

Covid update

Following the announcement by the Prime Minister and Government on the relaxation of some COVID-19 restrictions this has meant that, from 20 January 2022, staff are no longer required by law to work from home, and from the 27 January 2022, you will no longer be required by law to wear a face covering.

This means the Government has removed Plan B and reverted to Plan A which we all lived under in the Autumn last year and, therefore, the same guidance applies.

However, the Government guidance is that, in indoor settings, where a face covering is not legally required, you should still continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet – such as offices. Guidance also encourages the use of social distancing to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 where appropriate.

COVID-19 has not gone away in this time and, like all public agencies in the Suffolk Resilience Forum, we are still working under our business continuity plan and monitoring the impact of absence through COVID-19 on our staffing numbers and the impact this has on the delivery of services.

Therefore, if staff need to, they can work from the offices, after talking to your manager. As before:

- keep space between others of more than one metre - this includes in meetings
- office desks remain socially distanced and you should continue to use the desk booking system
- while walking around our buildings, face coverings must be worn unless you are exempt (when seated at desk or in meetings, face coverings can be removed)
- we will continue with cleaning plans
- we will continue to promote good hygiene practices, washing of hands and so on
- we encourage all staff to take a lateral flow test before coming into the workplace
- isolate if have symptoms and if you test positive (minimum of five days isolation, you will be able to come out of isolation on day six if you have two negative tests - one on day five and one on day six)
- if conducting online meetings, don't forget to use headphones
- please make sure you leave the desk you have used clean and tidy and clutter free.

We would also like to remind staff not to leave personal belongings, files and work-related material on desks, filing cupboards or in communal areas when not present in the building. Our workspace does need to be kept tidy, clean and clear to allow colleagues to work under the current arrangements.

We are working on opening communal areas, meeting rooms and adding more desks as soon as we can. This is being done alongside partners at Suffolk County Council who also share West Suffolk House. This will happen in the next few weeks and we will update you next week on the timescale for this and what the floorplate will look like for West Suffolk House. We are reminding staff, if they have booked a desk but are not using it, please unbook it.

We will, of course, review Government guidance and advice from public health and adapt to that if it changes, as well as follow our business continuity plan. Our approach is in line with our neighbouring councils.

At West Suffolk Operational Staff (WSOH) are no longer being tested twice a week through the mobile testing unit, as this was withdrawn in December. We are now asking these staff to complete twice weekly testing (LFD/T) at home or at the depot and report results to the Operations team.