



Post-coronavirus start-up guidance: Garden centres

Some businesses may now be permitted to reopen following the enforced Covid-19 partial, or full, shutdown. In many cases business owners and staff will be returning to work and their premises for the first time in weeks.

Reopening the business for trading and activating building services, plant and machinery needs to be planned to resume activities in a controlled and safe manner. Each business will need to be individually risk assessed to establish specific needs, and the guidance given below covers some of the main areas to consider.

These guidelines do not override any existing policy conditions.

All applicable health & safety legislation and regulations remain fully in force, including but not limited to:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992.
- Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order.

The fact that a business is deemed essential, or is permitted to operate, does not mean its legal obligations are in any way relaxed or reduced. Indeed, in the present climate the duties owed to employees and others are enhanced. All activities must only be undertaken in line with the current guidance issued by HM Government.





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Risk management measures

Activities: First and foremost, customer and employee safety is paramount.

It is important that a review of your working activities is undertaken before restarting any work, as this will form part of your Covid-19 Compliance risk assessment. You must carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment; this means looking at working areas activities to enable your employees to successfully distance themselves from customers and colleagues and work safely. It may not be appropriate to carry out certain activities as you normally would and / or you may need to consider supplying PPE equipment to certain employees. Please see the latest Government and HSE advice for updates on appropriate precautions.

Please remember that if some activities cannot be carried out safely, they should not be undertaken at all.

You must reinduct your employees to ensure that they understand new restrictions, new rules and altered arrangements for using welfare facilities, and you may need to operate out of hours and/or, introduce shift patterns in order to manage safely the social distancing elements of the Covid-19 guidelines.

Garden centres / plant nurseries

It is likely that some premises can operate safely, whilst protecting both staff and customers and observing social distancing guidelines – further guidance is available via the following links for sector specific applications.

Please click on the headings below for links to further information:

[Working safely during Coronavirus](#)

[HSE Working safely during Coronavirus](#)

[Coronavirus guidance](#)

[Social Distancing Guidelines for Retail](#)

[HSE Coronavirus information](#)

[Horticultural Trades Association Coronavirus information](#)

Premises management

- A competent person must update and realign your risk assessments to take account of the Covid-19 related activities and exposures.
- It is important that you have suitable notices posted at the entrance, and on your website, clearly informing customers what your arrangements are for managing Covid-19 and that they may need to queue externally 2 metres apart.



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Consultation

Employers should consult with employees and trade unions about the return to the workplace. In the meantime staff should continue to work from home if they can.

Employers should keep up to date with the latest government guidance to help them plan ahead.

When planning to return to the workplace, employers must:

- Consult with staff and employee representatives, including any trade union representatives and health and safety officials.
- Consider the risks of anyone being harmed in the workplace and carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment .
- Make the workplace as safe as possible for staff, customers and other visitors.

Some employees may be anxious about their safety when returning to the workplace. Employers and employees should talk about any concerns and try to resolve them together. It can also help to signpost staff to any health and wellbeing support that is available, for example occupational health or mental health services.

Car parks

- Ensure that social distancing in car parks can be achieved by:
 - » Implementing a one-way traffic flow system, if not already in place.
 - » Ensure there are adequate directions and prominent signage.
 - » Use alternative parking bays to ensure social distancing.
 - » Reduce speed in car parks to 5 mph to protect members of the public who may queuing to gain entry.
 - » Employees involved in directing car parking operations must wear high visibility clothing.
 - » Make sure that access and egress to car parks is managed in such a way as to maintain social distancing requirements.
- In line with the Government advice, be aware that increased cycle use is likely for both employees and members of the public. You must ensure that traffic management arrangements takes account of this.
- Opening hours may need to be restricted to allow you extra time to clean before opening and closing.
- You must train all your employees in the new procedures and share information with them regarding the risk assessment before the premises reopen.
- Make sure that they understand fully how to manage the social distancing guidelines.
- You will need to have adequate door control to ensure that numbers being admitted are manageable. Consider if extra security personnel or measures are required.
- Ensure staff are wearing protective gloves and that any shopping trolleys and baskets are wiped down after every use.



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- Door handles and any touch surfaces need to be regularly wiped down.
- Payment should be by chip and PIN – avoid where possible handling cash – remember to clean keypads.
- Alarm keypads should be sanitised daily after every deactivation. Are the fire safety and evacuation arrangements adequate? Given social distancing guidelines it may not be possible to undertake trial evacuations of premises so you may need to impose a temporary change of fire policy.
- Combustible rubbish and waste need to be removed regularly throughout the day.

Cafes and coffee shops

- Although cafes are not permitted to operate at this time it is worth thinking carefully about how this will operate within the current restrictions – it may not be possible or practical to do this, however if the area is big enough it may be possible to manage limited numbers.
- If your coffee shop / cafe is managed by a third-party, you must ensure they have shared their updated Covid_19 risk assessments with you, and that these comply with current Government guidance and restrictions.
- Carry out a detailed risk assessment covering food deliveries, food preparation and serving.
- Map out how social distancing amongst staff and the public is to be achieved.
- Limit numbers.
- Make sure you have adequate PPE for employees.
- Sanitisation of surfaces and prep areas must be carried out regularly.
- Accept only chip and PIN payments and avoid handling cash.
- Limit menus to self-service items – these may need to be pre-packaged items rather than freshly made.
- Table service should be avoided.

Spillages need to be carried out promptly whilst exercising the 2-metre distance rule.

Farm shops/produce

- Businesses that have farm shop outlets as part of their operation need to ensure that:
 - » All employees must wear food grade disposable gloves when handling produce.
 - » A thorough cleaning and sanitising regime must be in place and cleaning undertaken at regular intervals throughout the hours of operation.
 - » Avoid cash handling if possible, payment should be by contactless or chip and PIN.
 - » They consider whether to “Pre-Pack” food-stuffs to help avoid congestion.
- Specific advice about food safety issues during the coronavirus disruption issued by the UK Food Standards Agency can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>



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Deliveries

- Think about products/goods deliveries and how you limit employee exposure – ideally these need to be managed so that social distancing can be exercised between storemen and delivery drivers.
 - » Delivery drivers must only open the rear of vehicles then return to the cab.
 - » Staff should remove goods either by forklift truck, pallet truck or roll cages.
 - » If more than one employee is involved social distancing should be achieved by staggering offloading. This will be longer but keeps your employees safe.

Premises opening

- On reopening a business following temporary full or partial shutdown, the following precautionary measures will assist in mitigating potential losses and further disruption:
 - » Undertake a thorough inspection of the perimeter security including fences, gates, doors, windows, shutters etc to ensure they are undamaged and locking devices are serviceable.
 - » Inspect the building for any signs of damage or deterioration and arrange for remedial repairs as necessary.
 - » Fire alarm systems, access control, CCTV systems, intruder alarms, fire doors (including self-closers), fire extinguishers, fire dampers, emergency lighting/signage and emergency exits should be checked and/or tested to ensure they are fully operational and where required arrange for a service or emergency visit to rectify faults.
 - » Review the alarm keyholders to ensure adequate coverage is provided and ensure the intruder and fire alarm system alarm receiving centres are informed of any changes.
 - » Fixed automatic fire suppression systems, such as wet chemical systems to commercial cooking ranges, should be checked to ensure they are serviceable and when in doubt arrange a service visit by the installer.
 - » Where automatic fire sprinklers systems are installed, please refer to the separate detailed guidance note.
 - » Reinstating building services where they had been shut down (heating, air conditioning, power supplies etc) and restarting processes, plant and machinery should follow the OEM procedures by suitably trained and competent staff to ensure this is undertaken safely to minimise hazards and avoid damage or injury.
 - » Where the incoming water supplies have been isolated at the stopcock and systems drained, reinstating and refilling should be conducted in a slow controlled manner checking for any leaks and to avoid water hammer which can cause damage to pipes, connections and fittings.
 - » Waste storage and removal should be carefully managed as part of general housekeeping on site. Frequency of waste collections may be less than necessary until normal services are fully resumed. Where additional arrangements are made to remove waste build-up, ensure you only use registered companies to avoid the potential risk of 'fly-tipping'. To check that a company is registered, go to the following website: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>
 - » Taking shortcuts when reinstating utility services or starting-up machinery that has been idle should be avoided, as this could lead to costly further disruption to the business.



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Cleaning – general guidance applicable to all locations

- Think about your garden centre and the layout of your premises. You should only consider cleaning surfaces yourself if you have the protective equipment and materials to hand or these are readily available. We also understand that businesses may wish to use a service delivery option to do this work for them ahead of opening.
- Common and shared areas need to be managed but it is important that you consult with other parties regarding cleaning and sanitising of these areas.
- Prepare a schedule of cleaning steps covering the following:
 - » Access and egress routes, what could anyone have touched?
 - » Sanitise, trolleys, baskets etc.
 - » Always work from clean to dirty areas, to avoid spreading any contamination.
 - » Door handles, letterboxes, finger plates, keypads, glass surfaces and floors – these are just a few areas but may well differ from premises to premises.
 - » Washrooms, WC's, should be subjected to a deep clean, especially if they are/have been available for public use.
 - » Phones, PC's, keyboards, desks and vending machines, chip and PIN pads.
 - » Kitchen areas, taps, fridges.

