

HSE is checking businesses in Swindon are COVID-secure

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors are busy contacting and visiting businesses in Swindon to make sure workplaces are COVID-secure and help tackle a local outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases.

After a rise in workplace Covid-19 outbreaks in the town, the government moved Swindon on to its coronavirus watch-list.

HSE is working alongside Swindon Borough Council to support the understanding of any patterns in the confirmed coronavirus cases in the area while reassuring the local community.

Inspectors are out checking workplaces across Swindon, putting duty holders and employers on the spot and ensuring that they are complying with the latest Safer Workplace guidance relevant to their sector.

Being COVID-secure means that businesses need to put in place workplace adjustments to manage the risk and protect workers and others from coronavirus. Businesses can do this by following [five practical steps](#):

- Step 1. carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment
- Step 2. develop increased cleaning, hand washing and hygiene procedures
- Step 3. take all reasonable steps to help people work from home
- Step 4. maintain 2m social distancing where possible
- Step 5. where people cannot be 2m apart, manage transmission risk.

Simon Chilcott, HSE Principal Inspector, said: "As confirmed cases of the disease are on the rise in Swindon, we are talking to and conducting spot inspections on local businesses in the area to gauge and understand how they are managing risks in line with their specific business activity.

"Our visits are not just located on the town centre; we are conducting spot inspections and telephone inspections across businesses in the wider area to ensure becoming COVID-secure is their current number one priority.

"While reassuring businesses, we are also reminding them that it is a legal duty for employers to protect their workers and others from harm and this includes taking reasonable steps to control the risk and protect people from coronavirus. This will entail making often simple but effective workplace adjustments to become COVID-secure."

As inspections across the country are on-going, HSE has been utilising a number of different ways to ensure organisations and businesses are COVID-secure and compliant with the guidance.

HSE and local authority inspectors are finding some common issues across a range of sectors that include: failing to provide arrangements for monitoring, supervising and maintaining social distancing, failing to

introduce an adequate cleaning regime – particularly at busy times of the day – and providing access to welfare facilities to allow employees to frequently wash their hands with warm water and soap.

To support businesses, HSE is providing advice and guidance to manage risk and protect workers. Where some employers are not managing the risk, HSE will take action which can range from the provision of specific advice, issuing enforcement notices and stopping certain work practices until they are made safe. Where businesses fail to comply, this could lead to prosecution.

Simon Chilcott added: “If you are a business or organisation that is open anywhere in the UK you must ensure you have the right workplace adjustments in place to safeguard your workers from Coronavirus infection. HSE are combining a range of tactics to ensure they can check as many businesses as possible so if you get a phone call or a visit from HSE you must engage in the spot inspection process.

“We are also encouraging all employers to work with their employees when implementing changes to become COVID-secure and guiding them to the right information on how to do this.

“Our inspectors could call unannounced at any business in any sector so please make sure your workplace is COVID-secure and measures are in place to manage any risks.

“That way it will benefit the health of workers, customers and the local community while supporting the regional and national economy.”

For the latest information and Safer Workplaces guidance, see www.gov.uk

Ends

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk
2. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
3. For HSE’s working safely guidance see <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

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