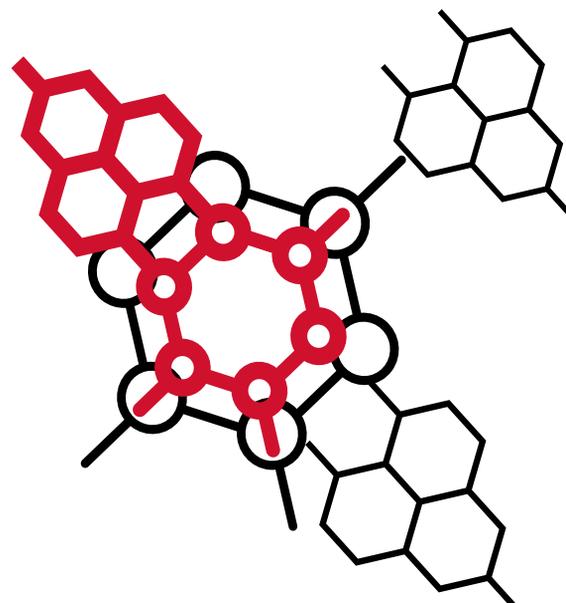


Spring4

BUSINESS AS USUAL?

Returning to the workplace after the
COVID-19 lockdown



CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION

2

- BACKGROUND
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- SPRING4: HOW CAN WE HELP?



OCCUPIER CHECKLIST

3



PREPARING THE WORKFORCE

4

- HEALTH
- TRAVEL
- EXPOSURE
- WELLBEING
- PRODUCTIVITY



PREPARING THE WORKPLACE

5

- CLEANING, DISINFECTING & SUPPLIES
- OFFICE RE-CONFIGURATION
- CIRCULATION
- VISITOR MANAGEMENT
- PERSONAL HYGIENE
- REDUCE TOUCH POINTS
- PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT
- SOCIAL DISTANCING



THE FUTURE OF THE WORKPLACE

7

- CONTINUED FLEXIBLE WORKING
- 'SMART' OFFICES

INTRODUCTION

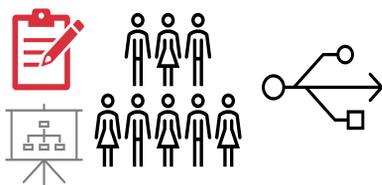
BACKGROUND

As the UK passes the initial peak in coronavirus infections it is anticipated that restrictions across the country will begin to be lifted. Organisations must consider what challenges they will face and the steps that should be taken to ensure staff feel safe to return to the workplace.

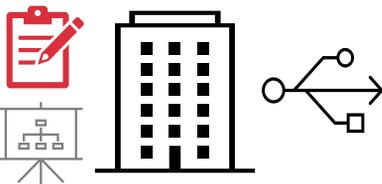
While many companies and staff alike are eager to resume a regular office routine, it is clear that this cannot and will not happen overnight.

This paper has been produced to assist tenants with putting in place precautionary measures to minimise the risks associated with coronavirus as teams go back to their desks.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Employers should consider how each employee's return to the office may impact them both individually and corporately. 'Business as usual' is not the best policy.



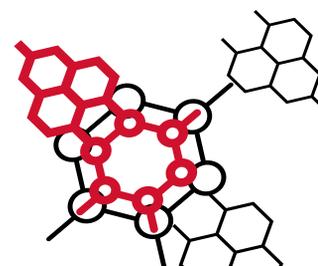
Occupiers should consider the ways they can create a safer working environment for staff at a time when a risk of infection may still be high.

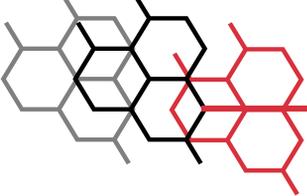


Tenants may be starting to consider the long-term impact that COVID-19 will have on the workplace norm; flexible working and 'smarter' offices could form the foundations of future requirements.

Spring4 HOW CAN WE HELP?

Spring4 offer commercial real estate consultancy to occupiers across the UK. We can assist with a range of services from acquisitions and negotiations, to office fit outs and alterations through our dedicated Project Management team.



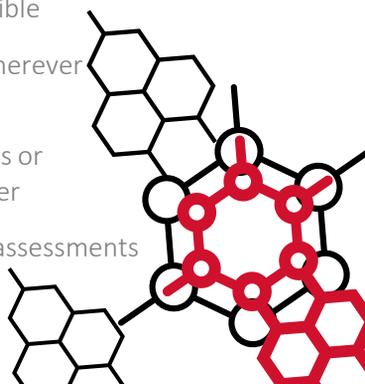


OCCUPIER CHECKLIST

WHAT CAN OCCUPIERS DO:

- Determine which staff might initially return to the workplace
- Consult with staff on their experience of working from home
- Liaise with staff who are anxious about returning to the office
- Keep staff updated
- Continue a flexible working strategy
- Ensure the building is operational
- Liaise with the Landlord and building management team
- Confirm supply chains relating to using the office
- Restrict office visitors to essential only
- Implement a virtual meeting policy
- Create a system for reporting possible infection
- Develop a policy for an emergency office closure and clean in the event of a confirmed case
- Create a contingency plan in the event of a 'second wave' of COVID-19
- Implement shift working (red team / blue team)
- Consider alternative operational hours to avoid peak travel times
- Update Health & Safety policy
- Establish a revised maximum occupational density for the office
- Deep clean the office before reoccupation
- Increase the frequency of cleaning
- Provide hand sanitiser dispensers
- Provide PPE (where appropriate)
- Supply disposable necessities
- Provide surface wipes next to shared facilities
- Reduce / end hot-desking
- Disinfect shared facilities daily
- Implement a fixed 'checkerboard' seating system
- Provide protective screens for reception and/or individual desks
- Remove unused furniture
- Designate the direction of foot traffic in main circulation paths
- Where possible designate separate up and down stairwells
- Restrict access to breakout areas
- Leave internal non-fire doors open
- Leave lights on throughout the day

WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYEES DO:

- Maintain high levels of personal hygiene
 - Familiarise themselves with any new building and office policies
 - Maintain social distancing, keeping 2 metres apart wherever possible
 - Adhere to '1 in, 1 out' for confined spaces, such as kitchens or stationery cupboard
 - Avoid shared building amenities
 - Avoid lifts wherever possible
 - Avoid public transport wherever possible
 - Communicate frustrations or anxieties to their employer
 - Complete individual risk assessments
- 

PREPARING THE WORKFORCE

In determining which staff might initially return to the office, corporate policy needs to reflect the circumstances of individual staff members. Each individual must make their own assessment of Health & Safety risks to reflect their personal position and the circumstances of those around them.

HEALTH



Consideration should be given to more vulnerable employees. Staff with underlying health issues will require greater flexibility.

TRAVEL



Commuting time and modes of transport will differ from employee to employee. Those that must take public transport or with a long commute should be given more flexibility as to when they come into the office.

EXPOSURE



Where staff have family members or housemates who have come into contact with COVID-19 or displayed any symptoms, there should be flexibility to allow them to work from home. There is no certainty that having previously had COVID-19 provides immunity.

WELLBEING



Many employees may be bored of their current situation or anxious about returning to the workplace. Giving staff the initial option of flexible working may put concerned minds at rest. Managers should remember that individuals have different home working environments.

PRODUCTIVITY



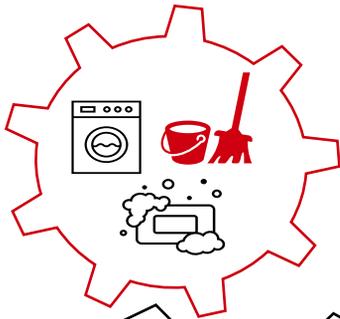
Employers should differentiate between employees that are essential in the workplace and staff that can continue to work from home. If people can work away from the office without it negatively impacting their productivity, continued flexibility may not be an issue. It remains imperative to make all staff feel part of the same team, wherever they are working.

PREPARING THE WORKPLACE

There are a number of simple steps that organisations and staff can take to reduce the risk of infection spreading around the workplace.

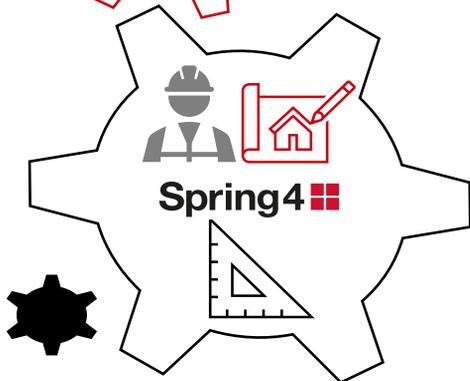
CLEANING, DISINFECTING & SUPPLIES

Tenants should have their offices deep cleaned before any staff return to the office and a stringent level of hygiene should be maintained moving forward. Alcohol-based hand sanitisers and disinfectant wipes should be provided to each desk.



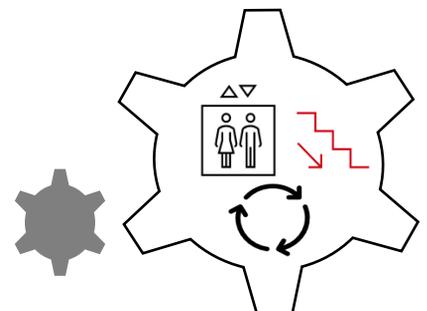
OFFICE RE-CONFIGURATION

Occupiers might consider re-fitting their workplace to create a safer environment. For example, some tenants are considering installing desk screens. Spring4 Project Management can advise further on potential physical changes to the office.



CIRCULATION

Employers may wish to designate the direction of foot traffic in main circulation paths. Employees should avoid using lifts wherever possible.



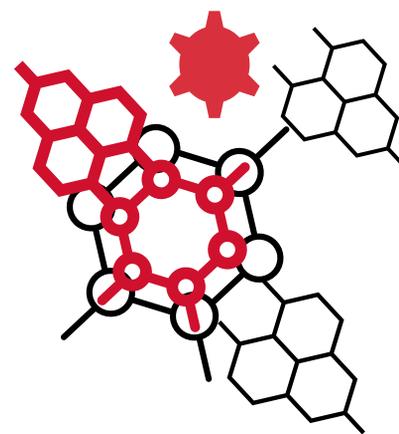
VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Occupiers should limit workplace guests to essential visits. Managers should restrict access to the general public and clients by implementing a virtual meeting policy.

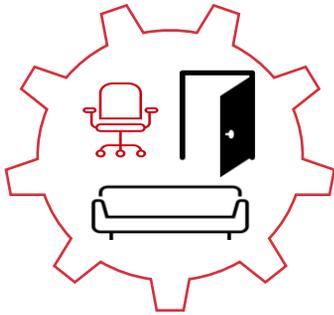


PERSONAL HYGIENE

Staff should ensure they are maintaining high levels of personal hygiene both in and out of the office at all times. Employers must provide adequate supplies of cleaning materials.

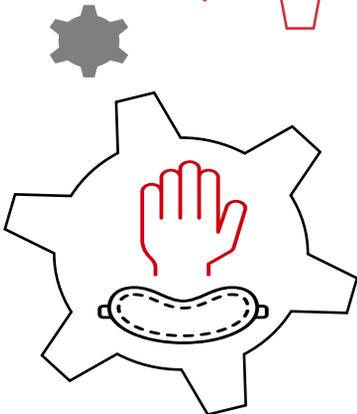


PREPARING THE WORKPLACE



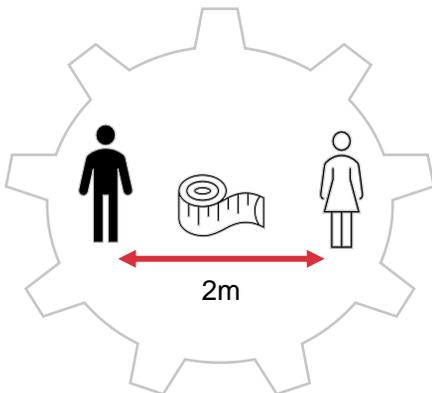
REDUCE TOUCH POINTS

Employers should leave internal non-fire doors open and lights on throughout the day, supply disposable items where appropriate, restrict the use of breakout areas and remove un-used furniture where possible.



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Employers should provide PPE (masks, gloves & eye protection) where it is deemed appropriate.



SOCIAL DISTANCING

Staff should use all reasonable endeavours to keep 2 metres apart at all times in the workplace and when circulating throughout the building. Limiting occupation of confined spaces to 1 person at a time and implementing a 'checkerboard' seating plan (i.e. leaving every other desk empty) may be effective in aiding this.

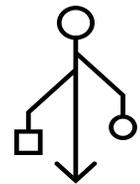
PLEASE NOTE

Corporate measures can only do so much to minimise the risk of contaminating the workplace. If staff spend the evening in a crowded bar and then travel to the office by public transport, even if they then adhere to internal workplace policy, mitigating the spread of the virus will be a challenge. Be clear with staff that these measures have been put in place for their safety.

THE FUTURE OF THE WORKPLACE

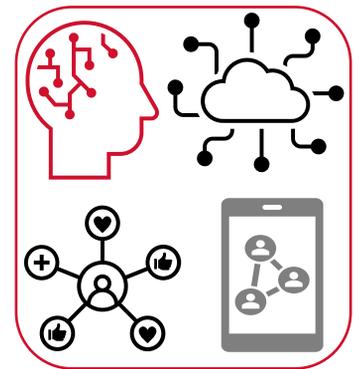
CONTINUED FLEXIBLE WORKING

As offices remain closed, many industries previously adverse to agile working have found that the ability to work at home has been tested and generally proven both practical and effective. The conclusion would therefore be that once these tenants re-occupy the workspace, they can successfully operate with a flexible working strategy in place. This is a time when occupiers might want to when begin rethinking how space can be most efficiently utilised in the workplace to potentially lower their operational footprint. In future, the norm may be to work from home with the office used as an occasional collaborative hub. By contrast, some organisations may have found working from home to have had a significant negative effect on employee productivity.



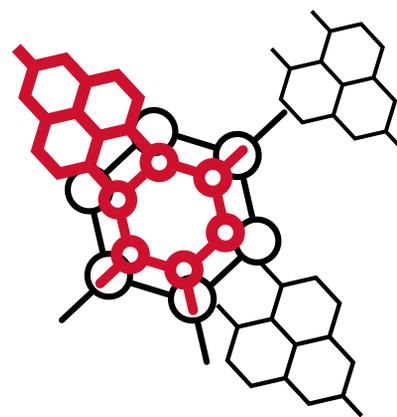
'SMART' OFFICES

COVID-19 is likely to be a catalyst for automation and touch free technology in the workplace. As office strategies begin to develop, tenants will demand more from their place of work. For example, some buildings in Asia have introduced thermal imaging in reception to screen for elevated body temperatures, a key indicator of viral infection.



While it is believed that the UK has now reached the peak of infections, the country is still far from returning to life before COVID-19.

For corporates beginning the journey to transform their office environment and culture following the COVID-19 experience, speak to the Spring4 team.





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DISCLAIMER

This document is intended only as a guide. Following the precautions within this paper cannot guarantee that COVID-19, or indeed any other infectious disease, will not spread amongst staff in the workplace. It is imperative that occupiers follow Government rules and advice and consult with Health & Safety specialists.

