

This risk assessment has been produced by Management in line with the Government’s guidance and in co-operation with the employee elected Employee Health & Safety Representative. Our main aim is to reduce and where possible eliminate the risk of COVID-19 infection and/or transmission within the work place. This risk assessment applies to all of our offices.

As part of our dedication to keeping people safe we are also limiting contact with members of the public. The majority of our offices are currently closed to members of the public. Our offices have been closed to the public during the November 2020 lockdown in order to minimise the risk of transmission of Covid-19 to staff and third parties. Where legally possible the witnessing of documents is being carried out remotely. Meetings are being carried out by telephone conference and video conference. In the rare circumstances where meetings with clients do have to take place in a face to face environment these are being conducted in line with social distancing guidelines and Government Regulations.

<b>Potential Risk</b>	<b>Steps to Mitigate that Risk</b>
Number of People in the Office	<p>It is important that we maintain staff in the offices in order to deal with tasks that cannot be carried out at home – these include but are not limited to dealing with printing and post.</p> <p>Those staff who can work from home are working from home and have been provided with the necessary equipment to do so.</p> <p>Those staff who are required to be in the office have to abide by the risk mitigation steps that are outlined in this Risk Assessment.</p> <p>Where appropriate break times, start times and finish times should be staggered to avoid staff arriving at or leaving the building at the same time or congregating in or around communal shared facilities.</p> <p>From 28.09.2020 work spaces will have been rearranged to ensure social distancing measures are in place in light of an increased number of staff returning to work from the office.</p> <p>Where it is viable for role, staff have been offered partial home working.</p>
Lateral Flow Testing	<p>All members of staff who work in any of our offices whether on a full time or part time basis, are requested to take lateral flow tests twice a week. Tests are to be obtained by staff, however, we shall also carry a supply of tests which will be placed at Receptions for those who have run out or have not been at any time able to obtain the appropriate tests.</p> <p>If a lateral test proves positive we would ask that you advise us immediately, do not come into work, and get a full Covid test to determine the lateral test result.</p>
Location of People in the Office	<p>The following measures have been implemented:</p> <p>Workspaces are not to be shared. Hot desks have been suspended.</p> <p>Workspaces have been relocated so that staff are not sitting opposite each other and so that there is at least a 2 meter distance between them.</p>

	Workspaces where appropriate have dividing screens between them.
Movement around the Offices	<p>The following measures have been implemented:</p> <p>Staff should maintain at least a 2 meter distance from others at all times. Where appropriate around desks and at photocopiers floor markers have been laid to indicate a 2 meter distance for those who may be approaching that work space.</p> <p>Queues are prohibited for use of equipment.</p> <p>Staff should not cross on the stairs but wait at a safe distance for the person ascending or descending the stairs to have finished.</p> <p>At all offices all internal doors are held open during working hours to allow free movement around the building without having to touch door handles or plates.</p> <p>At the Merry Hill Office a one way clockwise system for walking around each floor is in place in order to avoid staff crossing paths with each other. This is not possible at other offices due to their configuration so staff should ensure that they move around the office in such a manner as to avoid crossing paths with others.</p> <p>At the Merry Hill Office only one person should use the lift at a time and where possible the stairs rather than the lift should be used. No other office has a lift.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged not to mix with members of other teams unless done so remotely.</p> <p>Facemasks are to be worn when people are in communal areas of the office or speaking with a member of staff at another desk. Facemasks need not be worn in meetings provided other social distancing measures and ventilation can be achieved.</p>
Use of Communal Areas	<p>No more than one person should be in a kitchen area at a time.</p> <p>Staff should wash their hands prior to using any equipment in the kitchen.</p> <p>Following use of a kitchen the items touched and work surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned with the anti-bacterial wipes provided.</p> <p>Mugs, glasses and utensils should not be shared. All cutlery and crockery should be thoroughly cleaned after use. In some of the offices the Firm has provided dishwashers for this purpose. Appropriate settings should be used.</p> <p>All individuals should only make their own drinks not those of any colleagues. We recognise that staff share their birthday celebrations with colleagues by bringing in cakes and other treats to be shared. We do not wish to discourage this as it is a nice thing in what are otherwise difficult circumstances. Current Government guidance is that risk of spreading COVID-19 on food packaging is</p>

	<p>low however, we do encourage staff to consider carefully the type of treats that they bring in and whether packaging has to be touched by multiple people to access the treats – these types of treats should be avoided or set out in such a way as to prevent/minimise this whilst otherwise considering food safety.</p> <p>The number of people using toilet facilities at the same time (where offices have communal facilities) should be kept to a minimum and surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned after use with the anti-bacterial wipes provided.</p> <p>If staff need to be in the same meeting room as large a meeting room as possible should be used. Staff should sit so as to avoid being face to face and at least 2 meters apart. Where possible meetings should be held remotely by video or telephone conference using approved services.</p> <p>Staff should avoid gathering, even with social distancing measures in place, in high traffic areas such as landings, around desks, and photocopiers for example.</p> <p>Communal areas should be regularly cleaned throughout the day by the staff in the office and once a day by the cleaners using equipment and cleaning materials provided.</p>
Ventilation of office spaces	Where possible, especially when the weather is nice windows should be opened to increase ventilation. The use of fans and of air conditioning should be avoided as these circulate air within a closed environment.
Use of shared equipment	<p>Shared use of equipment should be kept to an absolute minimum.</p> <p>In some instances this is not possible – for example use of printers/photocopiers. Only one person at a time should use such equipment – queues should be avoided and the equipment should be thoroughly cleaned using the anti-bacterial wipes provided. Prior to use staff should ensure their hands are sanitised using the hand sanitiser provided.</p>
Personal Protective Equipment – Staff Generally	<p>The Government have not recommended the general use of medical grade face masks. They have recommended the use of homemade cloth face coverings and have given guidance on their website gov.uk on how these can be made, fitted and kept sanitised.</p> <p>Staff are encouraged to wear face coverings (masks are preferred but visors may be worn as an alternative) in appropriate circumstances particularly when having to attend meetings in person or are in large groups or in public places. As from 08 August 2020 in line with Government guidance it will be mandatory for visitors to our Merry Hill office to wear a mask, even if they are only dropping documents in or collecting documents and will only be in reception briefly. If a visitor refuses to wear a mask then they will be politely refused entry. The only exception to this is if a visitor has medical reasons as to why they cannot wear a mask or they need to not wear a mask in order to be able to properly communicate e.g. communication would be dependent on being able to see facial expressions or read lips. When meeting with clients staff should</p>

	<p>also wear face coverings unless the client requires no mask in order to assist with communication. If staff wish to wear face coverings at other times this is not discouraged. Government guidance does state that this measure will not necessarily protect a person from contracting COVID-19 but may act as a preventative step from that person passing on the virus to others. For further information please refer to the “Reception” Section of this Risk Assessment. Facemasks are to be worn by staff in all communal areas.</p> <p>Latex free gloves are available for use in the office generally or when meeting with clients or handling papers or documents that cannot otherwise be sanitised. The use of gloves is not mandatory nor is it a substitute for washing your hands with soap regularly or using hand sanitiser when washing is not possible. Staff are reminded that they should avoid touching their face even when wearing gloves. Gloves should be disposed of in the same manner as tissues – double bagged and left for 72 hours before being placed into general waste bins for collection. A guide to how to safely remove them has been circulated to all staff and is located next to the glove box. Staff should also check that they do not have an allergy to the material from which the gloves are made prior to using them.</p> <p>A wall mounted thermometer is installed at the Merry Hill office and handheld thermometers are available at all offices. Members of staff should have their temperature checked on entering the building. If their temperature is registered as above 37.8 degrees Celsius then they must leave immediately and go home to self isolate and obtain a test. They must inform their head of department and the HR Manager.</p>
<p>Reception Merry Hill</p>	<p>During November 2020 and until at least 30.5.2021 all of our offices are closed to the public. Documents may be posted through the letter box at the Merry Hill office.</p> <p>It still remains policy that all client meetings should be carried out remotely. It is not general policy to meet with clients in the office.</p> <p>In the rare event that it is necessary to meet with a client in the office, when it reopens, then the following guidelines must be followed:</p> <p>Only rooms 1 and 2 should be used – these are sufficiently large enough to ensure appropriate social distancing measures can be maintained.          Whilst in the room windows should be opened to maintain ventilation          Following use of the room it must be thoroughly cleaned (this will be the responsibility of the person who last used the room) – all hard surfaces including door handles, table surfaces, chair arms must be sanitised with the anti-bacterial wipes.</p> <p>In order to protect the receptionist who is based in the Reception:</p> <p>A Perspex screen will be placed on the reception desk where the receptionist’s computer is located,          A two meter floor tape marking is in front of the reception desk.</p>

	<p>A basket for documents to be placed in is at the end of the reception desk for clients to place their documents in and step back without coming within the two meter social distancing distance.</p> <p>The receptionist will have at her option a facemask or visor when other people are in the reception area</p> <p>The receptionist will have latex free gloves available for use when handling documents or other items brought in by clients.</p> <p>The card machine has been moved so that the receptionist and clients do not have to be within close proximity for its use.</p> <p>In order to protect clients:</p> <p>Chairs have been moved so that if more than one person needs to attend reception and wait for any reason they can do so in line with the social distancing guidelines,</p> <p>A table has been set up in the client area with latex free gloves, single use masks, tissues, and antibacterial gel for their use.</p> <p>Signs have been put up regarding the safe use of the personal protective equipment</p> <p>A bin is available for used gloves, masks and tissues to be safely discarded – used items should be bagged and left for 72 hours before they are put into the general waste for collection</p> <p>As from 08 August 2020 in line with Government guidance, and when the office reopens, it will be mandatory for visitors to our Merry Hill office to wear a mask, even if they are only dropping documents in or collecting documents and will only be in reception briefly. If a visitor refuses to wear a mask then they will be politely refused entry. The only exception to this is if a visitor has medical reasons as to why they cannot wear a mask or they need to not wear a mask in order to be able to properly communicate e.g. communication would be dependent on being able to see facial expressions or read lips.</p>
Cleaning	<p>Washing facilities, soap, sanitiser and anti-bacterial wipes are available throughout all offices. Staff are required to regularly wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds in line with government guidance, copies of which are posted by the washing facilities, and wash/sanitise their hands before using shared equipment/equipment located in a communal area.</p> <p>Cleaning staff are required to clean the offices on a daily basis paying special attention to communal areas. Cleaning staff have been provided with appropriate cleaning materials.</p> <p>Additionally staff are required to sanitise their work space and desk equipment on a daily basis using the cleaning equipment provided.</p> <p>All rubbish bins are to be lined with a fresh bin liner on a daily basis and emptied on a daily basis. Tissues should be double bagged and left for 72 hours before disposal in line with Government guidance.</p> <p>Staff are to maintain a clear desk policy to allow cleaners to clean desks at the</p>

	<p>end of each day.</p>
Travel to, from and for work	<p>In line with Government guidance staff are encouraged not to use public transport for travel.</p> <p>Where more than one person is required to travel for a face to face meeting – if they are not of the same household they should travel separately.</p> <p>Travel expenses for alternative means of travel on work matters should be claimed in line with the Firm's expenses policy.</p>
Travel Abroad	<p>If staff choose to travel abroad and are returning from a country to which the quarantine/isolation measures apply staff will not be permitted to come into the office for 2 weeks following their return. This measure is being implemented in order to protect colleagues and clients and to ensure that any exposure to the COVID19 infection has minimal impact on the operation of the business.</p> <p>This rule applies even if the isolation measure/recommendation is imposed by the Government whilst staff are away.</p> <p>If staff are able to work from home they will be permitted to do so. If however, staff would otherwise be required to work in the office then they are required to take the 14 days' isolation period as holiday. If staff have remaining holiday then they will be paid accordingly. If staff do not have remaining holiday allowance the absence will be unpaid but will not be registered as unauthorised.</p> <p>In light of the Government guidance a negative COVID19 test upon return to England would not be sufficient to allow staff into the office and out of self-isolation.</p> <p>The list of relevant countries changes regularly as new information comes to light regarding infection rates. The Government has listed the relevant countries here <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors</a></p>
Symptomatic Staff	<p>Staff who are experiencing any of the following symptoms (as listed on the gov.uk website) should not attend work but inform the Human Resources Manager and self-isolate for at least 14 days.</p> <p>Staff who have a member of their home experiencing any of the following symptoms (as listed in the gov.uk website) should not attend work but inform the Human Resources Manager and self-isolate for at least 14 days.</p> <p><i>Symptoms:</i>  <i>New continuous cough and/or</i>  <i>High temperature</i>  <i>Loss of taste and/or smell</i></p> <p>Staff who develop these symptoms at work must immediately:  Contact the Human Resources Manager and provide a list of all staff and other</p>

	<p>people (work related) that they have had contact with in the last 10 days; and Go home, seek medical treatment and self-isolate for at least 14 days.</p> <p>Staff who have children who have been sent home to self-isolate as a result of a Covid-19 positive test at their child's school will need to work from home.</p> <p>If a positive case of Covid is confirmed at our Merry Hill everyone must self-isolate for 14 days and work from home where possible. They must get a test urgently. The office will be closed for 3 days followed by a deep clean Post and DX to be collected from PO Box (DX and hand deliveries collected after 3 days). Work will be dealt with at other offers.</p>
<p>Staff in high risk groups; or Staff who have members of their household who are in high risk groups; or Staff who have members of their household who have to make regular trips to hospitals or other medical facilities for medical treatment; or Staff who have members of their household who have to safeguard.</p>	<p>Where possible such members of staff should work from home.</p> <p>Where this is not possible staff following individual consultation will be offered alternative working arrangements or will be placed on the appropriate type of leave.</p>
<p>Emergencies and First Aid</p>	<p>In emergency situations, such as the administration of first aid, a fire or an evacuation it may not always be possible to maintain social distancing requirements. In such circumstances those rendering assistance and those being assisted should where possible wear a face covering and should take steps to sanitise/wash their hands as soon as possible after assistance has been rendered. Facemasks should be worn when administering first aid.</p>
<p>Covid Vaccinations</p>	<p>Please follow the Government Guidelines and recommendations with regard to immunisation, when you are given the opportunity to do so.</p>
<p>Interaction with people outside of the work place on work related business.</p>	<p>Face to face contact with members of the public is limited to where it is absolutely essential.</p> <p>All of our offices are currently closed to members of the public and meetings are being carried out by telephone conference and video conference.</p> <p>Where legally possible the witnessing of documents is being carried out remotely.</p> <p>In the rare circumstances where meetings with clients do have to take place in a face to face environment these are being conducted in line with social distancing guidelines and masks or visors should be worn, unless the client relies on facial expressions or lip reading.</p>

<p>Court and Police Station Attendance</p>	<p>Where appropriate and allowed police station visits and court hearings should be conducted by video or telephone conference.</p> <p>Where appropriate mediations should be conducted by video or telephone conference.</p> <p>Where it is not appropriate or the court has ordered otherwise.</p> <p>Staff must consider their duties as officers of the court and their duties to act in the client's best interests when making any application for a hearing to be conducted by video or telephone conference or for an application to set aside such an order.</p> <p>Where court attendances are taking place in person or police station attendance is taking place in person, the member of staff should ask for and familiarise themselves with the relevant organisation's risk assessment and comply with any health and safety policy/procedure that has been put in place and at a minimum comply with the Government's guidelines on social distancing.</p>
<p>General Areas of Risk</p>	<p>Staff are reminded to comply with the Government's guidance on social distancing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To remain at least 2 meters apart from others</li> <li>To wash hands regularly</li> <li>To avoid touching you face with your hands.</li> <li>To wear masks when interacting with people you may not ordinarily interact with</li> </ul> <p>We expect all of our staff to comply with the Government guidance and legal requirements in relation to the wearing of face masks.</p> <p>We will require clients and visitors to wear facemasks in meetings and when they attend our office unless they fall into an exemption.</p>
<p>Mental Health</p>	<p>Waldrons recognises that these unprecedented circumstances are very stressful and staff may become anxious or suffer from a deterioration in mental health due to working conditions, being on furlough, self-isolating or working from home. For that reason the following measures are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular communication with all Staff regarding steps being taken at work to deal with the COVID-19 situation</li> <li>Regular communication by the Human Resources Manager with members of staff who are on furlough to check in with them on a social basis</li> <li>Regular communication by Heads of Department with their teams to check in with how they are doing.</li> </ul> <p>Members of staff who are experiencing mental health difficulties are</p>

	encouraged to speak with the Human Resources Manager, their Head of Department, or a Director. They are sign posted to medical professionals and charities that can assist.
Track and Trace	We are supporting the Government's Track and Trace system. Clients who attend the open receptions are asked to provide their name and telephone number. This is voluntary. The data will be stored for 21 days and then destroyed. If there is a risk that a member of the public who has attended the office has come into contact with a member of staff who has a positive Covid-19 test within that 21 day period, their data will be passed onto NHS Track and Trace so that they can contact the member of public.