

Returning to work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Any red underlined text within this document is a hyperlink.

Now that the government has begun relaxing the lockdown measures in England, businesses are starting to consider returning to work. Two aspects will be key for all businesses at this time:

- safety of employees;
- safety of customers.

There is a wealth of information available to help businesses through this process, principally the [government portal](#) and [HSE website](#).

To assist with the thought process of returning to work, Hiscox have put together a set of questions that businesses can ask themselves to help navigate these unprecedented times.

Four key stages

There are four key stages in the thought process which are naturally interlinked and will repeat as the situation evolves:

1. **thinking**: the initial review to ascertain whether it is permitted to re-open and what it might look like;
2. **preparing**: assessing what needs to be done to protect employees and customers;
3. **executing**: ensuring that the actions required for safety are practicable and that they are followed;
4. **monitoring**: making sure that staying open is still permitted and that controls remain relevant.

As you can imagine, this list and the content below are not exhaustive and you need to be sure the reviews etc. conducted are relevant to your business.

1. Thinking

Is a return to work permitted?

Check the latest [government guidelines](#) to be sure a return to work is feasible.

Is there an alternative way?

Do you need to re-open a specific location (e.g. office)? If it is possible to work from home, this remains the preferred method of trading.

Do my business activities require specific actions?

The government has issued specific guidance for [certain activities](#), including [office work](#) and [working in, visiting or delivering to other people's homes](#).

2. Preparing

Do I need to complete specific risk assessments?

In short, yes. [Risk assessments](#) have always been viewed as a key way of protecting employees and others from harm as the process will help you identify risks and establish the best controls. Do not forget to consider any exposure you could have to vulnerable staff or customers.

How will I communicate plans?

Factor this in from day one – having the best plan and controls will be redundant if employees do not understand what they are doing. The HSE have issued a [guide on talking to employees](#) about COVID-19.

4. Monitoring

How often should I re-visit my risk assessments?

This will vary dependant on your business and evolving government guidelines. It is certainly worth frequent consideration and be particularly mindful if one of your employees has shown any symptoms during the preceding 14 days.

Has my message been absorbed by employees?

Check-in with employees regularly to be sure they understand what they should be doing and how.

Is there anything else I should be aware of?

Yes – note the [updated RIDDOR requirements](#).

3. Executing

Is there anything I should consider about face masks?

If your risk assessment identifies a need for face masks, be sure they [fit properly](#).

How do I factor in social distancing?

To assist with [social distancing](#), where possible, businesses that do have to re-open could consider the likes of shift patterns and temporary demarcations.

What should I do about cleanliness and hygiene?

Proprietary cleaning products (soap, sanitisers, etc.) should be available with regular [cleaning and disinfection](#) conducted.