

A photograph of three people (two women and one man) standing on a wooden platform high up in a tree, part of a ropes course. They are all smiling and waving. The background is a dense forest with many trees. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue overlay.

COVID-19

Re-opening Advice & Considerations:
High ropes courses, adventure parks and zip wire activities

V2 – Jan 2021

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Executive Summary

COVID-19 is a Public Health issue and not simply confined to the workplace

UK Government guidance clearly demonstrates a shared responsibility, to lower the transmission of the virus, between the facility and the general public who visit them and makes use of their services. This document is written on the basis of this shared responsibility and that no measure put in place can be fully effective without the public doing their part.

Scientific evidence is emerging showing that being outdoors reduces the risk of transmission of the virus

Re-opening your facility should be based on the 5 principles as outlined in the UK government "Working Safely" documents:

COVID-19 risk assessment;

Helping people work from home;

Cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures;

Maintaining the current social distancing guidelines; and

Managing transmission risk.

At the current time there is no definitive answer to the precautionary cleaning of customer and staff safety equipment (i.e. helmets, harnesses etc.)

Be VIGilant, pay attention and be ready to respond and develop your plans.

In the first days/weeks of opening you will know if your plans are working. Engage your staff in this and listen to your customers. Being flexible and adapting quickly will be critical. Expect that something will not work and be ready to resolve it.

This document will be reviewed and updated as and when the science and government policy and guidelines change.

1. Introduction

On 11 May 2020, the UK Government announced its COVID-19 recovery strategy. The aim at the centre of its plan is to: *“return life to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, as fast and fairly as possible...in a way that avoids a new epidemic, minimises lives lost and maximises health, economic and social outcomes.”*

The Vertex Industry Group (“VIG”) comprises a number of organisations and individuals that offer, or are otherwise involved in, the operation of high ropes, adventure parks and zip wire activities.

One of the anticipated outcomes of the prolonged lockdown period will be a surge in the public wanting to *“be outdoors and active”*. It is important

that off-ground activities are ready to re-open and have communicated effectively with staff and customers.

VIG is committed to ensuring that, when permitted to re-open, working environments are adapted to operate in accordance with the [UK Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy](#), available “COVID-19 Secure” guidance where applicable, and guidance issued by stakeholders including the supporting/national regulator, the HSE.

VIG guidelines have been written with the anticipated need for social distancing to continue for a currently, unspecified period. **VIG** are committed to demonstrating observance of the UK Government's [‘Five Steps to Safer](#)



[Working Together](#)’ where it is reasonably practicable to do so:

- Helping people work from home;
- COVID-19 risk assessment;
- Cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures;
- Maintaining the current social distancing guidelines; and
- Managing transmission risk.

Operators may still need to make additional adjustments and control measures that are specific to their own activities and are encouraged to consider all the current guidance. In some cases, it may be necessary for operators to seek specific guidance, support from specialist technical advisers and/or legal advice.

Information about COVID-19 is constantly evolving and with that the development and publication of guidance by the UK Government and other stakeholders, including the supporting/national regulator, the HSE. It is therefore important to acknowledge that a judgment made about whether a place of work is safe, has to be made by reference to the knowledge and standards of the time ¹.

Regional differences in requirements across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland should be taken into account when planning arrangements for managing the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

We would like to extend our thanks to the following organisations for their support in the creation of this document:

- [The Outdoor Industries Association, UK](#)
- [European Ropes Course Association](#)
- Adventure UK
- [Work at Height Safety Association](#)
- [The British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions](#)

¹ Baker v Quantum Clothing Group Limited & Others [2011] UKSC 17.

Outdoor facilities are more likely to open before indoor facilities and therefore the focus of this document is on outdoor operations. **VIG** will be producing further advice on indoor off-ground facilities.

The **VIG** guidelines set out in this document will focus on measures and considerations that cover the following areas:

- Looking after staff
- Managing risk
- Communicating with your customers

More generalist advice and guidance can be found on numerous websites including the [.GOV website](#), [PHE website](#), [HSE website](#) and Appendices C and D.

1.1 Vertex Industry Group

Formed very recently, the Vertex Industry Group is a collective of organisations and individuals that offer, or are otherwise involved in, the operation of high ropes, adventure park and zip wire activities.

The group was originally formed for those connected to [Vertex Instructor Training Ltd](#) to be able to come together, support each other and work as one in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It developed into a working collective of operators, builders, inspectors, PPE manufacturers, trade associations, insurers etc. who are assessing what changes will need to be implemented in order to protect customers and staff once the sector can re-open by providing appropriate information, guidelines and recommendations.

It is important when reading this document, you do so in the intended context. It has been written by the **VIG** for the **VIG** and at this time has not been endorsed by any trade organisation or regulator or enforcing body.



VIG have written this document to support each other but due to numerous requests have taken the decision to share it publicly for anybody to benefit from or adopt.

1.2 Disclaimer

This document is intended to provide information and advice on re-opening strategies to the **VIG** that run off-ground activities such as ropes courses, adventure parks and zip-wires.

It is not intended or designed to serve as industry best practice.

The contents and any associate materials, current at the date of publication, are for reference purposes only. It is a summary of what could be implemented but each user of this document is responsible for ensuring that all applicable laws and regulations and government guidance, applicable to them, are followed carefully. This document and its contents do not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. Legal advice about your specific circumstances should always be sought.

The authors and contributors to this document take no responsibility for any action or consequence as a result of an organisation or individual's interpretation or application of this guidance.

It does not absolve any organisation or individual of their legal duties under the relevant UK Laws and Regulations.

1.3 Insurance

It is strongly recommended that you check with your insurers before implementing changes to your current working practices to ensure that your cover remains valid.

1.4 Interpretation & Definitions

'ACAS' – The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service is a Crown non-departmental public body of the Government of the UK.

"ALARP" – as low as reasonably practicable. ALARP describes the level to which the HSE expects to see workplace risks controlled ².

'ACoP' – Approved Code of Practice issued by the supporting/national regulator, the HSE. ACoP enjoy a special legal status. Proof of failure to observe any provision of an ACoP relevant to a requirement or prohibition may be accepted by the court as proof of non-compliance with that requirement or prohibition unless the court is satisfied that the relevant requirement or prohibition was complied with by other means.

"Biological agent" – a micro-organism, cell culture, or human endoparasite, whether or not genetically modified, which may cause infection, allergy, toxicity or otherwise create a hazard to human health ³.

'COSHH' – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002.

² <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/theory/alarpglance.htm>.

³ Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, regulation 2(1).



"Diagnosis" – means a registered medical practitioner's identification (in writing, where it pertains to an employee) of– (a) new symptoms; or (b) symptoms which have significantly worsened;

'HSE' – Health and Safety Executive

'HSWA' – Health and Safety at Work etc Act, 1974

'MHSWR' – Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

'RIDDOR' – Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013.

'Technical/specialist adviser' – is a 'Competent Person' as defined by the MHSWR – "A person shall be regarded as competent for the purposes of the MHSWR, regulation 7(1) and (8) where he has sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to enable him properly to assist in undertaking the measures referred to in regulation 7(1)."

'WASHA' – Work at Height Safety Association

2. Looking After Your Staff

Making sure your workplace remains a safe place for you and your employees to return to should be a key part of your re-opening plan.

You will need to ensure that you continue to work to your existing Health & Safety policies and risk assessments and are following all the appropriate official guidelines and recommendations in relation to COVID-19 in order to lower the risk of transmission of the virus.

The ["Safely Back to Work A Practical Guide – An analysis of COVID-19 protocols in the United Kingdom May 2020"](#) written by an Alliance of HR Services states:

"Successfully securing the workplace entails both physical changes (e.g. physical separation, entrance checks, PPE, etc.) as well as behavioural changes (e.g. behavioural nudging, personal conduct, procedures and process, etc.). Companies will be required to not only prioritise and set up the right operational solutions, but also to create the right circumstances for organisational adoption. This could be achieved through consultation with employees, to ensure that all workers feel confident in their safety, and that any concerns they might have are being listened to and acted upon."

We have looked at two phases as they relate to your staff and what you, as their employer, can do to support them. As many of you regularly use freelancers, you may wish to consider them as well.

- Furlough and Working from Home
- Returning to Work

2.1 Furlough and working from home

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 imposes a general duty on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. This responsibility remains in place whilst staff are on furlough or are working from home. This means continuing to support the health and wellbeing of employees, even when they are on enforced leave.

2.1.1 Staff welfare

As you prepare your facility to re-open and review the UK Government ['Five Steps to Safer Working Together'](#) it is possible that some staff will remain on furlough and others will continue to work from home.

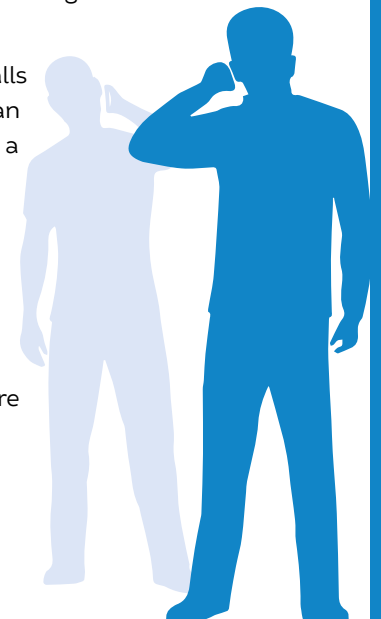
VIG suggest you consider the following:

Maintain communication by:

- Implementing regular wellbeing calls – talk to staff about how they are coping
- Encouraging staff to think about their mental well-being and how they can manage it
- Keeping social calls going: Set up weekly or daily calls so that anyone who wants to join to chat can, or can play virtual games, host happy hours, or even hold a quiz – just make sure it's not work-related!
- Emphasising their value and highlight their contributions to supporting the business.

Encourage employees to access well-being boosting resources & training courses

- Put together an employee wellbeing pack and share information about exercise, hobbies etc. on work community pages.



- Talk to staff about whether they have any goals during their enforced leave, as having a focus can help people to cope. Have they thought about any skills they want to learn or training they would like to undertake?
- Would they like to consider undertaking any volunteering?
- Provide access to general support for staying well.

Evaluate the support that your team may need

- do they live alone, have they lost a loved one, do they have mental health and/or personal issues
- If you have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) furloughed staff will still have access to this. Remind them of the details and encourage them to use it. Most EAPs provide counselling services and advice on family and financial problems
- Signpost staff to where they can access:
 - mental health support
 - grief and bereavement support
 - information about domestic abuse during the crisis
 - information about living alone during the crisis
 - information about financial difficulties during the crisis

Support HomeWorkers

- Ensure staff are working safely at home
- Put procedures in place so you can keep in direct contact with home workers so you can recognise signs of stress as early as possible
- Provide an emergency point of contact so employees know how to get help if they need it
- Provide information on remote working

2.1.2 Government Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme - Furlough

As one of the industries most affected by the virus many of your staff will currently be on furlough. From statements in the press, posts on social media there is clearly some misunderstanding as to its meaning and its role during the COVID-19 crisis. **VIG** suggest that as an employer you should try to bring clarity to your employees and provide the necessary information and assurances that they need about furlough.

Some areas that you should cover include, but are not limited to:

- What is furlough?
- Put together a list of FAQs and Dos and Don'ts
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures during the pandemic
- Protecting your staff and workforce whilst they are on furlough
- The use of holidays during furlough
- Training and volunteering

2.1.3 Lone/home working duties

As an employer, you must manage any health and safety risks before people can work alone. This applies to anyone contracted to work for you. A home worker is a lone worker. Areas that you need to consider will include:

What does the Law say about lone working:

Listed below are some laws and regulations that you, as an employer, need to consider and act upon in relation to lone working:

- [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#)

Employers must provide a safe and healthy environment for all employees (including homeworkers, part-time and temporary workers)

- [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#)

Employees need to take care of their own health and safety and that of others by:

- attending and following any instructions or health and safety training provided;
 - co-operating with the employer to help them comply with health and safety legislation;
 - informing their employer of any work situations that present a serious and imminent risk.
- [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)

Employers must carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments of all significant hazards in the workplace which includes the employees home working environment. This will prove difficult during COVID-19. We suggest that you look at both HSE and ACAS advice on what can be done:

www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm

www.acas.org.uk/working-from-home

- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations (DSE) 1992

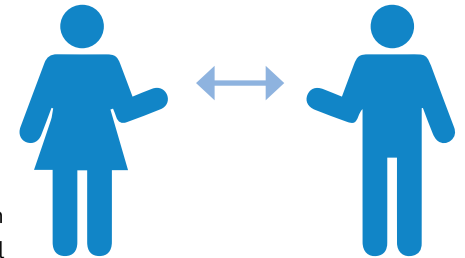
Risks and Policies

As the employer it is incumbent upon you to identify and combat the risks of lone/home working for your employees. Every organisation should have a lone-working policy to raise awareness of lone-working risks and inform lone workers of how those risks are to be managed. ACAS have advice on what to include in your risk assessment <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-from-home> and they link to the CIPD [preparing for home working questionnaire](#) which could be adapted for current purposes.

VIG recommends that you firstly read the [HSE guidance](#) on protecting home workers. You may also want to make use of the documents from ACAS and CIPD.

2.2 Returning to work

The current situation is likely to have had a huge impact on the health and wellbeing of your employees and many will have been out of work for a number of weeks. It is vital that the wellbeing of staff is considered when returning employees to work following the easing of the government restrictions and the subsequent opening up of workplaces.



It will be important to manage your staff supportively back into the workplace and to understand your, and their rights during this complicated process. The key is to build on the environment of trust you have with your employees. You should be aware that some employees may not feel safe to return to work and we recommend that you engage your staff at an early stage with your plans on how they can safely return to work.

The HSE have produced a guidance document called "[Talking with your workers about preventing coronavirus](#)". It explains how you can talk to your workers about preventing coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace over 5 key topics:

- Social distancing
- Organising your workplace
- Cleaning and sanitising
- Information and guidance
- Wellbeing and support

Communicate Clearly

- Provide clear updates to your teams and ensure that personal, one-to-one, check-ins are available to all employees. This can help to reduce anxiety about returning to work.



- Be honest and up front with the team about who is being unfurloughed, when and why.
- Give staff as much notice as possible of any plans to return to work and re-opening dates.
- Inform the staff about all new procedures that will be in place and invite them to bring forward any concerns e.g. How health and safety is being reviewed and managed, the latest risk assessment, planned adjustments to the workplace, additional hand washing facilities, staggering start and finish times to avoid overcrowding or floor markings to help people keep socially distanced.
- Promote access to support if staff are suffering from anxiety about returning to work.

Evaluate the support your team may need to return to work

- Build an individual 'return to work' plan with each team member evaluating their individual circumstances (when staff might return to the workplace/ how staff will travel to and from work/ working from home arrangements etc).

- Be empathetic and flexible if you can and consider the impact of returning to work on the mental wellbeing of your staff.

Manage conflict and negative information flow in the workplace

- Foster an inclusive working environment – be sensitive to any underlying tensions and be confident about managing potential conflict(s).
- Try to minimise gossip and hearsay about the coronavirus news and personal stories whilst at work.

Support Home Workers

- Continue to monitor the well-being of staff who are continuing to work from home and help them stay connected to the rest of your staff, especially if most of their colleagues are on-site.
- Be flexible and understanding of people's individual circumstances e.g. understand that there may be disruptions for people with children at home.

Be Aware

The ["Safely Back to Work A Practical Guide – An analysis of COVID-19 protocols in the United Kingdom May 2020"](#) written by an Alliance of HR Services also states:

"Under sections 44 and 100 of the UK Employment Rights Act 1996, an employee may not be dismissed or subjected to any detriment based upon his/her staying away from the work site due to a reasonable belief that it is dangerous or unsafe. Companies should prepare for the possibility that there will be members of staff who raise concerns about returning to the work place on the grounds that it is not safe to do so due to the threat posed by COVID-19; this could be based upon a perceived lack of health and safety protocols at the work site itself, or potentially that there exists no safe way to access the worksite (e.g. because overcrowded public transport is the only travel method available)."

Employers should be mindful of the risk of legal proceedings under sections 44 and 100 if they insist that their workforce return to the worksite and immediately administer disciplinary sanctions to those that refuse. A consultative approach is preferable, involving trade unions where relevant, to ensure that reasonable concerns are adequately and properly addressed. Employers should at the very least ensure that their final workplace H&S protocols at least address the standards set down by the government's 'COVID-19 Secure' guidelines, to demonstrate that the employee's belief is not reasonable in all the circumstances and the mitigating measures deployed."

We would recommend that you seek advice from your Human Resources department or adviser if required.

2.2.1 Health & safety considerations

The health and safety of your staff will be paramount when starting to re-open your business and returning your staff to work. Many of the areas in the previous sections relating to working from home and lone working will still be valid. We suggest you will need to at least consider the following:

Update Risk Assessments

- COVID-19 and the closure and/or the reduction in the use of your facility may have created or enhanced risks that are already apparent. For example, legionnaires disease – if you have not been flushing the loos and running the taps it may be appropriate for them to be tested. A ropes course specific example is that your course will not have been used, checked, inspected, or maintained during this closure period and you will need to address this as part of your re-opening plan
- Covid-19 Risk Assessment – refer to section 3.2 of this document
- Consider a return to work checklist, similar to the one you may use when employees return to work after a period away from the workplace, normally due to ill health. The HSE has a [good checklist document](#) that could be adapted for these purposes and will help with your COVID-19 risk assessment

- The UK Government has published ["Working Safely"](#) documents for a variety of industry sectors. These can be used to update your risk assessments and create your COVID-19 risk assessment. Although there is not one specific to our sector you should look at those that are similar or have relevant information for your operation and facility.

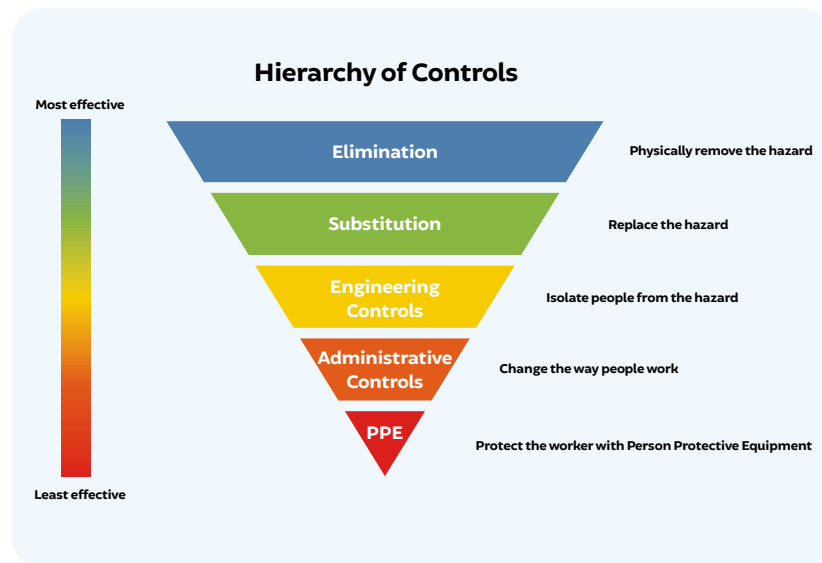
Plans and Policies

- Create an operational plan for all employees and non-employees. You may wish to publish this on your website.
- You may wish to consider including in your plans the following:
 - Staggered start times.
 - Separate site teams / reduced movement around site.
 - Change uniform at work / before leaving.
 - Consider a system of monitoring the health of staff to lower the risk of transmission from one staff member to another (MHSWR Regulation 6 – see footnote).
 - COVID-19 secure compliance.
- Create a strategy for the possibility you have a positive case where you will need to follow the UK [government guidance on COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#).



3. Managing Risk

The UK Government [“Working Safely”](#) documents require employers to “reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures” and in the case of COVID-19 to lower the risk of transmission of the virus.



As a sector, we have a good health and safety record, are used to dynamic risk assessment and endeavour to create wonderful and life-affirming experiences for our customers. With our activities our aim is to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Many, if not all, of us are familiar with the [Hierarchy of Controls model](#). Its purpose is to achieve acceptable levels of risk as well as limiting economic impact to the business.

Using this model and mapping the journey of your employees and customers from their homes to your site and back again is one way to establish which measures you may need to implement in order to lower the risk of the transmission of the virus and to write your COVID-19 risk assessment.

When you look at your risk assessments and your COVID-19 risk assessment it is important that you consult with and listen to your staff. As the government states in their [Working Safely](#) documents:

**“The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely...
full involvement of your workers creates a culture where relationships between employers and workers are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving”**

3.1 UK Government Principles

The government issued [“Guidance for Employers to Help Workplaces Operate Safely”](#) has a downloadable notice your business should display to show people you have followed the guidance. The 5 principles for workplaces to operate safely are:

- Work from home, if you can
- Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment in consultation with workers or trade unions
- Maintain the current social distancing, wherever possible
- Where people cannot observe social distancing, manage transmission risk
- Reinforcing cleaning processes

In addition to the above principles the government's document "[OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#)" states in Annex A – Staying Safe Outside Your Home

"This guidance sets out the principles you should follow to ensure that time spent with others outside your homes is as safe as possible (unless you are clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable in which case you should follow separate advice on GOV.UK). It is your responsibility to adopt these principles wherever possible. The Government is also using these principles as the basis of discussions with businesses, unions, local government and many other stakeholders to agree how they should apply in different settings to make them safer. All of us, as customers, visitors, employees or employers, need to make changes to lower the risk of transmission of the virus. The Government has consulted with its scientific advisers to establish the principles that will determine these changes."



The principles are:

- Keep your distance from people outside your household
- Keep your hands and face as clean as possible
- Work from home if you can
- Avoid being face to face with people if they are outside your household
- Reduce the number of people you spend time with in a work setting where you can
- Avoid crowds
- If you have to travel (to work or school, for example) think about how and when you travel
- Wash your clothes regularly
- Keep indoor places well ventilated
- If you can, wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn't possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas, for example on public transport or in some shops
- You should follow the advice given to you by your employer when at work

What does this mean for us and our customers?

When you join these two pieces of advice and guidance together it clearly demonstrates a shared responsibility, to lower the transmission of the virus, between the facility and the general public who visit them and makes use of their services. This document is written on this principle and that no measure put in place can be fully effective without those visiting doing their part.

3.2 COVID-19 risk assessment

A requirement of COSHH is that an employer shall not carry out work which is liable to expose any employees to incidental exposure to COVID-19 unless a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk to employees' health created by that work has been carried out, the steps needed to control the risk have been identified, and those steps have been put into operation.

3.2.1 What is 'incidental exposure'?

According to HSE guidance, incidental exposure to biological agents can occur when an employee's work activity brings them into contact with material, which contains infectious agents, e.g. blood, body fluids, contaminated water, waste material or bedding/laundry etc. The circumstances in which the risk of exposure arises must be work-related⁴. This means that the exposure to COVID-19 must arise out of or in connection with work at the workplace⁵.

When deciding whether an incident is work-related the key issues to consider are whether the incident was attributable to any one of the following:

- The way the work was organised, carried out or supervised;
- Any machinery, plant, substances or equipment used for work; or
- The condition of the site or premises where the accident happened.

3.2.2 Do the general duties of COSHH apply?

The HSE and the HSC appointed Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens have issued guidance identifying when your legal duties under

⁴ Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, regulation 2(2), and ACoP and guidance, paras. 18-19

⁵ Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, regulation 2(2).

COSHH are not engaged.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 Approved Code of Practice and guidance states,

*"COSHH does not cover a situation where, for example, one employee catches a respiratory infection from another. This is because regulation 2(2) specifies that COSHH only applies in those circumstances where risks of exposure are work related, and not those where they have no direct connection with the work being done."*⁶

The following statement within the publication by the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens, 'Infection at Work: Controlling the risks' supports this position:

*"Although your employees may well pick up infections from workmates (just as they might from their friends and family outside work) - these infections are not your responsibility under health and safety law. This is because the infection is just as likely to be caught outside the workplace as in it."*⁷

VIG Comment

It is difficult to envisage how incidental exposure could include catching a virus given the terms of the above HSE guidance, which are plainly intended to apply in the workplace. Exposure of an employee to COVID-19 must arise out of or in connection with the work activities being conducted at your workplace for the duties under COSHH to apply. The belt and braces approach is to conduct a risk assessment even if you should conclude there is no greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 as a result of the work activity being undertaken.

⁶ Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 Approved Code of Practice and guidance, para.18.

⁷ 'Infection at Work: Controlling the risks', Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens, 2003, para.6.



3.2.3 Examples of possible work-related exposure

The following list, is a non-exhaustive list of potential sources of work-related exposure to COVID-19 that may arise in the operation of high ropes, adventure park and zip wire activities:

- Physical contact with common touch points off the course, including gates, door handles, seating areas, handholds and handrails within transport used to shuttle customers to and from the work environment and canteen, break out or seating areas.
- Physical contact with common touch points on the course, including ladder rungs, handholds, handrails, ropes, poles and crates.
- Airborne transmission including during coaching, while fitting safety equipment, effecting a rescue or driving shuttle vehicles.

3.2.4 Risk assessment

Ensuring risks are reduced to ALARP does not mean you can completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19, nor does it mean that every measure that could possibly be taken (however theoretical) to reduce risk must be taken⁸.

HSE guidance 'Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak - a short guide' published in May 2020 offers guidance, in simple terms, about what you must do as an employer when conducting your risk assessment,

"You must:

- identify what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus;
- think about who could be at risk;
- decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed;
- act to remove the activity or situation, or if this isn't possible, control the risk."

The first step in conducting the risk assessment is to appoint someone within or without the organisation who is competent to carry out the risk assessment. Employers must ensure the person carrying out the risk assessment is competent to do so. In making decisions on who to appoint, employers themselves need to know and understand the work involved, the principles of risk assessment and prevention, and current legislation and health and safety standards. Employers should ensure that anyone they appoint is given access to their work environment, employees and information pertinent to their operations. Making an external appointment does not absolve the employer from their legal duties under the HSWA and other relevant statutory provisions.

⁸ <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/theory/alarpglance.htm>.

Employers are required by law to consult employees and/or their safety representatives on any measures they plan to introduce as a result of the risk assessment, which may substantially affect their health and safety. The following is a list of reasons why involving workers and/or their safety representatives in the risk assessment process can be beneficial:

- Workers are often best placed to assess and validate whether changes made to the work environment and work activities will be effective in practice;
- The experience of workers engaged in frontline roles such as instructors who are likely to have greater exposure to members of the public engaging in the activities on offer can add significant value to the assessment;
- Consultation provides an opportunity to explain the changes being made, improving understanding of the risks and control measures; and
- Consultation may provide workers with reassurance that reasonably practicable steps are being taken to prevent or control the risk of exposure, which is essential to their mental health and wellbeing.

3.2.5 Recording your findings

The significant findings of your risk assessment, including the steps that will be implemented to prevent, or where this is not reasonably practicable, control incidental exposure to COVID-19 should be recorded where you employ five or more people.

The UK Government recommends that duty holders should [publish the results](#) of the risk assessment on their website. Where an organisation employs over 50 workers this is an expectation.

3.2.6 Review and revision

The risk assessment should be reviewed regularly and immediately in the event that there is evidence that it is no longer valid, and, if necessary, revised. The circumstances in which the validity of your risk assessment may be called into question. May include, but are not limited to:

- deterioration in the effectiveness of your control measures identified by monitoring and supervision arrangements.
- reports or complaints from workers or members of the public about the effectiveness, or non-adherence to, control measures.
- new information about the transmission of COVID-19; and
- changes to your work activities.



3.2.7 Control measures

Guidance relevant to risk assessment, and in particular the identification of control measures has been published by various stakeholders, including the UK Government, Public Health Departments, and the supporting/national regulator, the HSE.

HSE published guidance '[Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak - a short guide](#)' and '[Talking with your workers about preventing coronavirus](#)' aimed at employers and the self-employed identifies control measures that can be used to protect people from COVID-19 in the workplace. The guidance is not industry specific but aimed at all work environments.

Following guidance is not compulsory but doing so will normally be enough to comply with the law. Duty holders are free to take other action, but in doing so, shall be able to demonstrate, and should document, why the alternative measures are equally as effective in controlling risk.

Where it is not reasonably practicable to prevent exposure to COVID-19, for example by working from home, protection measures appropriate to the work activity and consistent with the COVID-19 risk assessment should be applied according to the following order of priority:

- The design and use of appropriate work processes, systems and engineering controls and the provision and use of suitable work equipment and materials;
- The control of exposure at source, including adequate ventilation systems and appropriate organisational measures; and
- Where adequate control of exposure cannot be achieved by other means, the provision of suitable personal protective equipment in addition to the above protection measures.

Protection measures shall be applied to the extent that they are applicable, and the COVID-19 risk assessment indicates it will lead to a reduction in risk. The protection measures shall include:

- Reducing, to the minimum required for the work concerned –
 - The number of employees subject to exposure; and
 - The level and duration of exposure.

Control of the working environment, including appropriate general ventilation where operating in an enclosed environment;

- Appropriate hygiene measures including adequate washing facilities;
- Displaying suitable and sufficient warning signs;
- Specifying appropriate decontamination and disinfection procedures;

- Instituting hygiene measures compatible with the aim of reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace, including –

- The provision of appropriate and adequate washing and toilet facilities, and
- Where appropriate, the prohibition of eating, drinking, smoking and the application of cosmetics in working areas where there is a risk of exposure to COVID-19.



To ensure adequate control of exposure to COVID-19, the following principles of good practice should be followed:

- Design and operation of processes and activities to minimise exposure and transmission of COVID-19.
- Taking into account all relevant routes of exposure – inhalation, transmission from surfaces and ingestion – when developing control measures.
- Controlling exposure by measures that are proportionate to the health risk presented by COVID-19.
- Choosing the most effective and reliable control options, which minimise the spread of COVID-19.
- Where adequate control of exposure to COVID-19 cannot be achieved by other means, provision, in combination with other control measures, of suitable PPE.
- Checking and regularly reviewing all elements of control measures for their continuing effectiveness, and in any event where you have reason to doubt the validity of existing control measures.

- Provision of information and training to all employees on the hazards and risks from COVID-19 and the use of control measures developed to minimise the risks.

Ensuring that the introduction of control measures does not increase the overall risk to health and safety.

3.2.8 Ensuring the effective use and application of control measures

Employers are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that any control measures, items or facilities provided are properly used or applied. It is therefore imperative that appropriate arrangements are implemented to meet this requirement. Arrangements should include:

- Reviewing existing health and safety practices to ensure they do not undermine the effectiveness of new control measures.
- Ensuring that where more than one item of PPE is worn, those items are compatible.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of controls and taking prompt remedial action when necessary.
- Supervising employees to ensure that new methods of working safely during the COVID-19 pandemic are being followed in practice.

Employees are subject to legal duties, to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work, and to cooperate with their employer so far as is reasonably practicable to enable any duty or requirement imposed on their employer to be performed or complied with.

Employees shall make full and proper use of any control measure in the way the measure is intended to be used and in accordance with relevant instruction. This includes use of control measures provided for equipment and processes and following defined methods of work.

3.3 Information, Instruction & Training

Every employer shall ensure that employees and non-employees are provided with suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training.

The information, instructions and training provided shall include:

- Information about COVID-19, including the symptoms that can occur and training workers to exercise personal **VIG**ilance so that prompt medical attention is sought if they develop early signs of infection;
- Details of any cleaning product or detergent which the employee or others are liable to be exposed including the name of the substance and the risk presented to health,
- The significant findings of your COVID-19 risk assessment;
- The appropriate precautions and actions being taken to safeguard employees, members of the public and contractors at the workplace. For example measures protecting people at higher risk, self-isolation protocols, social distancing measures, arrangements for managing customers, visitors and contractors, cleaning, disinfecting and hygiene procedures, managing the number of contacts between people, and use of PPE and face coverings;
- When to use hygiene facilities provided and the importance of doing so in accordance with agreed procedures;
- Cleaning, storage and disposal procedures relevant to PPE, face coverings and contaminated waste; and
- Information about procedures to be followed in the event of accidents, incidents and emergencies.

A record of information, instructions and training should be kept and updated. It is important to obtain written evidence of the recipient's participation including details of the mechanism of delivery, their opportunity for recourse where they have questions and their understanding.

3.4 Emergency Procedures

Employers are required by law to establish emergency procedures for any worker to follow if situations presenting serious and imminent danger were to arise.

You should review your existing emergency procedures to ensure that they reflect the significant findings of your COVID-19 risk assessment, in particular any preventative and protective measures. An example might be the need to amend your procedures to incorporate preventative and protective measures that must be followed where social distancing cannot be observed. This may be particularly relevant when conducting a rescue following a work-related accident.



3.5 RIDDOR

3.5.1 What must be reported

HSE guidance identifies three circumstances in which you must make a report under RIDDOR, which are as follows:

- An unintended incident at work leading to someone's possible or actual exposure to COVID-19 (reportable as a dangerous occurrence⁹);
- Upon receipt of a worker's diagnosis of COVID-19 where there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work (reportable as exposure to a biological agent¹⁰); and
- In the event of the death of a worker resulting from occupational exposure to COVID-19 (reportable as a work-related fatality¹¹).

Of the three circumstances identified by the HSE, it is anticipated that the requirement to make a report under RIDDOR will only arise upon receipt of a worker's diagnosis of COVID-19, which has been attributed to exposure at work. This is covered in more detail below at [3.5.3]. It will presumably be rare for a registered medical practitioner to be able to attribute COVID-19 to occupational exposure, as distinct from exposure within the wider community.

3.5.2 Dangerous occurrence

Any accident or incident, which results or could have resulted in the release or escape of COVID-19, must be reported as a dangerous occurrence.

⁹ RIDDOR, reg.7.

¹⁰ RIDDOR, reg.9(b).

¹¹ RIDDOR, reg.6(2).

For the reporting requirement to be triggered, the dangerous occurrence must be attributable to:

- The way the work was organised, carried out, or supervised;
- The plant or substances used for the purposes of an undertaking; or
- The condition of the premises used for the purposes of an undertaking or any part of them ¹².

You should notify the relevant enforcing authority by the quickest means practicable without delay and send a report within 10 days of the incident.

3.5.3 Exposure to a biological agent

According to HSE guidance *"If there is reasonable evidence that someone diagnosed with COVID-19 was likely exposed because of their work you must report this as an exposure to a biological agent using the case of disease report."*¹³

The requirement to report only arises if you receive a diagnosis of a worker with COVID-19 attributed to occupational exposure to COVID-19. For avoidance of doubt, "diagnosis" means a registered medical practitioner's identification (in writing, where it pertains to an employee) of— (a) new symptoms; or (b) symptoms which have significantly worsened.

3.5.4 Work-related fatality

Where any person dies as a result of occupational exposure to COVID-19, the death should be reported as a death due to exposure to a biological agent using the 'case of disease' report form.

You should notify the relevant enforcing authority by the quickest means practicable without delay and send a report within 10 days of the incident.

¹² RIDDOR, reg.2(2).

¹³ <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/riddor-reporting-coronavirus.htm>.

3.5.6 Who must report?

In the event of a dangerous occurrence, exposure to a biological agent or work-related fatality involving an employee, the employer is responsible person who must following the reporting procedure.

In the event of a dangerous occurrence or work-related fatality involving a person not at work or a self-employed person, the person in control of the premises where the reportable incident happened. This would apply if a self-employed consultant were visiting the premises of an adventure activities operator when the dangerous occurrence or occupational exposure to COVID-19 resulting in death happened.

In the event a self-employed person receives a diagnosis of COVID-19 attributed to occupational exposure to COVID-19, the self-employed person is the responsible person charged with following the reporting procedure.



3.6 Social distancing & unavoidable close contact

The government in their [“Working Safely”](#) documents state the following about the use of additional PPE to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus:

“When managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE”

“Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. Unless you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, your risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited. However, if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then you must provide this PPE free of charge to workers who need it. Any PPE provided must fit properly.”

Clearly, where staff and customers already use PPE to protect against non- COVID-19 risks they should continue to do so.

The recommendations here focus on protecting staff during the daily operations of sites. The measures described may protect customers, however through government advice and current practice from other relevant businesses, it can be seen that it is incumbent upon the visiting public to manage their own personal hygiene in regards to COVID-19. For example, operators cannot force customers to wash their hands frequently, however, they can reasonably provide hand wash facilities and stress the importance of using them through signage, customer information and verbal briefings. Certain areas may require additional PPE where customers are not be able to protect themselves, for example, a ropes course cannot reasonably and practicably be expected to provide

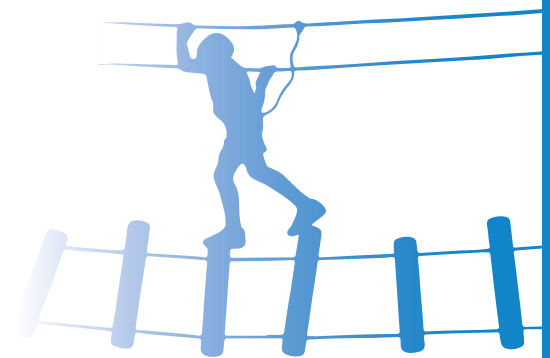
masks for all of their customers, however, they may be able to provide them for exceptional circumstances, such as during a first aid incident .

Whilst the considerations within this document suggest the use of PPE within the industry, it should be noted that in the hierarchy of controls, PPE is the least effective method of controlling COVID-19. Therefore, before selecting and buying additional PPE to reduce the level of transmission of the virus it is important to look at the other control measures. Ask yourself if you can:

- completely eliminate the risk
- replace the potential hazard that's been identified with something safe
- isolate people from the potential hazard
- ensure that you've employed administrative controls that can change the way people work

Each operator will need to review their activities and complete a risk assessment, in line with current information and guidance in order to determine whether the considerations below are reasonable, practicable and sufficient for their sites, activities and customer groups, with particular focus on groups that are vulnerable to infection or groups that may be more likely to be contagious.

Where additional PPE is considered necessary as a control measure consideration should be given to whether it is intended to protect the wearer or 3rd party and the suitability of equipment against the aim. i.e. the use of a face covering will do little to protect the wearer from becoming infected, but it will help prevent the user infecting others



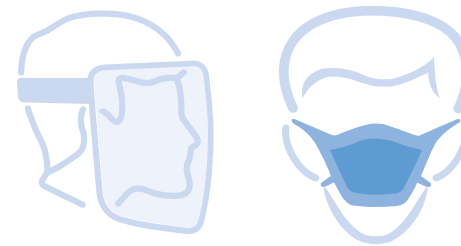
We recommend that all sites should implement the following protective measures considering staff, customers, spectators, accompanying adults and other non-employees:

- Hand-washing facilities available across your site. Where this is not practically possible, hand sanitiser should be made available with instructions on how to use it and to let it dry before moving onto a activity or handling equipment
- Appropriate hygiene principles are practised by staff and customers
- Washing of hands before breaks, smoking, eating or drinking
- Signage advocating social distancing and hand sanitisation displayed throughout the site
- Where it is reasonable and practicable, keeping interactions outside in well ventilated areas
- Interactions of less than the prescribed social distancing measures should be avoided. Where there is not possible they should be kept to a minimum
- Customers should be advised to rebook if any of the government self-isolation guidelines apply to them
- Staff should remain at home should any of the government self-isolation guidelines apply to them.
 - [\(U.K. Government\). 2020.Covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](#)

The following social distancing measures may be implemented on sites, and may remove or reduce the requirement for additional PPE:

- Informing customers about social distancing measures before they arrive on site
- Using signage, marking areas to stand/wait and arrowed routes to help move people around your facility to ensure your social distancing plan

- Reducing capacity at your facility as a whole, and on each individual activity structure will allow you to potentially increase the current social distancing requirements, this will result in:
 - Lower numbers of participants on sites
 - Lower numbers of staff required
- For multi-activity sites, staggering the opening of attractions



3.6.1 Information about face masks

We would advise that you make it mandatory for customers to wear face coverings at indoor venues, unless the person is exempt from doing so. You can also ask customers and staff to wear them at outdoor venues, but this is currently not mandatory.

Remember the government, in their [Working Safely documents](#), have advised that you do not need to introduce additional PPE outside of a clinical setting, unless your risk assessment has determined there is a need.

The following table gives you summary information about the selection of masks, should you choose to use them. Please note that the topic of what is an appropriate mask or face covering is beyond the scope of this document. If you choose to use masks for either your staff or customers, then we advise you to seek advice from a specialist in this area. There is advise on the selection, use and fitting of face masks on the [HSE website](#) in relation to COVID-19, however, at the moment this refers to their use in a clinical setting only.

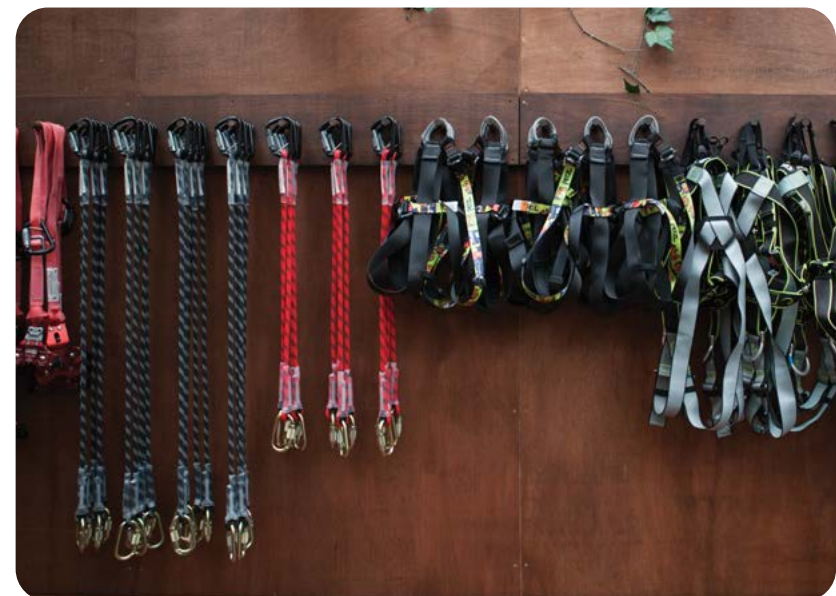
PPE	Considerations on selection
<p>Masks and face coverings differ in the level of protection that they offer.</p> <p>Also, they differ greatly in how effective they are and how they should be used appropriately</p>	<p>The most common masks found are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFP3 masks should be formally fitted to the wearer, including a face fit test, the wearer should be freshly shaved and have training in the use of the mask. (HSE advice on fitting). This is unlikely to be practicable in the industry. • FFP2 mask – Used as RPE (respiratory protective equipment) the user should have a fitting by a competent person (HSE advice on fitting) • FFP1 mask– Dust rated mask. Would be permissible as a face-covering. • IIR mask – R denotes fluid resistant. Surgical masks which are one-way protection masks used in a clinical setting • Face coverings. Items such as neck rolls, bandanas or snoods are in line with the advice from the UK government to the general public

All the masks and face-coverings mentioned above will come with their own set of instructions on how to use them correctly and their discard criteria. You will need to consider these when determining the type and quantities needed for your operation.

3.6.2 What Additional Staff PPE to Consider and When

Below is a table identifying possible staff roles and locations around a typical off-ground operation. We have suggested engineering and admin controls that you could consider before looking at options for PPE. We must stress at this point that all of the content of the following table has been put together purely to demonstrate examples, potential control options and where appropriate the possible use of PPE. You may find that there are things relevant to your facility that need to be included or excluded. Please remember that good hygiene and hand washing are probably the most effective control measures and also that for indoor venues face coverings are mandatory.

It remains the duty of the employer to carry out their own suitability assessment as per the requirements of the [PPE at Work Regulations, 1992](#).



Staff Roles/ Locations	Examples of engineering/admin controls to consider before employing PPE	Staff PPE to consider- based on guidance and when engineering or admin controls are not sufficient in themselves.					
		Disposable gloves	Disposable plastic apron	Disposable plastic gown	A mask that is, as a minimum, fluid resistant	Face covering	Eye- face protection
Staff arrival on site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staggered clock in times to reduce crowding Staff could be placed into small teams to work for the season and thereby reduce overall contact Non-central clock in Hand washing facilities in staff areas 	X	X	X	X	X	X
Customer arrival on site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-information about COVID-19 measures distributed before arrival on site "Social distancing in place" signage or similar Queue management 	X	X	X	X	X	X
Customer Check in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote check in systems/ pre bookings only Perspex screens separating staff from customers Social distancing markers Queue management Hand sanitiser available for staff Reduced cash use, gloves used for cash handling Contactless used as preferred payment method Wristband alternatives 	X Except cash handling	X	X	X	X	X
Merchandise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perspex screens separating staff from customers Social distancing markers Queue management Hand sanitiser available for staff Reduced cash use, gloves used for cash handling Contactless used as preferred payment method 	X Except cash handling	X	X	X	X	X
Customer waiting areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Social distancing in place" signage or similar Demarcation on the floor to show where customer(s) should stand 	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Staff Roles/ Locations	Examples of engineering/admin controls to consider before employing PPE	Staff PPE to consider- based on guidance and when engineering or admin controls are not sufficient in themselves.					
		Disposable gloves	Disposable plastic apron	Disposable plastic gown	A mask that is, as a minimum, fluid resistant	Face covering	Eye- face protection
Kit-up where it is not possible to maintain > current social distance guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider ways for increased social distancing/ remote kit up Kit up brief videos Kit up demonstrations Perspex screens to work behind Peer cross check, demonstrated and watched by staff 	X	X	X	X	✓ Shift use1	X
Attachment to the activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can demonstrations be completed, then customers attach themselves under supervision from socially distanced staff- tug checks to show correct connection? Hand wash/ sanitiser available between groups 	X	X	X	X	X	X
Running the activity where it is possible to maintain > prescribed current social distancing requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand wash opportunities before and after the course/ activity 	X	X	X	X	X	X
Detachment from the activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand wash opportunities before and after the course/ activity 	X	X	X	X	X	X

Staff Roles/ Locations	Examples of engineering/admin controls to consider before employing PPE	Staff PPE to consider- based on guidance and when engineering or admin controls are not sufficient in themselves.					
		Disposable gloves	Disposable plastic apron	Disposable plastic gown	A mask that is, as a minimum, fluid resistant	Face covering	Eye- face protection
Coaching participants where it is not possible to maintain > current prescribed social distancing requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can coaching be carried out remotely/ from the ground Can peer coaching be carried out by members of the same party, under guidance from socially distanced staff 	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓ Shift use ¹⁴	✗
Rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rescue should always be a last resort, potentially even more so with the additional risks presented by COVID-19 Can peer support and remote coaching solve the issue Consider type of rescue- passive rescues reduce face to face contact time Asking conscious casualties to turn away from rescuers during the rescue, except during attachment Rescuer should consider changing clothes after rescue is completed 	✓ Single use ¹⁵	✗	✗	✓ Single use	✗	✓

¹⁴ Shift use indicates that the item of PPE is used for the duration of the shift and not changed between interactions. New PPE will be required every time the user removes the item, e.g. during breaks

¹⁵ Single use indicates that the item of PPE is used for a single interaction, e.g. a single rescue, then disposed of in line with best practice

Staff Roles/ Locations	Examples of engineering/admin controls to consider before employing PPE	Staff PPE to consider- based on guidance and when engineering or admin controls are not sufficient in themselves.					
		Disposable gloves	Disposable plastic apron	Disposable plastic gown	A mask that is, as a minimum, fluid resistant	Face covering	Eye- face protection
1st aid (non-resuscitation, where current prescribed social distancing is not possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can first aid be administered by a member of the same booking group, under the social distanced supervision of a qualified first aider Can the first aid be completed in a well-ventilated area/ outside Limit the number of group members within the permissible social distancing guidelines of casualty/ first aider Disinfect 1st aid area after use May be a sliding scale depending on first aid required, patient history, current alert level and up to date advice https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/first-aid-and-medicals/first-aid-certificate-coronavirus.htm 	✓ Single use	✓ Single use	✗	✓ Single use	✗	✓
CPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please follow the link to the latest guidance on CPR from the HSE https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/first-aid-and-medicals/first-aid-certificate-coronavirus.htm 	✓ Single use	✓ Single use	✓ Single use	✓ Single use	✗	✓ 3
Staff cleaning areas after suspected COVID-19 case on site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the area be isolated for 72 hours? Area to be cleaned with soap and water, then standard disinfectant 	✓ Single use	✓ Single use	✓ Single use	✓ Single use ¹⁶	✗	✓ 3
Staff completing PPE checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand wash before and after checks 	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Work related vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain social distancing measures Lower capacity 	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓ Shift use	✗

¹⁶ Only required if the area is heavily soiled- i.e. visible fluids

3.7 Cleaning and Management of Customer and Staff Safety Equipment

3.7.1 General comments

In this document customer and staff safety equipment includes but is not limited to the following:

- Helmet
- Harness
- Lanyard
- Zip trolley
- Karabiner
- Individual Safety System



The working group that looked at this area was comprised of PPE manufacturers, WASHA and operators. The aim of the group was to research and consider a potential solution to the precautionary cleaning and/or disinfecting of items of equipment between uses and users of off-ground activities.

VIG would like to stress at this time it is not clear as to what the risk is of transmitting COVID-19 in this way.

Most PPE manufacturers have issued information with reference to the cleaning of PPE on their web sites. Much is general in nature and there appears to be disparities between cleaning regimes, what sort of products to use, and how effective those products or methods would be in preventing/reducing the risk of exposure and/or transmission of COVID-19.

Some suggestions would involve purchasing of specialist equipment or cleaning agents, which in turn would involve additional risk to those using them and therefore additional safety requirements such as COSHH or even additional PPE requirements to use the products. Also, some of the suggested cleaning products could only be used a finite number of times, in some instances only up to 3 times maximum.

3.7.2 Staff safety equipment

For some operations it is standard practice not to allocate staff with their own specific set of safety equipment but to provide shift sets. This means safety equipment for the instructors and rescuers on that shift would then be used by a different staff member the next day or shift.

Consider allocating staff their own set of safety equipment and provide them with a safe place to store when not in use. They should be instructed and trained on how to clean, look after, and maintain their own safety equipment.

3.7.3 Textiles, plastics & metal

In the instructions and information that was available at the time of writing manufacturers did not specify when or how often cleaning should take place.

At the current time we were unable to find evidence of what the risk would be of transmitting the virus from one customer to another through the shared use of safety equipment.

You could consider the following but remember it is important that you first refer to the manufacturers' instructions:

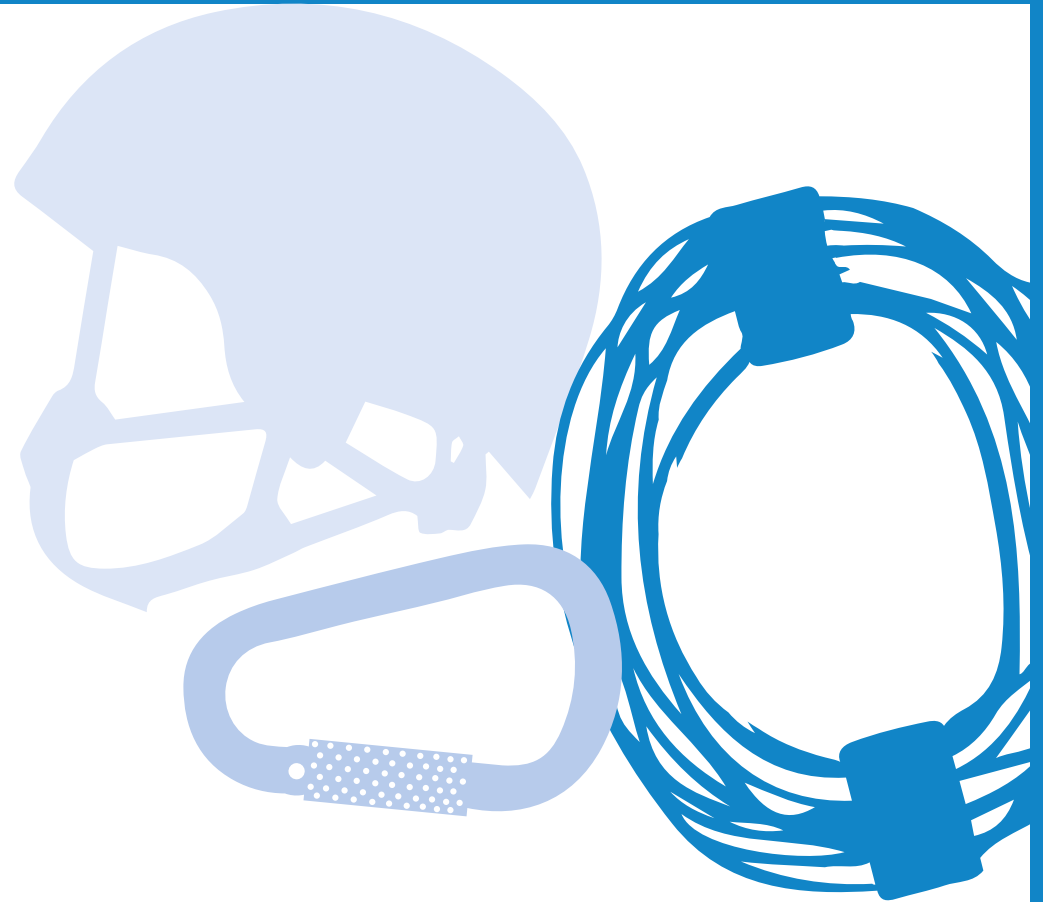
- Implementation of a quarantining period
- increasing the frequency of cleaning using warm water and a pure soap product in the pH range 5.5 to 8.5 with no additives
- cleaning of external surfaces of metal components that are regularly handled by the customer with a wipe or anti-bacterial wipe

3.7.4 Helmets

It may be possible, through a risk assessment process, to make the decision not to issue helmets for some of your activities during this period.

3.7.5 Considerations & recommendations

- Consider providing staff with their own set of safety equipment.
- As the number of visitors/users is likely to be reduced from normal levels consider the use of a quarantine method and/or increased cleaning of the safety equipment.
- Rotation of the safety equipment or the activities themselves with the current number already in circulation.
- Refer to the relevant manufacturer and follow their advice and specific instructions for cleaning.
- If you choose to adopt a new cleaning or disinfectant method to your safety equipment this may result in introducing additional risks.
- Remember that with the increase in cleaning of safety equipment, an increase in frequency of monitoring and inspection of the equipment will be required. This is a control measure to combat the effects of more rigorous, frequent or harsh treatment – that requirement must fall to the Competent Person to monitor and record/report.



3.8 Cleaning your ropes course

In this section we are simply referring to common touch points of your activity structures as outlined in section 3.2.3. The rest of your facility should be cleaned as per the government guidance on re-opening your workplace.

Indoor facilities

With regard to the transmission of COVID-19, it is considered by many experts that indoor activities pose a greater potential risk when compared with being outdoors. Therefore we suggest that those operators who have indoor operations implement a more thorough cleaning regime.

However, when planning the frequency of the cleaning, the method of cleaning and the products chosen to clean the surfaces and common touch points we would recommend operators consider the following;

- **Use a soap and warm/hot water solution over any kind of cleaning chemical**

Due to the nature of these off-ground activities, those carrying out the cleaning may be doing so in a safety harness or using other items of height safety equipment. Even low levels, or highly diluted solutions can still, over time and through regular exposure, degrade plastics, stitching and also corrode metals such as aluminum.

This type of damage or degradation is almost impossible to measure with normal levels of visual inspections.

Be aware that if you use anything other than soap and warm/hot water or cleaning fluids recommended by the manufacturer of the safety equipment you may not realise that the equipment has been damaged until it is too late.

- **When possible, clean at the start of the day and the end of the day**

We are instructed to do the following under the current UK Guidance:

- clean the site before you reopen
- clean work areas, surfaces and equipment more frequently between use with your usual cleaning products
- clean busy areas more often and more thoroughly

Due to the issues raised above we suggest the following:

- Do NOT use your normal cleaning products on your activity structures
- Remind staff and customers to wash their hands frequently, especially at the end of their time on the activity and to refrain from touching their face
- A thorough clean, using soap and water before you open and at the end of each day may be practicable for you. If not each day, then as often as you reasonable can. This is because we do not believe it is reasonably practicable to do so after each and every use.

Whatever you decide to implement just be sure you are not introducing a new risk or impacting on the level of safety covered by your normal operating risk assessments.

Outdoor facilities

It would be impracticable to clean or sanitise these during the operation of a day. When combined with the developing scientific research that COVID-19 does not survive for very long on surfaces in the outdoors, we strongly advise that staff and customers are reminded to wash their hands frequently, especially at the end of their activity and to refrain from touching their face.

If you wish to implement a more frequent cleaning regime of common touch points, please take expert advice on the duration, methods and products you want to use, as use of the product could lead to

unintentional consequences on an outdoor high ropes course, adventure park or zipline, when you factor in the complexities of accessing the activities and uncontrollable factors such as weather on any given day.

For example:

- contaminating staff safety equipment
- accidental exposure to areas of the body such as face and skin or through inhalation
- contaminating the natural environment
- contaminating critical components (I.e. bearings on zip wire trolleys)

As an example of the research into this topic, the following excerpt is taken from [The Journal for Infectious Diseases](#) website in relation to a recent scientific survey [Simulated Sunlight Rapidly Inactivates SARS-CoV-2 on Surfaces](#)

Previous studies have demonstrated that SARS-CoV-2 is stable on surfaces for extended periods under indoor conditions. In the present study, simulated sunlight rapidly inactivated SARS-CoV-2 suspended in either simulated saliva or culture media and dried on stainless steel coupons. Ninety percent of infectious virus was inactivated every 6.8 minutes in simulated saliva and every 14.3 minutes in culture media when exposed to simulated sunlight representative of the summer solstice at 40°N latitude at sea level on a clear day. Significant inactivation also occurred, albeit at a slower rate, under lower simulated sunlight levels. The present study provides the first evidence that sunlight may rapidly inactivate SARS-CoV-2 on surfaces, suggesting that persistence, and subsequently exposure risk, may vary significantly between indoor and outdoor environments. Additionally, these data indicate that natural sunlight may be effective as a disinfectant for contaminated non-porous materials.

3.9 Conclusion to managing risk

UK Government guidance clearly demonstrates a shared responsibility, to lower the transmission of the virus, between the facility and the public who visit them and makes use of their services. No measures put in place can be fully effective without those visiting doing their part.

We believe it is important to educate visitors about this shared responsibility before they arrive, reinforce it on arrival and during their time at your facility.

Notices on websites, booking forms and throughout the site should explain the precautions and procedures you have put in place to lower the risk of transmission of the virus. It is important to recognise that PPE is the least effective control measure and that a policy of thorough hand sanitisation, be that on arrival, during the visit, on departure, or all three is one of the most effective control measures along with social distancing.

It goes without saying that social distancing will need to be maintained at all times so additional education and training of staff on how to monitor the stations, reassure visitors and possibly deal with objections will be required.

It is recognised that a combined approach of the provision of information to customers, thorough sanitisation and social distancing protocols together with quarantine and cleaning/disinfection procedures where necessary is likely to be the optimal management strategy, and that no single control measure is likely to be effective in isolation.

Be **VIGILANT**, pay attention and be ready to respond and develop your plans. In the first days/weeks of opening you will know if your plans are working. Engage your staff in this and listen to your customers. Being flexible and adapting quickly will be critical. Expect that something will not work and be ready to resolve it.

4. Communicating with Your Customers

As we all prepare to re-open our businesses, an important question is how do we effectively communicate our re-opening plans. The correct communication will be critical to the ongoing success of your business whilst we are faced with the challenges presented by COVID-19.

Customers need to feel confident and safe when they visit your facility and you need to ensure you keep them up to date with the latest advice.

You need to be honest, clear and re-assuring in all your communications.

4.1 How best to communicate with your customers

All communications must be effective and consistent across all channels to help build customer confidence and trust.

Think about addressing customers 'fear' by:

- promoting health and hygiene measures
- promoting activities as encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle

It is extremely important to ensure all your digital channels are kept up to date with timely and relevant information; latest government guidance, opening times and marketing messages including new health & hygiene measures in place; Google, websites and social media channels are all places customers can find you easily. Consider a Covid Q & A section on your website, see a good example here from [Woolacombe Bay Holidays](#)

If you use E-Mail or SMS marketing, stay in touch with your customers through these channels and let them know the steps you are taking and plans on re-opening. Consider adding a re-opening statement to your website.

Create a marketing campaign

- Promote the health & hygiene measures you have in place
- consider a short video so the customer can see what to expect and what is expected of them



Pre-visit communication

- Ask for bookings to be made online and tickets to be sent electronically wherever possible
- Send a pre-visit e-mail to remind the customer what time to arrive, what they need to do in advance of visit, what to expect and what is expected of them during their visit. Remind them of and explain the following:
 - If you or any member of your party or family is not feeling well, don't visit. Plan to come when everyone is well. Add link to cancellation policy and contact details in case booking needs to be amended.
 - If you fall in to the government at risk group, we advise you not to attend, [details here](#).
 - Session capacities may have been reduced to allow for social distancing, whilst still ensuring a great customer experience.
 - Implementation of enhanced cleaning measures throughout the day across the business.
 - Requirements on hand washing before, during and after the activity and confirm if hand sanitiser will be available during visit or do they need to bring their own.
 - There will be new information and wayfinding signage. Ask them to read all the advice and follow the instructions.
 - Make any on-site payments using contactless or touch free options where possible.
 - Explain what they need to do and what you will do if they fall ill whilst at your facility.
 - Ask them to sign the disclaimer electronically before your visit.
- If recommended or required by local health authorities, please bring a suitable face mask/covering.

4.2 Things you may want to consider

- If you have a safety briefing video, could this be put on line with a link for the customer to watch pre-visit.
- Adjust your disclaimer document to include a statement on the COVID-19 risk.
- Create a short video highlighting what the customer can expect during their visit. A good example is one from [ZipWorld](#).
- Communicate health & hygiene guidelines and expectations by placing posters/signs on entry and throughout the business. If you have TV screens, communicate through video messages.

Top Tip:

Communicate with empathy, not just facts. Health and hygiene measures are important, but customers have come to our activities to have fun so don't lose sight of the element of 'Fun'.

4.3 Communication resources

There are lots of resources available on the internet to help you display the latest advice, some examples of these are:

- [Signage and wayfinding reminding customers of physical distancing requirements. Free downloads and social distancing sign.](#)
- [Signs for toilets and handwashing facilities reminding customers of handwashing standards](#)
- [Think about your customers. For example, if your activities are child focused then consider signage tailored to children](#)

5. Possible Booking Technology

Right now there is an overwhelming amount of data on the internet claiming to be the next best thing in helping your business recover from COVID-19 and to resume operations as normal. One thing that is for certain is that operations will need to change to adhere to social distancing rules outlined by the government, to optimise hygiene standards to protect customers and your staff and to rebuild the trust and confidence your customers once had before COVID-19 arrived.

A quick search on Google or your device's app store demonstrates that there are hundreds of online booking reservation systems, queue management apps and social distancing technology which can be tricky to wade through and decide which is best for your individual operating model.

Two that have been the most documented are Crowd Solo and Attractions IO, which for some of us in the **VIG** will tick a lot of boxes in what they aim to achieve.

Here is some information to help you make the right decision for you and your business as to whether these two apps and their features will help you rebuild customer trust whilst reducing contact exposure to your teams.



5.1 Crowd Solo

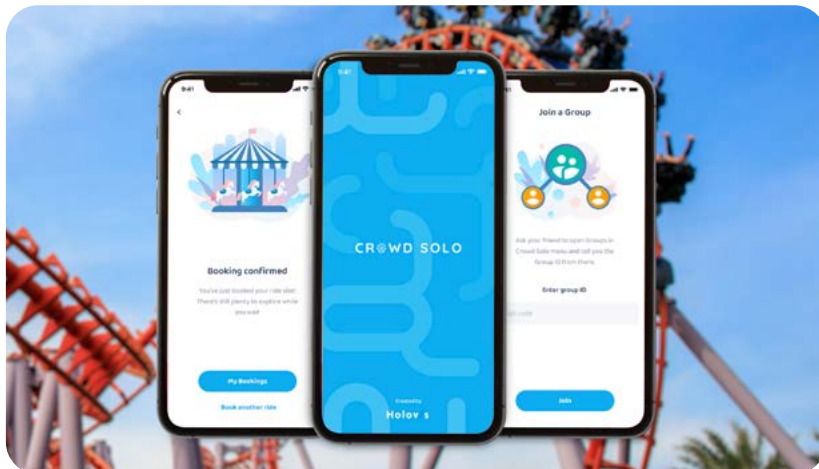
A social distancing and facility management app that has been specifically designed to help workspaces, retail, leisure and entertainment destinations reopen safely in the wake of COVID-19.

The mobile app gives access to real-time insights via heatmaps to show the flow of people at your business; this is to help return to populated areas with the confidence that social distancing and hygiene standards are being met and you are able to manage staffing and capacity quotas effectively.

Features of the app include: Peer to peer proximity alerts, real time heatmaps, peak time avoidance data, booking platform to monitor footfall and avoid queue hotspots, user engagement reports, surface cleanliness tracker.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptcT1J7htTw>

Creative Director Peter Cliff and Development Director Jos van der Steen hosted a live webinar to showcase in more detail the features of our



Crowd Solo mobile app, how it works and the benefits for operators and guests. Attendees were able to ask questions and take the next steps in registering their interest.

<https://www.crowd-solo.com/>

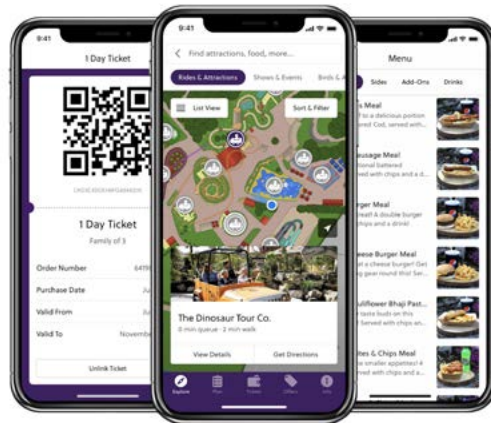
5.2 Attractions IO

Already integrated into the operations of UK attractions such as Alton Towers and Legoland, Attractions IO aims to offer your guests a branded app that lets them access digital tickets, order food and virtually wait in line for attractions from their smartphone.

Features include:

- Targeted communication which will help to communicate revised opening times, or new on-site safety measures during periods of social distancing, make sure guests are kept up-to-date and address any concerns promptly.
- Integrated eCommerce – integrating your e-commerce stores into the app means you can identify and leverage e-commerce opportunities that enable you to generate revenue through the app during the period closure or when capacity is limited.
- Digital Ticketing – Maintain social distancing measures by switching to online pre-purchased tickets in place of at-the-gate admissions to limit queues and help manage capacity. Integrate your existing ticketing solution and provide guests with instant access to their tickets and passes inside the mobile app – available both online or offline and ready to scan and go at the turnstiles. Boost admissions revenue using intelligent in-app ticket upgrade offers targeted by location, demographic of behaviour.

- Mobile food ordering - This app claims to help overcome social distancing and hygiene challenges during your food & beverage ordering experience by removing queuing and reducing interactions with staff or communal self-serve kiosks.
- Mobile food ordering enables guests to browse menus and pay for food from the convenience of their own smartphone, then get notified when it's ready to collect.
- The app aims to organically create automatic up-sells, cross-sells and abandoned order recovery – claiming to have seen average transaction sizes increase by 38% versus walk-up sales.
- Virtual Queuing - Re-open safely amidst the challenges of keeping groups separated by introducing virtual queuing. Enable your guests to join a virtual queue line using their smartphones and receive an alert when it's their turn to ride.
- Heat Maps - Gather the data you need to make decisions with confidence. Use heatmaps to understand guest flow, identify the most populated areas on-site and limit or increase capacity accordingly. Capture and analyse guest feedback to provide a barometer for guest confidence, address concerns in real-time and build trust and positive brand association that lasts far beyond the current crisis.



<https://attractions.io/>

Appendices

Appendix A

Vertex Industry Group Participants

The group were invited to Zoom meetings approximately every 2 weeks and recordings of the meeting were made and are freely available [here](#).

Following the first meeting a number of working groups were formed and these groups then researched and wrote their findings and recommendations. These were then collated and formed the basis of the document you are now reading.

The participants in the group meetings included the following companies and businesses.







Active Learning Group



The Lakes by yoo ECOVENTURE





Appendix B – Working Groups

PPE Group

ISC, Wales



Zipit Forest Adventures



UK Youth



Lyon Equipment



Adventure, Climb, Rescue



Nuclear Races



Work at Height Safety Association



Lapwing Lodge



Close Contact, COVID PPE and Social distancing

Zip World



Rock Reef



Mojo Active



Magna Vitae, Altitude 44



Nuclear Races



Active Learning Group

Zipit Forest Adventures



Tim Wild

Independent Consultant

Risk Assessments etc.

DWF Law



The Growth Company



Activities Industry Mutual



Woolacombe Bay Holiday Parks



Go Ape



Nuclear Races



Zip World



Tim Wild

Independent Consultant

Ecoventure



Staff Matters

Tree Top Trek



Zip World



In2Action



Rock Reef



Sky Walk Adventure



PR, Comms,
Bookings and IT

Branching Out Adventures



Nuclear Races



Rock Reef



Woolacombe Bay Holiday
Parks



Girlguiding Ulster



Appendix C

Useful Links and Websites

[UK Government](#)

OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy

[UK Government](#)

Working Safely during COVID-19 documents

[Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health Wales, Public Health Agency Northern Ireland, Health Protection Scotland, Public Health Scotland, Public Health England and NHS England](#)

COVID-19: infection prevention and control guidance

[HSE](#)

Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak – a short guide, HSE, May 2020

[HSE](#)

Talking with your workers about preventing coronavirus, HSE, May 2020

[HSE](#)

RIDDOR Reporting coronavirus

[Resuscitation Council](#)

Statement on Covid-19, CPR and Resuscitation

[UK Active](#)

COVID-19 – A framework for the re-opening of gym, leisure centre and wider fitness industry during social distancing

[IAPPA](#)

COVID-19 Reopening Guidance: Considerations for the Global Attractions Industry

[The Outdoor Industries Association, UK](#)

COVID-19 Help Hub

[Institute of Outdoor Learning](#)

COVID-19 Response and Support

[Association of British Climbing Walls](#)

COVID-19 News and updates

[Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

[Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002](#)

[Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)

[Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 Approved Code of Practice and guidance](#)

[Infection at Work: Controlling the risks', Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens, 2003](#)

Appendix D

Looking After Your Staff – Useful Links and Websites

Staff on Furlough or Working from Home

[ACAS](#)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for employers and employees

[ACAS](#)

Disciplinary and grievance procedures during the coronavirus pandemic

[ACAS](#)

Using Holiday: Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for employers and employees

[ACAS](#)

Working from home

[ACAS](#)

ACAS Webinars

[BBC](#)

Zoom etiquette

[CIPD](#)

Furlough FAQs

[CIPD](#)

Furlough Guide

[CIPD](#)

Guide to communicating with staff whilst on furlough

[CIPD](#)

Protecting your workforce

[CIPD](#)

Self employed FAQs

[CIPD](#)

Remote Working Top Tips

[Cruse Bereavement Care](#)

Coronavirus: dealing with bereavement and grief

[High Speed Training](#)

Working from home risk assessment

[HSE](#)

Protect Home Workers

[HSE](#)

Lone Working

[Mental Health & Money Advice](#)

Mental health and money advice for COVID-19 outbreak

[Mental Health UK](#)

Managing your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak

[MIND](#)

Coronavirus and your wellbeing

[National Debt Helpline](#)

[NHS](#)

Mental wellbeing while staying at home

[Sodexo](#)

The employee health and wellbeing pack

[Stylist](#)

11 of the best free online courses to take during lockdown

[UK Government](#)

Job Retention Scheme

[UK Government](#)

Personal data an employer can keep about an employee

[UK Government](#)

The Skills Toolkit

[VeryWell Mind](#)

Tips on Coping With Coronavirus If You Live Alone

[Welsh Government](#)

Furlough Support

Staff Returning to Work

[ACAS](#)

Returning to the workplace

[ACAS](#)

Furlough letter templates

[ACAS](#)

Managing staff redundancies

[ACAS](#)

Changing an employment contract

[ACAS](#)

Lay offs and short time working

[CIPD](#)

COVID-19: returning to the workplace

[CIPD](#)

Workplace safety risk assessment example

[CIPD](#)

Back to work support

[Citizens Advice](#)

Flexible Working

[Citizens Advice](#)

Coronavirus – if you need to be off work to care for someone

[The Guardian](#)

Returning to work in the coronavirus crisis: what are your rights?

[HSE](#)

Return to Work

[HSE](#)

Example risk assessments

[Lexology](#)

COVID-19: UK workplace temperature screening – striking the balance

[MIND](#)

Coronavirus and work

[UK Government](#)

Employment Rights Act, 1996 – Section 44

COVID-19

Re-opening Advice & Considerations: High ropes courses, adventure parks and zip wire activities

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Design: **blackdoggraphics**.portfoliobox.me
email: **mary@blackdoggraphics.co.uk**