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The Covid Safety Codes of Practice: What we can all do to minimise risk of infection and transmission

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**The Covid Safety Codes of Practice:
What we can all do to minimise risk of infection and transmission**

Draft for consultation 1st September 2021

Independent SAGE presents a draft 'Covid Safety Codes': a set of proposals for reducing risk of infection and transmission that can be adopted and implemented by local government, employers, public-facing business and services and individuals themselves.

Why do we need Covid Safety Codes of Practice?

Everyone in society can play a role in minimising Covid infection rates while permitting individuals and society to function effectively. National Governments play a pivotal role in this, both in terms of exercising their own responsibilities and in supporting others to exercise theirs. The aim of this document is to outline what others can do: local government; employers; owners of pubs, restaurants, sports facilities and other public facing businesses; and individual members of the public.

The Covid Safety Codes of Practice that we set out in this document are designed to provide a simple and clear outline of what each of these groups can do. This is a consultation, designed to initiate dialogue with the relevant agencies following which we aim to develop a version to support those agencies in creating more detailed versions that can be updated as required.

The Codes draw on three sources: (a) existing evidence and guidelines; (b) respiratory infection control measures set out by the World Health Organization; and c) 'APEASE' criteria for behavioural interventions (Acceptability, Practicability, Effectiveness, Affordability, Spill-over effects, Equity).

The core principles that emerged from (a) and (b) were.

- Making environments (both domestic and public) as safe as possible commensurate with reasonable use
- Maximising vaccine take-up
- Ensuring people self-isolate when infected
- Providing people with the information needed to make accurate risk assessments
- Providing people with resources needed to act in ways that minimise infection transmission.

We identified four potentially overlapping groups that have somewhat different requirements, responsibilities and resources. Some organisations may fall into more than one category, e.g. employers with public-facing businesses. In those cases multiple Codes would apply.

The Codes should be regarded as headlines that will need to be elaborated, explained and qualified. Part of the consultation process will be to develop that additional material.

The Four Covid Safety Codes of Practice

1. Local Government

Responsibility: To provide information, practical support and resources for people and organisations in their locality, to ensure good practice as employers and to ensure safe practices in all premises within their jurisdiction.

1. Provide clear information and regular updates about local Covid measures, risk levels and Covid support in languages and on platforms that make this accessible to all members of the community.
2. Work with relevant agencies to provide vaccination and testing sites/timeslots that are easily accessible for all those living in the locality, and ensure that all Council employees are able to take paid time off work to get vaccinated.
3. Create and maintain a mechanism to involve all key sections of the community in developing, implementing and providing feedback on all Covid policies.
4. Provide as much financial/practical support as required to local mutual aid and community support groups in providing Covid-related assistance to people in the locality.
5. Provide as much material, social and financial support as required for those who need to self-isolate.
6. Support local organisations and businesses in improving standards of Covid safety, both through providing guidance and (to the extent that it is practically possible) resources.
7. Work with local employers and owners of public-facing businesses (pubs, clubs, restaurants, sports/leisure facilities etc.) to establish an assessment process for Covid safety (including working practices, infrastructure, resources and ventilation) and a scheme for publicly displaying the findings, such as a star rating.
8. Provide information about the Covid safety of all premises open to the public (including schools and public offices as well as shops, bars, entertainment venues etc.) that is accessible to all members of the community (e.g. on an open website with multiple language options).
9. Promote and, where appropriate/practical, require the use of masks and spatial distancing in council-owned/run buildings and on public transport.

2. Employers

Responsibility: To ensure the maximum Covid security for all employees, customers and visitors.

1. Follow and disseminate best practice regarding Covid safety (including ventilation, spatial distancing, mask use and general hygiene), guided by standards such as those set by the Health & Safety Executive, Public Health organisations, Trades Union organisations, relevant trades associations and other bodies.
2. Work with staff organisations and their representatives to develop, implement and monitor the delivery of a 'Covid Safety Plan' that applies general standards to the specific organisation.
3. Create a culture of 'Covid safety', disseminating clear information about how staff can keep themselves and others safe and encouraging/supporting such behaviour both in the workplace and beyond.

4. Encourage employees to be fully vaccinated and receive boosters as required and also provide practical support such as workplace vaccination (where feasible) and paid time off to get vaccinated.
5. Maintain a regimen of regular workplace Covid testing to assess infection rates and identify employees who have been infected.
6. Develop flexible forms of working which allow employees the choice to work at home where possible and appropriate. Challenge a culture of 'presenteeism' which requires people to be at work irrespective of considerations of safety and analysis of need.
7. Strongly discourage people from coming into work when showing possible symptoms of Covid and encourage employees to get a PCR test and stay at home until testing negative;
8. Strongly encourage people who are contacted through NHS test and trace or via the NHS app to get a PCR test and stay at home until testing negative.
9. Provide maximum financial, social and material support for employees who need to self-isolate because of infection or contact with someone who has been infected

3. Public-facing business and services

Responsibility: To create as safe an environment as possible for staff, visitors, customers and service users.

1. Ensure that premises adhere to the highest standards of Covid safety (ventilation, distancing, mask-wearing, hygiene etc.)
2. Support and participate in assessment processes for Covid safety and in schemes for displaying the findings (such as a star rating for establishments)
3. Participate in schemes to provide the public with information about Covid safety in local establishments (e.g. an open website).
4. Provide clear information about the safety measures in the establishment and expectations of users (e.g. distancing, mask-wearing etc.)
5. Encourage a culture of mutual respect and support in maintaining Covid-secure behaviours both within the establishment and more generally.
6. Provide general information about Covid safety for customers (e.g. how to keep safe, where to get vaccinated, when and how to get tested)
7. Dissuade people from attending the establishment when they have possible Covid symptoms
8. Adapt premises as far as is practicable to provide outdoor space for customers and service users.
9. Provide sessions where practicable in which additional safeguards are in place (e.g., reduced numbers and increased ventilation) for more vulnerable members of the community.

4. The public

Responsibility: To keep oneself and one's contacts as safe as possible.

1. Take up vaccines and boosters (when offered) and encourage others to do so.
2. If feeling unwell with possible symptoms of Covid, do not go to work or mix with others. Rather, get a PCR test immediately and self-isolate until you get the result;

3. If you are contacted/'pinged' as a contact of someone who has Covid, get a PCR test immediately and self-isolate until you get the result.
4. If you test positive for Covid, self-isolate immediately and stay isolated for the required period.
5. Act in ways that keep yourself and others safe: where possible, socialise outdoors; when indoors, maximise ventilation; wear a mask in crowded indoor spaces (especially those with poor ventilation); spatially distance where possible; carry hand sanitiser, maintain hygiene, observe cough etiquette.
6. Limit unnecessary socialising and travel.
7. Stay informed about the level of Covid risk in the locality and any special mitigation measures in place.
8. Provide support for others to help them meet the challenges posed by Covid.
9. Always act in ways that will make everyone (including the most vulnerable) feel safe and able to participate in public.

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