**Protecting Our Staff – Returning to Work and Risk Assessments**

**Introduction**

With the Covid-19 Lockdown being eased the unions and some staff groups have been asking relevant questions of the government and employers to ensure that staff can have the confidence that employers will be doing all they can to maintain their safety.

This note references key information and reports that have recently been produced by NHS England and Improvement, the TUC, Public Health England, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), as well as Government Guidance.

**Preparing for the return to work outside the home**

As the lockdown eases and staff return to work, the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 provide an expectation that a specific Covid-19 risk assessment is undertaken.

The trade unions are calling on the government and employers to also commit to the following actions:

* Think creatively about how to enable social distancing at work. For example, change the layout of workplaces, adjust shift patterns or alternate sections of the workforce, and stagger commute times
* Employers must provide Personal Protective Equipment as required by their risk assessments
* Plan for the testing of key worker groups and utilise the contact-tracing programme to identify those that test positive for the virus and must self-isolate, if they cannot work from home
* Take account of travel patterns, to reduce the risk of public transport, especially at peak times.
* Take account of risks for specific groups of staff.

**Responding to these issues**

It is important for London boroughs to remember the actions and safeguards that have already been put in place to respond to the Coronavirus.

Risk Assessments have already been undertaken for many roles and staff groups.

Government and Public Health England have published extensive guides to the use of PPE and how work and Social distancing can be adhered to, and local government have been great and supportive at following this advice.

London Councils shared 18 helpful PPE guidance leaflets for different work group settings which help staff work safely; ensure staff feel supported in their work and protect local services.

Staff in specific groups that are in potentially more vulnerable or exposed to the effects of the virus have been told to self-isolate or shield themselves. London boroughs have closely followed all relevant government and public health guidance about social distancing, self-isolation and shielding arrangements and ensured that staff in government listed vulnerable or extremely vulnerable groups have adhered to these arrangements.

**The Risk Assessment Process**





