email:	

***Note:** Maintain up-to-date information on all workers (full-time, part-time, contract and agency) in the workplace. Such information should include at a minimum the name, address and contact phone number of the individual worker. This information will be needed by the Department of Public Health in the event there is a case or outbreak.



Step 4 – Checklists

Use the checklists (a) to (i) below to plan your response.



a) Return to Work – Planning and Preparing (opening or re-opening the workplace after closure)

The planning and preparing phase is critical to ensure a safe return to work (whether opening or re-opening for business) as well as continuing to work safely when open. It covers such items as information and guidance, Pre-Return to Work forms, communicating the identity of the Lead Worker Representative, revising our induction briefing, identifying and putting in place infection prevention and control (IPC) and other control measures and updating our safety statements, risk assessments and emergency plans.

Workers have been advised about the symptoms of COVID-19 in line with public health advice, and not to come to work if they are displaying any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if they feel unwell. The symptoms outlined on [hse.ie](https://www.hse.ie) have been explained to them. The Pre-Return to Work form will be used to assess workers' health before they enter / return to the workplace. Fitness for work procedures following a COVID-19 absence will also be in place and communicated to workers.

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Further Information

- [Checklist No. 1](#) - Planning and Preparing (Opening or re-opening the workplace after closure)
- [Pre-Return to Work form](#)
- [Checklist No. 9](#) – Returning to the Office
- [Interim Guidance for Employers on Fitness for Work following COVID-19 Absence](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Workers on Fitness for Work following COVID-19 Absence](#)
- [Interactive Checklists PDF - Interim Guidance for Employers](#)
- [Data Protection and COVID-19](#)



b) Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and Other Control Measures

This section deals with the measures we are implementing to prevent or minimise the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and in our communities. Vaccinations are a useful supplement to existing IPC measures but do not replace them. There is no requirement on workers to accept the offer of a vaccination or to inform their employer if they have availed of a vaccine.

Measures, which must be complied with, include:

- hand hygiene / sanitising
- respiratory hygiene
- physical distancing
- increased ventilation
- minimising contact
- considering at-risk workers
- information and advice specific to the workplace for workers (including workers with customer facing roles), contractors and visitors to workplaces.

Further Information

- [Checklist No.2](#) – Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures
- [Checklist No. 8](#) – Ventilation
- [Checklist No. 9](#) – Returning to the Office
- [Checklist No.10](#) - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs)
- [Checklist No.10\(a\)](#) - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs) (Workers)
- HSE advice on 'How to Clean your Hands' on hse.ie/coronavirus
- [How to Properly Wash Your Hands video](#)
- [Work Safely Resources](#)
- [HSE-HPSC posters and videos](#)



c) COVID-19 Induction

Workers will be kept informed about changes in the workplace and updated on new ways of working. Our standard induction, or workplace familiarisation for new employees has been revised to include measures outlined in the Work Safely Protocol to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. At a minimum, this training will include the latest up to date guidance and advice on public health. We will also provide specific advice related to the workplace, and may utilise the free online course 'Work Safely Induction' from the HSA as part of this induction. All workers (including visitors and contractors) will receive induction training. Workers will receive their induction when they return to the workplace following a closure. They may also receive induction training if they have been absent from work due to COVID -19 absence or extended periods of leave. The induction will be carried out in a safe manner with physical distancing measures in place.

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The following range of items will be discussed and brought to the attention of workers:

(Non- exhaustive list)

- Communication system
- Pre-Return to Work form
- [Signs and symptoms](#) of COVID-19 (at home and in the workplace)
- Information on how the virus is spread
- Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures
- COVID-19 contact log
- Lead Worker Representative(s) (LWR)
- Changes to risk assessments and safety statement
- Changes to emergency plans and first aid procedures
- Measures for dealing with a suspected COVID-19 case
- Minimising contact (including organising workers into teams or pods, who consistently work and takebreaks together)
- Reporting procedures
- Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Testing (RADTs) (where relevant)
- Fitness for Work following a COVID-19 absence

Attendance at a COVID-19 induction will be recorded and records kept. We will maintain personal information collected in line with GDPR requirements.

Further Information

- [Checklist No.3](#) – COVID-19 Induction
- [Checklist No. 6](#) - Workers
- HSA 'Work Safely Induction' online course hsa.ie/covid19 – this may be provided to workers as part of the overall Induction training provided.
- COVID-19 translated resources available from [HSE.ie](https://hse.ie) and [HSA.ie](https://hsa.ie)
- [Work Safely Protocol](#)
- [Data Protection and COVID-19](#)

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d) Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

This details our procedures in the event of someone developing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 while at work or while in the workplace.

We have a response team in place and have assigned a case manager / designated contact person(s) for dealing with suspected cases. They have been provided with information on how to do this safely. We have a designated isolation area(s) to be used to isolate the affected person from the rest of the workforce. The route to the isolation area(s) is easy to access and has a closed door. The isolation area has ventilation via a window, and necessary provisions such as tissues, hand sanitisers, gloves, masks, waste bins / bags, are available. Procedures are in place to enable the person to safely leave the premises. Contingency plans are in place should more than one person present with COVID-19 symptoms at work.

Further Information

- [Checklist No.4](#) - Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19
- [Checklist No. 5](#) – Cleaning and Disinfection
- [Checklist No.10](#) - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs)
- [Checklist No.10\(a\)](#) - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs) Workers
- [Advice from HPSC.ie](#) on managing an outbreak of COVID-19
- [HSE-HPSC Outbreak Management Guidance](#)



e) Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace

We have put in place an effective cleaning system that is carried out at regular intervals. Disinfection is carried out in addition to cleaning, where required, and never as a substitute for cleaning. Cleaning and disinfection will help reduce the spread of the virus. We have also arranged for contact / touch surfaces, such as table tops, work equipment, door handles, handrails, etc. to be visibly clean at all times, and to be cleaned at least twice daily.

Welfare facilities and communal areas (e.g. locker rooms) will also be cleaned at least twice daily. If disinfection of contaminated surfaces is required, this will be done in addition to cleaning.

Workers will be provided with essential cleaning materials to keep their own workspace clean (for example, wipes / disinfection products, waste bins / bags) and advised to regularly clean any personal items brought in from home. Where it applies, workers will be provided with hand sanitiser and cleaning equipment for their work vehicle, and advised to clean before and after each shift. Alcohol-based (or non-alcohol based hand sanitisers) may be used. When choosing a hand sanitiser we ensure it is effective against COVID-19 and check the Biocidal Product Registers at the [Department of Agriculture and the Marine \(DAFM\)](#) to make sure the product is registered, and can be used. Where an alcohol-based hand sanitiser is provided, it must contain a minimum of 60% alcohol.

Waste collection points have been increased in the workplace, and these are emptied regularly during and at the end of each working day. Waste, including cleaning materials, wipes and used tissues are disposed of properly in line with measures outlined in the [Work Safely Protocol](#). Isolation areas are cleaned and disinfected properly, and the measures outlined in the Protocol are adhered to.

Cleaning staff will be given information and instruction in relation to the new procedures.

Further Information

- [Checklist No.5](#) – Cleaning and Disinfection
- [Checklist No.9](#) – Returning to the Office
- [Guidance](#) from European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

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f) Workers' Responsibilities in the Workplace

Aside from the normal day-to-day responsibilities that workers must comply with, the spread of COVID-19 brings new challenges that workers must also address, in order that they can be protected from the virus and the [Work Safely Protocol](#) can be implemented effectively.

Workers must:

- fill out the Pre-Return to Work form before returning to work
- continue to keep themselves updated on the latest advice from [gov.ie](#) and [hse.ie](#).
- co-operate in maintaining the IPC measures put in place to help prevent the spread of the virus
- report any issues or concerns they may have to their manager / supervisor or the Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
- not come to work and must stay at home if they have active signs and symptoms of COVID-19, as the virus can spread rapidly through the workplace causing an outbreak
- Immediately report to their employer or designated contact person if they have active signs or symptoms of COVID-19

Further Information

- [Pre-Return to Work Form](#)
- [Checklist No.6](#) – Workers
- [Checklist No.10\(a\)](#) - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs) (Workers)
- [HSE-HPSC Outbreak Management Guidance](#)



g) Lead Worker Representative (LWR)

We will facilitate the appointment of at least one Lead Worker Representative for the workplace, to ensure that COVID-19 measures are followed. The Lead Worker Representative(s) will receive training and information on their role and the measures that have been put in place to help prevent the spread of the virus. We will tell workers who their LWR is and how to contact them. Lead Worker Representatives should be involved in planning for the return to the workplace after closure.

Good communications channels in the workplace are essential for all stakeholders. Managers, supervisors and workers should engage with the Lead Worker Representative(s) to highlight concerns, report issues or concerns, submit ideas and identify improvements in the workplace.

Further Information

- [Checklist No.7](#) – Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
- HSA Lead Worker Representative [online course](#)
- Lead Worker Representative Poster ([A3 Poster](#) and [A4 Poster](#))

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h) Ventilation

Ventilation is an important factor in reducing the risk of aerosol transmission indoors, where individuals may be in close contact, potentially for longer periods of time and in poorly ventilated areas. Ventilation will not stop the spread of COVID-19 on its own and it is not a substitute for other infection prevention measures, such as vaccination, physical distancing, cleaning, face coverings, maintaining good hand and respiratory hygiene, staying at home if feeling unwell and working from home where possible.

Identify areas in the workplace where ventilation can be improved through the use of:

- natural ventilation
- heating ventilation and air conditioning systems (HVAC)
 - maintenance
 - air exchangers / cleaners with HEPA filters
- measurement of carbon dioxide levels through monitoring.

Further Information

- [Checklist No. 8 – Ventilation](#)
- [Work Safely Protocol](#), Section 5.D on Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning (HVAC)
- [Ventilation posters and other resources](#)



i) Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests (RADTs)

This checklist will help employers, workers and their representatives, including the Lead Worker Representatives (LWR), to implement and understand RADTs. When considering setting up a RADT programme in the workplace we will discuss and agree the implementation and administration of RADTs with our workers and their representatives, including the Lead Worker Representative and Safety Representative. Checklist 10 and 10(a) will help us and our workers to understand RADTs, in particular where we may be considering the introduction of a testing regime for the workplace. LWR's and Safety Representatives should be involved in the implementation of any RADT testing regime.

The key reason to use such tests is as an aid to public health in “identifying” cases of COVID-19. Even if RADTs are introduced, other infection prevention and control (IPC) measures, such as physical distancing, face coverings, good hand and respiratory hygiene, staying at home if feeling unwell and ventilation all still need to be adhered to. Workers do not have to participate in RADT testing, if they so wish. The COVID-19 Response Plan should take account of the agreed testing policy and approach taken and communicate it to all workers.

Further Information

- [Checklist No.10 - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests \(RADTs\)](#)
- [Checklist No.10a - Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Tests \(RADTs\) Workers](#)
- [Work Safely Protocol](#), Section 3.D13 and Appendix
- A list of RADTs with a CE-Marking, which are available on the EU market can be found on the [Joint Research Centre \(JRC\) homepage](#)

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