

## **Clinical Research COVID-19 Pandemic – Workplace guidance for staff (includes guidance for non-R&D staff visiting the R&D Department)**

Whilst Government advice remains to work from home if you can, it is recognised that in order to continue to provide an effective, valuable research service, there are situations where staff will be required to attend the office. The aim of this document is to offer guidance to ensure that when staff do attend the office it is in a safe and considered manner, and that risks are mitigated wherever possible.

### **Before attending the office**

- Staff must ensure they have completed the Staff Well-being Assessment and agreed any workplace adjustments with their line manager.
- Staff members should indicate on the Clinic Room calendar when they are intending to be in the office. If it is apparent there will be more staff in the office than desk spaces available, staff should choose another day/time (see below for office capacity).
- Staff members will self-monitor for any symptoms consistent with COVID-19. If a staff member has any one symptom possibly consistent with COVID-19 they must contact their Line Manager to discuss their symptom(s) prior to reporting to the office.

### **Arrival at the office**

- Staff must sign the 'signing-in book' upon arrival to the office. Staff should complete this using their own pen or, if using a shared pen, the staff member must wipe down the pen with a clinnell wipe and clean their hands with alcohol hand sanitizer.
- After entry to the workplace each employee should clean their hands with alcohol hand sanitiser. Staff should repeat this as soon as possible upon entering the R&D office.
- If a staff member will be conducting face-to-face visits with research participants, the employee must take their temperature. If their temperature is 37.7 °C or below they may conduct in-clinic assessments with participants (see separate guidance document - Guidance for Resuming Clinic Visits, for details on conducting clinic visits). If their temperature is above 37.7 °C they must notify a senior member of staff and leave the office.

### **Social distancing**

- When working in the office staff members will maintain at least 2 meters of distance from one another whenever possible. Staff should avoid working at workstations that directly face another workstation, and should instead use back-to-back or side-to-side working:

- Within the main R&D office this allows capacity for 3 individuals to be seated diagonally across from one another at the PH desk stations, two individuals seated diagonally across from one another at the MH desk stations, and one at the smaller bank of desks to the right of the office entrance (6 in total).
- With the R&D Administration office this allows two individuals to work side by side.
- In order to facilitate 2 meter distancing, staff should be prepared to move to allow other staff members access where required, e.g., when accessing cupboards, or when passing to use office equipment.
- Staff should consider taking breaks/lunch alone or. If staff do have breaks/lunch with colleagues, they must practice social distancing.
- Two staff members only may enter the kitchen area at any one time.

**Personal Protective Equipment** (guidance for clinical PPE is detailed in the '*Guidance for Resuming Clinic Visits*' document)

- All members of staff must wear a face mask/form of face covering from the workplace entrance (please see Appendix 1 for Tips for Safe Use of a Fluid Repellant Mask). R&D office based staff, when working at a workstation meeting the social distancing rules, may choose not to wear a mask, until such a time as they go into public areas such as visiting the WC, making a drink, walking down the corridor etc., when a facemask then needs to be worn. Masks **must** be changed and discarded into an orange waste bag:
  - After each clinical session
  - If damaged
  - If soiled

Staff must then wash their hands.

**Maintaining a clean working environment**

- Staff should clean the photocopier in the R&D office prior to and after use with a Clinell wipe, and perform hand hygiene after use.
- At the start of each day and at the end of each day staff must clean the following with a Clinell wipe:
  - Work surface
  - Chair arms (if applicable)
  - Keyboard and mouse
  - Telephone

- All staff should take responsibility for cleaning commonly touched surfaces on a regular basis e.g. work surfaces, light switches, door handles, cupboard handles, using a Clinell sanitising wipe with a contact time of 60 seconds.
- All packages delivered to the office should be unpacked wearing gloves and boxes should be discarded as soon as possible after delivery. Unpacked items may be wiped down after unpacking if possible. All items delivered should be put away as soon as possible following delivery.

### Other considerations

- Portable air conditioning units are known to recirculate the air within a room and so must **NOT** be used in areas where patients are known to be infected with COVID-19 or have COVID-19 like symptoms. Portable air conditioning units **can** now be used in any other areas during hot weather when a heat alert (Level 2) is issued. Ensure that the air conditioning unit is pointing away from the door.
- Avoid the use of **fans** that recirculate air unless local risk assessment shows a significant risk of heat-related illness during hot weather when a heat alert (Level 2) is issued. Avoid using fans in areas where patients are known to be infected with COVID 19 or have COVID19 like symptoms. Keep the fan clean and point it away from the door.

### Staff Support

- The Trust psychological support services have worked in partnership to bring staff a 'Professional Psychological Support Offer'. This pulls together everything that is available to keep staff well during this time. More information about the services available can be found here: [Professional Psychological Support offer](#)
- Southern Health [Boards Commitment to Staff](#)

### Visits to the R&D Department by non-R&D staff

- All external visitors will be required to wear a face covering or face mask whilst on SHFT premises
- Where availability of equipment allows, external visitors should have their temperature taken upon arrival. If their temperature is above 37.7 °C they must be advised to leave the SHFT premises.
- Visitors to the department will be expected to comply with two-metre social/physical distancing and the recommended hand hygiene measures.

- Staff should minimise exposure with items shared (e.g. participants folders) to whatever extent possible. Any equipment shared must be cleaned after each use.

Study monitoring:

- MHRA guidance on Managing Clinical Trials during Coronavirus (COVID-19) supports remote monitoring where appropriate.
- HRA guidance also advises that, in most cases, monitoring of studies by sponsors will need to be undertaken remotely. The guidance recommends that Sponsors should consider what monitoring needs to be done in real time, and what checks can be undertaken later, taking a risk-based approach.
- Research staff, when in discussion with study sponsors regarding monitoring visits, should advise as to the MHRA/HRA recommendations.

## **Appendix 1:** Tips for Safe Use of a Fluid Repellant Mask

Masks must:

- Cover your nose and mouth
- Fit snugly over nose (bend nose band)
- Be close fitting - avoid gapping between face and mask
- Never be allowed to dangle around your neck
- Have the upper tie sitting at the crown of your head and a lower tie positioned at nape of neck (if tie variety)
- Be only handled by the loops /ties - you will contaminate your hands if you touch the front of the mask
- If you accidentally touch your mask clean your hands