

# **COVID-19 precautions, social distancing & non-compliance**

## **Management Guidance**

### **Introduction**

All STHK staff are expected to follow the Government's advice and guidance on "Staying Alert and Safe Social Distancing".

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

Whilst NHS workplaces are exempt from certain Government restrictions that does not mean that Social Distancing between individuals on NHS premises should be any different than for the general public. This does not apply to clinical and some other areas where close contact may be necessary and where appropriate PPE must be worn, but it does apply to all other areas of the Trust including offices, restaurants, corridors, staff rest rooms, staff kitchens, Trust vehicles and anywhere else that staff are in close proximity to each other.

### **Basic Infection Prevention actions required by all staff**

It is the responsibility of all staff to promote Social Distancing in the workplace. In addition, managers are expected to act as role models and carry out workplace risk assessments and follow through on any outcomes suggested by that process, such as rearranging furniture, workstations, ordering and displaying signage, arranging alternative office space or staff working from home, etc.

All staff must:

- wear appropriate PPE, such as surgical face mask
- keep 2 metres apart whenever possible if this can't be achieved wear PPE;
- practice frequent hand hygiene following the recommended technique.

Staff should not share cups or utensils and should avoid hot-desking if possible.

All work surfaces, including, desks, keyboards, phones (land lines and mobiles) etc. must be cleaned at least twice per day and more frequently if used by several staff.

### **Non-compliance with Social Distancing**

It is hoped that no formal action will be necessary for any staff that breach the Social Distancing guidance on a single occasion, or by mistake, or owing to confusion over the rules applying. However, repeated breaches should not be accepted and swift action should be taken by managers to ensure that the Trust can provide a safe working environment in which the spread of infection is minimised.

Any staff that believe they are unable to adhere to Social Distancing requirements in their workplaces should inform their managers as soon as possible and explain the reasons why.

A small number of staff may be exempted from wearing face masks on medical/safety grounds. If that is the case, they will be issued with written evidence of this by the Occupational Health Department.

Otherwise, where an employee is considered to have breached the social distancing rules, the following steps should be followed:

### **Step 1**

Any employee who appears to breach the Social Distancing guidance in the workplace should be told by their colleagues or manager of the breach and asked to observe the guidance;

### **Step 2**

Anyone who fails to respond to a 'Step 1' reminder should be reported to their line manager as being in breach of Social Distancing guidance. The line manager should speak with them and verbally remind them of the guidance and highlight which specific acts or omissions in their workplace behaviour need to be addressed.

In addition the manager should inform them that any further alleged breaches may be regarded as a disciplinary matter i.e. misconduct in accordance with the Trusts Disciplinary Policy, i.e. *"a failure to follow reasonable instructions"*;

### **Step 3**

If there is a further alleged breach, the line manager should meet the employee, inform them of the alleged breach and confirm in writing that their conduct will be investigated under the Trusts Disciplinary Policy. Staff will have a right to accompanied at that meeting by a workplace colleague or representative of a recognised Trades Union. From that point all the usual provisions of the Trust Disciplinary Policy will apply. (The fast track process could also be considered). If proven this may also result in withdrawal of pay for the period of isolation when staff have failed to follow the social distancing guidance or wear appropriate PPE.

### **Step 4**

Whilst the above matter is being investigated in accordance with The Trust Disciplinary Policy, any further alleged breaches of Social Distancing may be regarded as Gross Misconduct i.e. *"Deliberately disobeying a reasonable instruction"*. This could result in consideration of whether a suspension from the workplace is necessary until the matter is investigated and concluded. If proven this may also result in withdrawal of pay for the period of isolation when staff have failed to follow the social distancing guidance or wear appropriate PPE.