

**To: EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
8 DECEMBER 2021**

**COVID-19: Health & Safety Assessment Report
Executive Director: Delivery**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. As a result of COVID 19 and the changes with working arrangements, this report summarises the results of completions of the following eLearning package Display Screen Equipment, Home Working Assessments, Returning to the Office Assessment and BAME Vulnerable Assessments, which have been undertaken since January 2021.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That all new employees be required to complete a Home Working Assessment prior to commencing employment.
- 2.2 That completing a Home Working Assessment be mandatory for all existing employees.
- 2.3 That all employees be required to review their Home Working Assessments if their personal circumstances change.
- 2.4 That all new employees be required to undertake a Display Screen Equipment Assessment, and the eLearning package Display Screen Equipment as part of their induction process.
- 2.5 That completing a Display Screen Equipment Assessment and the eLearning package be mandatory for all existing employees.
- 2.6 That all employees, including new starters, be required to complete a Returning to the Office Assessment, prior to returning to any office environment.
- 2.7 That all Executive Directors be required to ensure that new members of staff complete a Display Screen Equipment Assessment, Home Working Assessment and Returning to the Office Assessment by the end of June 2022 and provide the data to Health and Safety, highlighting any changes or issues with individuals home working arrangements since ICT equipment has been made available for home working.
- 2.8 That all Executive Directors be required to review existing risk assessments for staff with potential work-related exposure to COVID-19 by the end of June 2022 and provide the data to HR and OD highlighting any concerns raised by managers and staff.
- 2.9 That HR and OD provide an annual report on issues/concerns highlighted in the risk assessments for staff with potential work-related exposure to COVID-19.
- 2.10 That the Health & Safety Assessment Report be produced annually, to provide comparative data.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The council has a duty of care under the Health and Safety legislation for ensuring the wellbeing of staff. All staff have had to change their working environments and ways of working, therefore, the council are required to update everyone's risk assessments. For those who use computers as part of their work, these staff also had to undertake Display Screen Assessments (DSE). Finally, for home and remote workers, their risk assessments needed to be updated, to reflect the increased time working away from the main office and the new requirements for the protection of customer data while away from the office.
- 3.2. According to the NHS' Equality and Health Inequality hub, the coronavirus pandemic has widened the health inequalities across the country, "*disproportionate[ly] impact on many who already face disadvantage and discrimination*". Evidence shows this has had a particularly negative effect on BAME communities. Therefore, it is important that the council is informed of how this may impact the workforce and puts in place actions to mitigate these impacts.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1. No alternative actions proposed.

5. Key findings

- 5.1 The purpose of the report is to ensure compliance with the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended in 2002) when working at home and in the office.

We received the following from 1123 employees:

- BAME/Vulnerable Assessment: **128**
- DSE e-learning: **835**
- New Home Assessments: **175**
- Returning to the Office Assessment: **358**

More detail can be found within the report.

The assessments can be found at:

<https://bfcouncil.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Risk-assessment-guidance.aspx>

6. Proposed next Steps

- 6.1. The recommendations in Section 2 are intended to ensure that the Council has an effective framework for ensuring compliance with best practice in terms of work environment, in the interests of staff well being.

7. Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 7.1. The recommendations in this report are underpinned by the Council's duties as an employer both in common law and under statute to take reasonable care in ensuring a safe work environment (which extends to home working) and safe systems of work for its staff.

Financial Advice

- 7.2. There are no financial implications.

Assistant Director: HR and OD

7.3 No comments received.

Equalities Impact Assessment

7.4 This paper is provided to summarise information related to health equalities and coronavirus. The proposed actions aim to encourage positive actions related to equalities.

Environment and Climate Implications

7.5 Not applicable.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

7.6 The council has reviewed its workplace risk assessment tool developed to assess working practice of all staff. The tool now enables a particular assessment of BAME staff as well as considering other protected characteristics which might put a member of staff at greater risk from COVID 19.

Background Papers

Appendix A – Health and Safety Report 2021.

Contact for further information

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