

# Return to Field Work for Household Survey Interviewers

## Booklet v3



## Index

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Introduction                    | 3  |
| Household Interviewer Rules     | 5  |
| Return to Work Form             | 9  |
| Daily Contact Log               | 12 |
| COVID-19 Risk Assessment for    |    |
| Household Interviewers          | 15 |
| COVID-19 Induction training     | 22 |
| Summary of Office Notice 8/2020 | 24 |
| Wellbeing Information           | 27 |
| References                      | 30 |

# Introduction

## Introduction

This booklet describes the measures required to be put in place by employers and adhered to by workers to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The first part of the booklet relates to the protocols for all staff, including field staff and the specific protocols relating to Field Staff are dealt with in the Household Survey Field Work Rules section on page 5 of this document.

On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020, the Government published a [‘Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business’](#) to ease the COVID-19 restrictions and reopen Ireland’s economy and society in a phased manner. In conjunction with this roadmap, a [‘Return to Work Safely Protocol’](#) has been agreed between employers, unions and the Government and this is now in place for all businesses, including the CSO. While the Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business has now been replaced with “Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19”, the ‘Return to Work Safely Protocol’ remains in place and is now call [“The Work Safely Protocol”](#), last updated in May 2021.

This Household Survey Interviewer Booklet gives staff all the information required when preparing to carry out field work, to ensure they are aware of all control measures in place to protect against the spread of COVID-19.

This document is a living document which may be supplemented by further measures introduced by Government and any advice issued as a result.

# Household Survey Field Work Rules

## Household Survey Field Work Rules

The outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has evolved rapidly and the Central Statistics Office is working on the advice of the HSE, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DEBI), and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) to put in place guidelines in relation to social distancing while in the office. This is to ensure we can control the spread of the virus.

The Return to Work Safely Protocol, which was published by DEBI, gives clear guidance on required steps to be taken to ensure we protect against the spread where possible.

This protocol gives advice and guidance for Ireland and takes account of guidance from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization, and decisions of the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET).

Exposure to COVID-19 is a public health risk which affects all citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic also has implications for all workplaces as it can present a health risk to workers and other persons at a place of work. Managing the risk of spread in the workplace is important in relation to the health of workers but is also important as part of general efforts to control the spread and protect the most vulnerable. The following document outlines the various measures required to be put in place by the CSO and adhered to by employees to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

**The best way to prevent person-to-person spread of COVID-19 is to use proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette and practice physical distancing.**

The principles behind these measures are dictated by the requirement for good hand and respiratory hygiene and ensuring adherence to the 2m social distancing rule.

To ensure social distancing, everyone must make themselves familiar with the following rules before returning to Field Work. All measures must be followed by every Interviewer.

Adherence to these rules will be strictly monitored.

## Household Survey Interviewers

The CSO field interviewers face a specific set of challenges in the course of their everyday work. To meet these challenges safely and effectively, the Field Administration Unit worked in consultation with Field HR and a panel of field staff representatives to put together a plan for working in the field. An independent risk assessment was completed and implemented and is available on page 15 of this document.

In addition, Senior Management met with Public Health in Nov 2021 to discuss the risks associated with field work for Census 2022. The advice received indicated that field activities such as an enumerator or interviewer calling to a household is a lower level risk given the current brief level of interaction with the households which takes place in a largely outdoor setting.

The CSO undertakes responsibility for health and safety in the field at various levels:

- CSO as the employer
- Health and safety officers within the CSO
- Coordinators as the line managers for field staff
- Interviewers while undertaking their duties in the field or at home

Under the COVID-19 workplace safety protocols two lead worker representatives (LWRs) have been appointed for field staff. The LWRs meet regularly with the CSO COVID-19 response team and discuss any concerns raised by staff. The LWRs for the field are David Murphy (Dublin) and Sabina Sheppard (Galway). They can be contacted in confidence via the LWR e-mail account [leadworker@cso.ie](mailto:leadworker@cso.ie).

## Key requirements

Working in the field has to be carefully managed to ensure adherence to Return to Work Safely Protocol including social distancing requirements. The control measures put in place by the CSO are robust and significantly mitigate against the risks associated with COVID-19.

The following actions must be completed by Field Staff:

1. Adhere to instructions and guidance from FAU in relation to carrying out field work;
2. Familiarise themselves with the process for maintaining 'Daily Contact Logs' which must be completed, maintained and submitted for each day of field work;
3. Familiarise themselves with the details of how the field work is organised to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 and the house rules to be strictly adhered to by staff to support this initiative;
4. Complete COVID-19 Return to the workplace induction training;
5. Read well-being tips

## Interactions with households

At present, no interactions that exceed 15 minutes to be carried out on the doorstep.

All households must be sent the first letter in advance of an Interviewer approaching the doorstep. When out in the field you may leave a reminder letter/sorry I missed you card, etc. (as appropriate) at households you could not make contact with. This applies to all LFS waves and GHS households. At all times public health guidelines must be adhered to include maintaining physical distance and

use of PPE. Letters should not be handed directly to householders but placed in the letter box/post box at the dwelling. If no contact is made following the letter drop you can proceed to post further reminders as normal for these cases.

## Car/Bike Parking and entering/exiting building

While parking and entering/exiting building via car park/footpaths, please ensure there is 2m distance between you other car park users

## Meeting with the Householder

Please note there is no hand shaking to take place at the households.

Please maintain a 2m distance from the householder(s)

- It is recognised that not all circumstances are within our control and circumstances may arise where it is not possible to observe this safe social distance. To mitigate any potential risk in such instances, face coverings should be worn whenever interviewers are interacting with households during their work. Field Administration Unit has secured disposable face coverings for use, in line with public health advice.

## Hand Hygiene

- Hand Sanitisers and wipes will be made available to Survey Interviewers carrying out face to face household interviewing.
- Field Administration Unit will ensure the supply of sanitiser and wipes is maintained, however, please log a call if you notice the supply is running low.

## Respiratory Hygiene

- Tissues will be made available to Survey Interviewers carrying out face to face household interviews.
- Field Administration Unit will ensure the supply of tissues is maintained, however, please ensure to log a call if you notice the supply is running low.



## Return to Field Work Form

## Return to Field Work Form

**All Survey Interviewers are required to complete a Return to Field Work form three days prior to returning to the commencement of any field work. You should not return to field work if you have been advised to self-isolate, cocoon, have confirmed or suspected COVID-19 or its symptoms, or have been in close contact with someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.**

This form should be completed and returned to [ReturntoOffice@cso.ie](mailto:ReturntoOffice@cso.ie)

Staff Member:

Field Location – Region:

Coordinator:

Date of attendance:

Head of Division:

### Health Questionnaire

**Please read and answer Yes or No to the following questions:**

Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days? (Y/N)

Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days? (Y/N)

Are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days (i.e. less than 2m for more than 15 minutes accumulative in 1 day)? (Y/N)

Have you been advised by a doctor/HSE to self-isolate at this time? (Y/N)

Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time? (Y/N)

Are you aged 70 years or over? (Y/N)

Have you returned from a country that currently requires post-travel quarantine within 14 days of your intended return to fieldwork? (Y/N)

### Declaration

I have read the Return to Field Work booklet (Y/N)

November 2021

I have read, understand and will comply with my responsibilities in relation to the Return to Field Work documents, House Rules and Procedures. (Y/N)

I understand that any changes to my circumstances in relation to the health questions in this form mean that I must not resume household interviewing. (Y/N)

Completion of Return to Field Form shall only be maintained during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The situation in relation to COVID-19 is dynamic and it will be monitored on a regular basis. The operation of the Return to Field Form may change in line with any changes in public health guidance.

Link to transparency notice - <https://www.cso.ie/en/staffnews/returntoworksafelytransparencynotice/>

## Daily Contact Log

## Daily Contact Log

**All Survey Interviewers are required to complete a contact log for each day that they carry out field work, including partial days.**

### Background / Context

On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020, the Government published a '[Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business](#)' to ease the COVID-19 restrictions and reopen Ireland's economy and society in a phased manner. In conjunction with this roadmap, a '[Return to Work Safely Protocol](#)' has been agreed between employers, unions and the Government and this is in now place for all businesses, including the CSO. This protocol describes the measures required to be put in place by employers and adhered to by workers to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in protecting the worker, their colleagues and others at the workplace. One action in the 'Return To Work Safely Protocol' to help with this process is to keep a log of contact/group work to facilitate contact tracing. On confirmation of a positive diagnosis contact tracing is instigated by the HSE. Contact tracing plays a key role in mitigating additional exposure.

The purpose of the Daily Contact Log is to assist employees and the CSO in this process. All staff that attend on-site at any of the CSO Offices are obliged to complete this log daily, as are staff working in the field. Information contained within the log shall remain confidential. It will only be accessed should the individual concerned notify the CSO that they are a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case. In conjunction with supporting the HSE's processes, the CSO may use this log in a preventative capacity, on receiving notification of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. In such an instance the CSO shall follow the directions of the HSE.

### Completion & Submission of Daily Contact Log

**The log must be completed daily.** Interviewers are lone workers and log all interactions with households electronically using the Case Management Application (CMA) on their tablet computers. The information contained in this CMA call history log is then synchronised with the Household Survey Management (HSM) application via a secure portal (using Reach). The HSM will then contain the required detail to meet the requirements of the daily contact log.

In the event that a household visit exceeds 15 minutes and a social distance of 2m cannot be maintained, Interviewers have been instructed to add this information to their CMA call history listing. Any such cases will be extracted from the final HSM call history log and forwarded to [ReturntoOffice@cso.ie](mailto:ReturntoOffice@cso.ie). The information forwarded will be retained by HR for a period of 4 weeks, after which it will be destroyed as the information is no longer relevant for the purposes of contact tracing.

There is currently no face to face team meetings for field staff as all such meetings are conducted on-line. A contact tracing log for this purpose will, therefore, not be required in the current working environment.

Completion of Daily Contact Logs shall only be maintained during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The situation in relation to COVID-19 is dynamic and it will be monitored on a regular basis. The operation of the Daily Contact Log and the definitions referred to therein may change in line with any changes in public health guidance etc.

Details are required in respect of all close contacts.

### **Close Contact**

Close contact can mean spending more than 15 minutes face-to-face within 2 metres. Anyone who has shared a closed space for longer than 2 hours even when social distancing is also considered a Close Contact. For the purposes of this log, a closed space includes meeting rooms, and individual offices, but excludes open plan office spaces. Any queries in this regard, please email [ReturntoOffice@cso.ie](mailto:ReturntoOffice@cso.ie).

**NOTE: Contact tracing data is being collected at the direction of the HSE and will only be used for COVID-19 contact tracing. It will be retained for no longer than 4 weeks and will be accessed only if required for Contract Tracing purposes.**

**Reminder:** You should not attend for work if you have been advised to self-isolate, cocoon, have confirmed or suspected COVID-19 or its symptoms, or have been in close contact with someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.

# **COVID 19 Risk Assessment for Household Interviewers**

## Risk Assessment: field staff

| Covid-19 | Activity                                | Hazard            | Persons at Risk | Existing Controls   | Current Risk |   |   | Further Action  |
|----------|---|-------------------|-----------------|---|--------------|---|---|---|
|          |   |                   |                 |   | L            | S | R |   |
|          | Field Staff House canvassing households | Catching Covid-19 | Field Staff     | <p>All employees will complete a pre-return to work form at least three days before returning to work.</p> <p>A medical questionnaire will include a declaration of any medical condition that falls into the category which is listed on the HSE website below which will be factored into the risk assessment.</p> <p><a href="https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html#very-high-risk">https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html#very-high-risk</a></p> <p>The field staff have been instructed on the actions that need to be taken in the event of a suspected case/confirmed case of COVID 19.</p> <p>Should any new controls be implemented the field staff will be communicated the relevant changes.</p> <p>Field staff have been instructed how to use and the PPE they have been issued.</p> <p>Field staff have been issued with masks which must be worn when completing the house canvass.</p> | 1            | 4 | 4 | Monitor government guidance and update risk assessment as required and communicate. |



|  |  |  |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  | <p>A disposable mask will be offered to the member of the household to be worn during the house canvass.</p> <p>Field staff have been issued with hand sanitizer and wipes.</p> <p>Field Staff have been instructed on a regular basis to wash their hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub regularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• after coughing and sneezing.</li> <li>• before and after eating.</li> <li>• if in contact with someone who is displaying any COVID-19 symptoms.</li> <li>• before and after being on public transport (if using it).</li> <li>• before having a cigarette or vaping.</li> <li>• after toilet use.</li> </ul> <p>Disposable gloves are available.</p> <p>Gloves are not considered a substitute for hand hygiene and hands must be cleaned whenever gloves are removed.</p> <p>Field staff have been instructed on the correct procedure on the removal and disposal of gloves.</p> <p>Field staff will wipe their phone they are using for the house canvass on a regular basis.</p> |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  | <p>Field staff will have two sealable clean waterproof bags, for example, a ziplock – one for clean PPE and for used PPE/wipes.</p> <p>Field staff will always adhere to physical distancing (2 metres) when conducting the house canvass.</p> <p>If there is a lack of space between the field staff member and the member of the household e.g. in an apartment scenario - the member of the household maybe asked to step back from their door to ensure a 2-metre gap or if there was more space in a corridor. Under no circumstances must a member of field staff enter a house/apartment.</p> <p>Field staff have been instructed to limit the time of the house canvass to 15 minutes.</p> <p>If field staff use public transport – they will always wear masks and sanitise hands on leaving public transport.</p> <p>There is a no hand shaking policy in place.</p> <p>Field staff will be provided with a 'door grabber', this is a device that will allow interviewers to open doors or gates without directly touching them.</p> <p>The grabber will be wiped clean on completion of the house canvass.</p> <p>Field staff will ensure that their vehicles will be subject to frequent cleaning especially surfaces that are</p> |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  | <p>touched regularly, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Door handles</li> <li>• Keys</li> <li>• Steering wheel</li> <li>• Gearstick</li> <li>• Handbrake</li> <li>• Radio</li> <li>• Steering column (indicators, windscreen wipers)</li> <li>• Elbow rests</li> <li>• Seat position controls</li> </ul> <p>Field staff will travel alone in their car.</p> <p>Field staff have been instructed only to stop for essential refuelling of vehicle and try to refuel in self-service stations.</p> <p>If fuel pumps have to be used disposable gloves can be worn and hands sanitised after.</p> <p>Field staff will be encouraged to take own packed lunch and water (if possible), this will minimise unnecessary interactions in shops.</p> <p>Field staff can use public toilets – hand hygiene in place before and after using the toilet and mask should be worn.</p> |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

## Appendix 1 - Correct method for the disposal of gloves.

- Pinch and hold the outside of the glove near the wrist area.
- Peel downwards, away from the wrist, turning the glove inside out.
- Pull the glove away until it is removed from the hand and hold the inside-out glove with the gloved hand.
- With your un-gloved hand, slide your finger/s under the wrist of the remaining glove, taking care not to touch the outside of the glove.
- Again, peel downwards, away from the wrist, turning the glove inside out.
- Continue to pull the glove down and over the inside-out glove being held in your gloved hand.
- This will ensure that both gloves are inside out, one glove enveloped inside the other, with no contaminant on the bare hands.



## Appendix 2 - Use of Masks

- Clean your hands properly before you put it on.
- Practice using it, so you are comfortable putting it on and taking it off.
- Make sure it is made from a fabric you are comfortable wearing.
- Cover your mouth and nose with it and make sure there are no gaps between your face covering.
- Tie it securely.
- Carry unused face coverings in a sealable clean waterproof bag, for example, a ziplock.
- Carry a second similar type bag to put used face coverings in.

### How to wash one

- Wash daily in a hot wash over 60 degrees with detergent.
- If using a washing machine, you should be able to wash and machine dry it without damage or change to shape.
- You do not need to sterilise face coverings. Wash it in a washing machine or by hand as you would any other item of clothing.
- Wash hands before and after use.
- Do not touch a face covering while wearing it - if you do, clean your hands properly.
- Do not use a wet or soiled face covering.
- Do not share face coverings.
- Do not lower your face coverings to speak, eat and [smoke](#) or vape - if you need to uncover your nose or mouth take the face covering off and put it in a bag for used face coverings.
- Do not discard face coverings in public places.

### Taking a face covering off

- To take a face covering off properly remove it from behind - do not touch the front of the mask
- put in a sealable clean waterproof bag or wash immediately - put disposable masks into a sealable clean waterproof bag, for example, a ziplock.
- clean your hands properly.

# COVID-19

## Safe use of Masks

HAND HYGIENE BEFORE AND AFTER USING A MASK

Coronavirus COVID-19 Public Health Advice

### THE MASK YOU NEED

**DO: REMEMBER TO WEAR THE CORRECT MASK FOR THE TASK:**

**Wear Surgical mask:** for droplet precautions, or when providing care within 2 meters of any patient, or when working within 2 meters of another healthcare worker for more than 15 minutes.

**Only wear FFP2 (Fit Checked) or FFP3 mask (Fit Tested)** for aerosol generating procedures.

### WEARING THE MASK

**DO:** Wear your mask so it comes all the way up, close to the bridge of your nose, and all the way down under your chin.

**DO:** Press the metal band so that it conforms to the bridge of your nose.

**DO:** Tighten the loops or ties so it's snug around your face, without gaps. If there are strings, tie them high on top of the head to get a good fit.

**DO NOT:** Wear the mask below your nose.

**DO NOT:** Leave your chin exposed.

**DO NOT:** Wear your mask loosely with gaps on the sides.

**DO NOT:** Wear your mask so it covers just the tip of your nose.

**DO NOT:** Push your mask under your chin to rest on your neck.

**ONCE YOU HAVE ADJUSTED YOUR MASK TO THE CORRECT POSITION, FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO STAY SAFE:**

- ALWAYS change your mask when you answer the telephone or you take a drink/break.
- ALWAYS change mask when leaving a cohort area or exiting a single patient isolation room
- ALWAYS wash your hands before and after handling a mask.
- ALWAYS change mask if it is dirty, wet or damaged
- NEVER fidget with your mask when it's on.
- NEVER store your mask in your pocket.

### REMOVING THE MASK

Use the ties or ear loops to take the mask off.

Do not touch the front of the mask when you take it off.

### DISPOSING OF THE MASK

Dispose of mask in a healthcare risk waste bin.

**IF HEALTHCARE RISK WASTE SERVICE IS NOT AVAILABLE:**

The mask, along with any other PPE used, needs to be double-bagged and stored for 72hrs in a secure location, then put in the domestic waste.

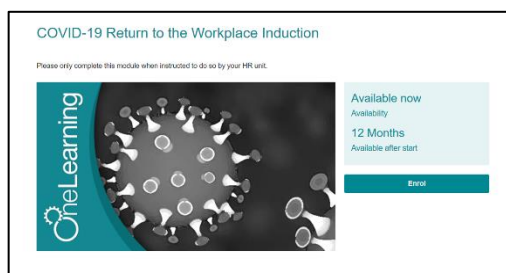
# COVID 19 Induction Training

## Induction Training

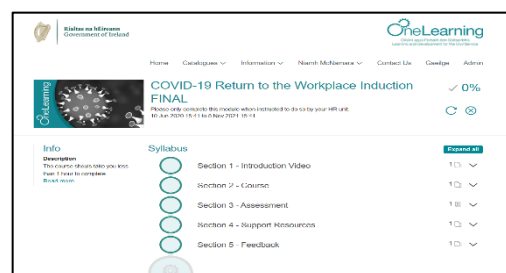
Before returning to the workplace it is **mandatory** that you complete the COVID-19 Return to the Workplace Induction, hosted on the [OneLearning LMS](#).

The Return to Workplace Induction was designed to support employers and employees to continue to suppress the COVID-19 virus and allow us to work safely. OneLearning has developed the Induction training for all staff whether they remained in the workplace or are now returning.

Training should be completed just prior to returning to the workplace, as the protocol is a live document and may be amended. This module will be updated to meet the evolving needs of the workplace and any further changes made to the protocol.



The Return to Work Safely Protocol Induction is available on the OneLearning LMS. As Survey Interviewers do not have access to OneLearningLMS, a process to provide the training was agreed with Learning & Development section. This process was implemented via Online video links and provision of all documents for the course.



The course will include practical information and an assessment. Once the course content is completed and you have achieved 100% in the assessment stage, you will be registered as having completed the induction training.

The course should take you less than 30 mins to complete.

In addition, you will be required to read and note the **House Rules** related to your working environment which are included in the Return to Work Pack.

## Summary of Office Notice – Protocol if a staff member is ill in the context of the of COVID-19 pandemic



## Summary of Office Notice 08/2020

### Protocol if a staff member is ill in the context of the of COVID-19 pandemic

The protocol deals with the following scenarios:

1. Where a staff member contacts their manager from home to let them know that they need to self-isolate/restrict their movements due to COVID-19
2. Where a staff member advises from home that they themselves or a member of their immediate family is a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection
3. Where a staff member shows symptoms of COVID-19 while in work.

Each scenario is dealt with in detail, specifying practical steps that should be taken by staff members and managers.

Within each scenario it specifies the following:

- Who the staff member should contact and when
- Who the manager should contact
- What is required of the staff member
- What is required of the manager
- Requirements for confidentiality
- Requirement, where requested, to co-operate with the HSE and inform HR.

When attending the office please ensure you are fully aware of this office notice, in particular the extract below in relation to what to do if a staff member becomes ill while at work.

## A staff member becomes ill while in work and is displaying symptoms of COVID-19

**REMEMBER - If a staff member were to become incapacitated in the workplace, an ambulance should be called immediately - whatever the cause.**

- 1) If a staff member shows symptoms of illness, the following procedure should be followed assuming the staff member is not incapacitated, in which case an ambulance should be called (by person, manager, other contact).
- 2) The staff member should be reassured that their health and safety and that of their colleagues is the primary concern.
- 3) HR should be notified immediately.
- 4) If the staff member prefers to go home and deal with the situation from there it is their choice. However, they should consider whether they are fit enough to do so and also whether the GP/HSE might first have relevant advice.
- 5) If a member of field staff develops the symptoms of COVID-19 while working in the field, they should isolate themselves from other people in the first instance. In most cases this will mean going home. However, if this is not immediately possible, then the person should remain in their car until alternative transport home can be arranged by the Line Manager if necessary.
- 6) The staff member/manager/other contact should alert HR to the situation.
- 7) If the employee is absent following the incident, the manager should alert HR to the situation (using the email address [AlertHR@cso.ie](mailto:AlertHR@cso.ie)).
- 8) If the manager is subsequently contacted to advise that the incident was related to COVID-19, HR should also be informed, and all assistance will be provided. The existing [guidelines from DPER](#) about recording and classifying absences are applicable as are the general principles applying to the management of sick leave, for example the requirement of staff to contact managers and for ongoing contact with staff who are on special leave for this purpose, will apply.
- 9) Contact details for Deirdre Harte (HR Assistant Principal, 0879552248) should be provided to the HSE should they decide that the case requires contacts tracing through the employer.

# Well-being Information

## RETURNING TO WORK

With a return to work on the horizon, you may be apprehensive about the prospect.



Your rational may be COVID-19 related, perhaps the prospect of being around a larger number of people is a source of anxiety for you. Should you live with a vulnerable relative, the question of whether your return to the office is placing them at greater risk, is perhaps the basis of such concern. For others, that fear may not hinge around COVID-19, it may simply concern returning to office life having spent a considerable period of time working remotely. It is not unreasonable to have

feelings of apprehension around leaving the safety of home. Returning to everyday life outside the home may well take a period of adjustment, that is perfectly understandable. Free, impartial and confidential support is available for any concerns you may have via the [Employee Assistance Programme](#).

It's worth remembering that it is highly likely you are not the only person with such fears.

As is so often the case in life, speaking to a friend or family member about the unease you are feeling may well provide you with the reassurance needed. Why not ask a colleague how they are feeling about returning to the office? By asking the question and expressing your own hesitancy, you are likely to feel better for it and you may well be met with a reply along the lines of, "I'm really glad you said that, I thought I was the only one feeling that way".



As obvious as it may seem, much of the advice around a return to the office centres upon ensuring good practice, hand hygiene, cough etiquette and observing social distancing measures. To achieve this, rules around the use of the canteen facilities will be different. Fear not, summer is upon us, why not take your tea break al fresco. 2020 has been a year like no other, we have been challenged to embrace new measures we never envisaged, a new look tea break is just the latest example on that list.

## Social Distancing



Are you someone who needs to use the lift with the workplace? Ordinarily, it is an activity you think little of. Nowadays, heightened levels of trepidation may surround this simple task. Try not to worry, people are generally reasonable and understanding, it is very likely your colleagues will not use the lift unless necessary for them to do so. Using the lift one at a time will help to mitigate the risk, as will the use of hand sanitizers upon entering and exiting the elevator.

Always remember, we are all fighting the same battle regarding COVID-19, asking the important question or gently reminding a colleague to observe social distancing is doing everyone a favour. Often, should someone encroach the two-metre rule, it is due to absent mindedness rather than disregard, so, they are not likely to take offence should you remind them.



COVID-19 has changed the way we live our lives. You may well find it uncomfortable to chat to someone at a distance or step sideways when someone is walking against you to ensure social distancing. That is okay, often highlighting the issue by simply saying, “how strange is this?” or “will we ever get used to this” can address the issue and ensure you are not walking away from a conversation saying, “I hope they didn’t think I was being rude”



## Time

As you prepare to return to the office, acknowledge that there may well be a period of readjustment. Remember to be open and honest about your concerns and to ask your work friends how they are coping, a listening ear can go a long way. Above all, be kind and allow yourself time to reacclimatise to the office environment.

Remember, we are emerging from a world-wide pandemic, there is nothing irrational about having certain fears and concerns during the process.

## References

## Contact Details

### Facilities Management Contact Details:

Facilities Management Helpdesk

Cork email: FacilitiesCork@cso.ie

Ardee Rd email: FacilitiesArdee@cso.ie

Swords emails: FacilitiesSwords@cso.ie

### HR Contact Details:

COVID Return Email: ReturntoOffice@cso.ie

Alert Email: [AlertHR@cso.ie](mailto:AlertHR@cso.ie)

### Worker Representatives:

Cork: Richard Basteed

Julie O'Hara

Ardee Rd: Paul McElvaney

Swords: Darren St. Leger

Field: Sabina Shepherd

David Murphy

Email for Lead Worker Reps is [leadworker@cso.ie](mailto:leadworker@cso.ie)

## Useful Resources

HSE Information on COVID 19: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>

Civil Service Employee Assistance Service: <https://www.cseas.per.gov.ie/>

Work Safely protocol: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bb7fd-work-safely-protocol/>

Covid- 19 Resilience and Recovery, The Path Ahead: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/resilience-recovery-2020-2021-plan-for-living-with-covid-19/>

WHO information Page: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1)

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/coronavirus>