

SAFE RETURN TO WORK

— KEY POINT BRIEFING.



As lockdown eases in Northern Ireland and more people return to workplaces, it's vital that employers remember their legal responsibilities to keep workplaces safe.

Here is a quick reminder of the **minimum** that employers should be doing. If you have concerns that your employer is not taking the required action to keep everyone safe then you should contact your union and the relevant enforcement agency including the [Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland](#).

Risk Assessments

Employers must complete risk assessments to spot potential hazards and to make any changes possible to reduce the risk of accidents or injuries or ill health. As part of this duty, your employer must carry out a specific **Covid-19 risk assessment** and this should be done in consultation with trade unions, health and safety reps and workers.

Employers should identify risks in each workplace, along with **specific steps they'll take** to reduce them, so that workers can do their jobs safely. They should take **additional steps to protect vulnerable workers**.

Risk assessments are a **legal requirement** for all employers, and must be in writing if they have 5 or more employees.

If your union is recognised, your employer must consult with it and any health and safety reps - it's the law.

Don't forget, if your employer recognises your union you can appoint a health and safety rep. Contact your union to find out more.

Your employer should share the risk assessment and plan with all workers. That means distributing it in accessible formats and making sure it's simple to understand.

And it should be **easy to find**. The UK Government expects all businesses with more than 50 employees to **publish the results of their risk assessments on their website**. Reps can use this to hold employers to account.

What should the risk assessment cover?

The risk assessment should be comprehensive and cover the following areas, as a minimum:

- The prevention of infection
- Personal Protective Equipment including face coverings
- Ventilation
- Travel to work and during work
- Workers at higher risk, including pregnant women
- BME workers
- Mental Health
- Safe Staffing levels
- Arrangements for visitors at workplaces

Having identified the risks, the risk assessment must also make clear what the employer is doing or will do to eliminate or mitigate the risks. Remember, you and your members have the right to work in safe workplaces. If you are concerned that your workplace is not safe, contact your union right away.

For more information

[HSENI](#) – has produced a number of resources including a sample [COVID risk assessment](#)

[Labour Relations Agency](#)

[Public Health Agency](#)

[ICTU](#)