

Return to the workplace safely: making our sites Covid Secure

12 June 2020

As the government continues to slowly ease the lock down measures, our first priority as a Trust is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff and service users before we make any changes.

The Trust is currently operating a work from home principle for those staff that are able to work effectively from home and this will continue for some time. The government has updated its [Stay at home guidance here](#).

We know that you are anxious to find out more about our plans to start bringing staff back to the workplace safely. We have formed a Return to the Workplace Safety Task and Finish Group which has been working on this for a few weeks.

The Government has [published guidance to help employers](#), employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the coronavirus pandemic which we are following.

What has become clear is that, in order to ensure our sites can become 'Covid Secure', there is a lot of work to do and we cannot rush it. Therefore, the process of bringing staff back onto Trust sites will take months, rather than weeks.

The majority of our frontline clinical staff have continued to work on sites whilst putting in place a number of infection control procedures and other new ways of working to operate safely. However a lot of clinical staff are working from home and we know this is putting a strain on their work/life balance.

Over 170 staff have been redeployed to maintain our critical services such as crisis and inpatient wards, and we thank you immensely for your commitment and flexibility. We must be clear that we anticipate this arrangement will continue for a number of months to come.

The majority of staff in corporate and support teams have been working from home during the pandemic. Social distancing and infection control measures will need to be established before any return to Trust sites. Again, this will likely take months rather than weeks.

Three phase plan

Our Return to the Workplace Safety Group has produced a briefing paper that sets out the principles and a three phased plan they will be following in line with national guidelines. You can read it here: [Back to work safely – outline plan and principles v06](#)

At the moment we cannot commit to an exact timetable as we are still scoping the amount of work that will need to be done, including identifying Covid Secure Site Co-ordinators for all our sites to oversee compliance at local level.

We can say that during June and July we will be working with nominated leads from services operating on our nine priority sites on data gathering, risk assessments and site reviews. This, alongside the individual wellbeing assessments that managers are carrying out, will help services determine who can come back onto Trust sites, when and how.

Our nine priority sites are:

Aire Court
St Mary's House
St Mary's Hospital
Asket House / Asket Croft
Becklin Centre
Newsam Centre
Clifton House
The Mount
Parkside Lodge

The Staff Wellbeing Framework

The Staff Wellbeing Framework has been developed in response to the emerging risk factors identified for Covid-19.

We are asking line managers and staff to have an ongoing comprehensive compassionate conversation about their personal context and working environment in the current phase of the pandemic, to understand what individual support is needed so that we can continue to deliver high quality care.

This framework will apply to all staff (including returning staff), with the first area of focus on undertaking assessments with BAME colleagues. These conversations are required to be undertaken and recorded as a priority. Wherever possible assessment conversations for BAME staff need to be completed by the end of June. You can download the Wellbeing Assessment Framework documents below:

[Staff Wellbeing Framework Guidance and Information](#)

[Staff Wellbeing Assessment Template](#)

Asking questions and feedback

We know there are currently lots of unanswered questions about returning to work safely and making our sites Covid Secure. This is as much as we can share for now but we are committed to on-going communication and engagement with affected teams going forward.

Please raise any questions through your usual line management routes.

If you have questions that cannot be answered locally, either about safe home working or coming back to one of our sites, please email our corona.virus@nhs.net address and we'll ensure this reaches the right people to help.