



December 1, 2021

An important message from Jyoti Atri Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire

Dear Business Owner

I am writing to thank you for all the efforts you have made throughout the many months of the pandemic, to reduce the COVID-19 risks in your business.

Since the start of the pandemic event organisers and businesses, especially shops have had many challenges in keeping their premises safe but also the financial pressures created by the lockdowns and the staffing issues created by sickness and a need to self-isolate.

Sadly COVID-19 has not gone away, and we are now confronted with the new “Omicron” variant. In Cambridgeshire this comes on top of a high number of cases of COVID-19 (Delta variant), low vaccination coverage in some areas along with related hospital admissions, which are adding to the seasonal and backlog of booked admissions, creating a huge pressure on the local NHS.

Prior to the emergence of the new Omicron variant this picture of a high number of cases led to the Government granting us the status of being an Enhanced Response Area (ERA). This means the Government recognises the seriousness of the situation that COVID-19 presents in the local area. As part of this, we need communities and businesses like yours to continue to support efforts to lower the risk of transmission to keep our communities safe and to protect working people and businesses, particularly as we move into winter when we have increases in many illnesses.

Alongside the many things I know you are doing, there are new legal requirements that the Government has introduced in response to the Omicron variant

Face coverings

From the 30 November 2021 there is a **legal** requirement for staff and customers to wear face coverings in shops and other indoor settings along with public transport. (information about the businesses affected by this requirement are found at the end of this letter along with those excluded from wearing face coverings.)

Settings in which face coverings are required must display signage or take other measures to ensure customers are aware of the requirement to wear a face covering on their premises where there is no applicable exemption or reasonable excuse.

Staff within these settings are required to wear them in areas open to the public. However, we recommend that staff wear them all the time when with colleagues. [Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own - GOV.UK](#)

Vaccinations

The Government has accelerated the vaccination programme as the best defence against Omicron and the booster dose will be offered to all adults over the age of 18 and a second dose will be available for 12- to 15-year-olds. Also, the interval between your first and second does has been reduced from six to three months. [Measures against Omicron variant come into effect: 30 November 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Please continue to strongly encourage and support your staff to be vaccinated for both COVID-19 and flu.

Omicron cases and contacts: self-isolation

If you have staff returning from an overseas visit, they are required to take a day 2 PCR test and self-isolate until they receive a negative test. Also, staff who have been told by Test and Trace that they are a contact of an Omicron case will be required to self-isolate for ten days, regardless of vaccination status. [Guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection who do not live with the person - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Please do support staff to follow these new legal requirements.

Other important action you can take

It is also important that you re-visit the other important measures that are not mandatory, but they can help reduce the spread of the virus and lessen the risks to your business.

- Review again the staff who work on site. Check that they do all need to be there and if measures can be put in place to help more of them to work effectively from home. For example, non-shop floor staff who provide office functions. This will help to reduce the risk of spreading the infection in the workplace and keep people working.
- Make your workplace COVID-19 safe with effective levels of infection control including good hygiene practices. For more advice visit the Health & Safety Executive website, [Coronavirus: latest information and advice - HSE news](#). In addition, more advice can be found on your local authority website.
- Where possible keep work areas well ventilated You can assess the level of ventilation in indoor spaces, as per the [HSE guidance](#). A simple ventilation toolkit to assess the ventilation can found [online](#).
- Promote twice a week lateral flow tests amongst staff to keep the workplace COVID-19 secure. It is important to identify positive cases and ask them to self-isolate if they do not more members of your workforce run the risk of becoming infected and being absent from work.
- Reminding staff to be vigilant on work breaks - transmission occurs when staff relax in smoking areas, canteens, and rest rooms.
- Encourage staff to report breaches of your COVID-19 secure measures in the workplace
- Continuing to reinforce to staff that their behaviour outside work has an effect on how your business can continue to run. Remind them that it is safer to meet people

outdoors or in well ventilated indoor spaces. The more people they meet, the higher the risk of catching Covid-19.

- Where it is essential for staff to share transport, remind them about wearing masks, cleaning vehicles, and keeping windows open.

The Christmas Season Risks

As the festive season approaches there will be celebratory events which will bring large groups of people together.

It is likely that your staff will want to celebrate either in work or outside of work which will increase the risk of infection spread. We are reminding everyone of the risks of large numbers of people gathering in enclosed spaces.

We appreciate that these events are important to your business, but they do come with considerable risks. Taking steps to minimise these risks will help avoid creating additional pressures of more people becoming infected with COVID-19.

If you are hosting events you are **legally required** to complete a risk assessment for holding any events on-site, which includes the COVID-19 risks (this can be as part of the normal Health and Safety risk assessment and/or Event Management Plan). If indoors, this includes the ventilation assessment of indoor spaces referred to above.

In addition, we strongly advise that you adopt the following measures if you are holding an event particularly as we have the ERA status, this includes holding Christmas events on site.

- a. Use the [NHS Covid Pass](#) system as per Government guidance for events which involve outside guests.
- b. Face coverings should be worn by attendees indoors and in crowded areas outside, on public transport arranged for attendees e.g., coaches, taxis, and/or car sharing.
- c. Set up the event to enable social distancing.
- d. If any person has COVID-19 symptoms, they should not attend.
- e. Recommend that staff and customers carry out lateral flow testing prior to the event and for 4 - 5 days after the event.
- f. Use the NHS QR code to help trace and stop the spread of COVID-19 if there are external guests.
- g. Undertake regular and frequent cleaning of high frequency touch points.
- h. Promote and provide easy access for regular hand washing and the provision of hand sanitisers.
- i. Keep COVID-19 safe arrangements for any food and drink offered during the event.
- j. Display prominent COVID-19 safe messages, posters etc. reminding attendees to take the common-sense precautions and encourage vaccine uptake ([both Covid and Flu vaccines](#)) and Covid testing.

You can support the ERA status campaign by using the [ERA Toolkit](#) for your own social media channels (Cabinet Office approved content) or alternatively, by sharing the official CCC social media messages.

Our commitment is to help and support you and your employees to do the right thing – for the benefit of their health and for your business.

We will keep you informed any changes in legal requirements or Guidance. If you do have any questions, please contact us on the following emails

- Workplaces - workplace.cell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Alternatively contact your local authority COVID-19 team:

Cambridge: COVID19Unit@cambridge.gov.uk


East Cambridgeshire: foodandsafety@eastcambs.gov.uk

Fenland: envhealth@fenland.gov.uk

Huntingdonshire: envhealth@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

South Cambridgeshire: env.health@scambs.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,



Jyoti Atri

Director of Public Health

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council

Sources

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/index.htm>

<https://breathefreely.org.uk/ventilation->

[tool/?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=guidance-push-hse&utm_term=ventilation-tool&utm_content=helex-13-sep-21](https://breathefreely.org.uk/ventilation-tool/?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=guidance-push-hse&utm_term=ventilation-tool&utm_content=helex-13-sep-21)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-covid-pass>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools/covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-young-people-guidance-for-parents>

<https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/health/localphi/about/>

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/coronavirus-campaign-for-communities>

Settings affected by the new legislation

- shops and supermarkets (places which offer goods or services for retail sale or hire)
- shopping centres (malls and indoor markets)
- auction houses
- post offices, banks, building societies, high street solicitors and accountants, credit unions, short-term loan providers, savings clubs, and money service businesses
- estate and letting agents
- premises providing personal care and beauty treatments (barbers, hair salons, tattoo and piercing studios, nail salons and massage centres)

- pharmacies
- premises providing veterinary services
- retail galleries
- retail travel agents
- takeaways without space for consumption of food or drink on premises
- public transport (aeroplanes, trains, trams, buses, coaches, and ferries), taxis and private hire vehicles
- any car or small van during a professionally delivered driving lesson, a practical driving test, or during one of the practical tests for giving driving instruction, and in all HGV lessons and tests
- transport hubs (airports, rail and tram stations and terminals, maritime ports and terminals, bus and coach stations and terminals)

Exclusions from wearing a face covering

- children under the age of 11 (The UK Health and Security Agency does not recommend face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)
- people who cannot put on, wear, or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- people for whom putting on, wearing, or removing a face covering will cause severe distress
- people speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate
- to avoid the risk of harm or injury to yourself or others
- police officers and other emergency workers, given that this may interfere with their ability to serve the public