



# NEW WAYS OF WORKING REOPENING OF OFFICES

Birmingham – August 2020 v.1.0



## INTRODUCTION

The last few months have been a time of change and challenge for us all, in both our personal lives and in our work lives. We are incredibly proud of your adaptability, perseverance and effort whilst we moved to home working and for maintaining business as usual as the crisis unfolded.

We are now at the start of a new exciting phase for the firm. Our desire to reopen the offices is not about a 'return' but a move to new ways of working that allow us all to optimise the balance of working from the office and from home.

The office is an important part of our working lives. It is a hub for interaction and collaboration – both of which are integral to our DNA as a firm. There is no replacement for human interaction and the positive impact it can have, even from a safe distance. The unplanned conversations which result in new ideas, the kitchen chats which spark opportunities and the informal team catch ups, all contribute to the culture and success of the firm.

The health and wellbeing of everyone remains our priority, and we have worked to make the office as safe as we can – but a safe environment relies on the actions of everybody; from regular hand washing, and social distancing, to speaking up and feeling comfortable to raise any issue or concern with your manager, Facilities, HR or a member of the Executive Board. I would like to thank those of you that volunteered to tidy your own, and team members' desks. This was fundamental in preparing the office and moving to a paper free, clean desk, environment.

This pack is designed to give you information on how the office will be set up, what protocols are in place, and the actions we need you to take. It is a comprehensive document which I urge you to read in its entirety, it is essential that everyone coming in to the office knows what protocols will be in place so they can fulfil their role in keeping it a safe environment for all.

This is a new situation for us all so please keep feeding back to the workplace team on your experiences as we enter this new phase: [workplace@geraldeve.com](mailto:workplace@geraldeve.com)

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to speak to me, or a member of the Executive Board.

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We really do look forward to seeing you soon.



**Simon Rees**

## YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Your health, and your family's, will always be the number one priority. We have worked to make the office as safe as we can, but you also play a very important part in keeping it safe and clean, reducing the risk to yourself, your family and your colleagues.

## SHOULD I COME TO THE OFFICE?

We want everyone to feel confident about coming back to the office. However, there are some circumstances when you should **not** come into the office:

- If you are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID19 or are living with someone that is, or if you are self-isolating
- If you are deemed to be an extremely vulnerable person (you have been informed that you should be shielding or living with someone that is)
- If you are a member of a vulnerable group, you should work from home, if it is essential for you to come into the office a further risk assessment needs to be undertaken (this includes individuals with underlying or chronic health conditions, over 70 years old, a weakened immune system, pregnant, or a BMI of over 40). Please note guidance is frequently updated, it is important that you familiarise yourself with the information available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

## WHAT TO DO IF I FEEL UNWELL AT THE OFFICE?

- If you start to feel symptoms of COVID19 in the office you should inform your line manager and a member of HR immediately and go home, avoiding public transport
- If you are unable to go home immediately you should go to the designated isolation area, Colmore meeting room, and stay away from others
- You should then follow NHS guidance on testing, and track and trace protocol
- If you are unwell, and unable to come to the office for any illness, or have had to leave the office, please make sure any absence is recorded in Cascade

## TRACK & TRACE

- If you are contacted by NHS, usually by text, to say you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID19 please follow their instructions to self-isolate for 14 days and inform HR and your line manager immediately. If you are in the office you should go home, avoiding public transport
- We will ask you who you have had close contact with during your time in the office
- Your desk, and areas you have been to, will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
- For more information please see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>

Any data relating to your health will be kept confidential and stored securely, and only kept for as long as relevant. If a positive test of COVID19 is present, the identity of that individual will only be shared when, and where, absolutely necessary, and only to those that need to know for their own health & safety.

## KEEPING HEALTHY

New protocols are in place to reduce the risk of COVID19, these include enhanced cleaning regimes in the office as well as the provision of hand sanitiser. You are responsible for your own hygiene, please follow the below when in the office:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially when you arrive into the office
- Use hand sanitiser regularly if you are not able to wash your hands
- Avoid touching your face
- Use tissues for sneezing or coughing, and dispose of these straight away
- Do not share equipment (such as chargers or stationery)
- Avoid touching door handles
- Maintain social distancing and keep interactions brief

## MY FAMILY

We understand many of you may have caring responsibilities, and this impacts your working day, as well as the ability to come into the office if you wanted to. As school holidays are now in full swing you may need to change your current working arrangement to help over the summer.

There are a range of options that might help, including changing your working pattern, your working hours, taking holiday or parental leave, or reducing your days temporarily. As everyone has different circumstances please speak with your manager and HR to discuss how we can support you.

## SPEAK UP

If you have any questions or feel that something is presenting a risk please let your manager, Facilities or HR know. If you feel uncomfortable about anything, please say something – no one will take offense if you raise an issue or take a step back to keep your distance.

If you would prefer to send an email please do so to [workplace@geraldeve.com](mailto:workplace@geraldeve.com)

[For more information on health & wellbeing](#)

## YOU AND YOUR ENVIRONMENT

There will be new procedures in place to enable social distancing and protocols for communal areas, and the office may be set up slightly differently. We want you to be prepared for what your day might look like:

### TRAVELLING TO WORK

**Avoid public transport if possible, if you can walk or cycle instead of public transport please do so, or use a private vehicle**

Please note it is currently not advised to share a car with anyone outside of your household

If you have to use public transport, please click [here](#) for more information.

**Make sure you are travelling safely:**

- You need to wear a face covering unless you are a member of the exempt groups; [Find out how to make a face covering](#)
- Keep 2 metres apart from others where possible
- Wash your hands before and after your journey
- Carry a hand sanitiser or use sanitiser points at the stations
- Use contactless payments
- Respect priority seating and wheelchair spaces
- Follow [government advice for safer travel](#) and [check the safer travel information sheet](#)

**Arriving & leaving the office**

To reduce the number of people entering the office at any one time, and to help with your commute, there will be flexibility in arrival and departure times to the office:

- Core hours will be introduced to give greater flexibility over your day
- Core hours will be 10am to 4pm – these are times we ask you aim to be in the office but appreciate as we navigate new or impacted commutes you may need more flexibility around this dependent on your travel
- Please arrive and leave flexibly around these hours
- You are required to work your normal total number of hours to enable your tasks to be completed – but it no longer needs to be 9am – 5.30pm
- If you work designated shift times, speak to your manager first about what times are best for you to arrive and depart
- You must ensure you have everything you need with you at the end of your week in the office

### AT THE OFFICE

As you may want to arrive extra early, or stay late, on rare occasions you may find you are on your own, or one of a few, in the office for a short space of time. As such please familiarise yourself with the Lone Working policy:

<https://geraldevellp.sharepoint.com/sites/gevesCompliance/SitePages/Health-and-Safety.aspx>

**Main reception:**

- The main entrance/exit to the building are via the main front doors
- Please keep to the right when entering/exiting the building and please give way, when required, and observe social distancing
- The middle security barrier has been cordoned off to comply with social distancing
- Please follow all signage, and visual cues, within the main reception area
- Perspex screens installed at the reception desk
- Soft furnishings have been temporarily removed in addition to magazines, confectionary and fruit
- Building management propose to limit the numbers of visitors with the reception space to 2 persons at one time. Therefore, please ensure that you liaise with reception to book accordingly and please follow the Firm's guidance on external meetings, visitors and contractors as per risk assessment

#### On arrival:

- Car, motorbike and bicycle access remain the same and access to the building from the basement car park also remains the same
- It is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of occupiers wishing to use the cycle facilities so please follow visual cues in the car park, and cycle rack area, and use the hand sanitiser dispenser at the basement lift lobby before entering the building
- Please use hand sanitisers on arrival in the main reception area and before you use the stairs or lifts
- Hand sanitiser and a PPE disposal bin are available as you enter the GE reception
- Within the office a one-way system may not always be possible, and you may not be able to be 2m from someone else whilst you walk past them, in such instances please turn to face away from them

#### Stairs & Lifts:

- Please follow signage, and visual cues, in the lift lobby and common areas at all times
- Markings and visual cues will be in place on stairs allowing occupiers to maintain social distancing when travelling between floors - if you pass people please turn your face away from them
- Lift car access has been reduced to 1 person at any time, and to ease congestion in the lift lobby, please use the lifts to ascend and stairs to descend
- If you have any mobility issues that prevent you from using the stairs, please let Facilities know so an additional risk assessment can be undertaken
- When using the lift please use clothing, fob/pass or your elbow to press any buttons in the lift
- Enhanced cleaning of touch points in common areas has been implemented using viricidal cleaning solutions and all operatives have been trained in infection control

#### Your desk:

- You will have been assigned a desk, this may not necessarily be the one you used to sit at, although where possible we will try to accommodate this
- Your desk will either be Yellow or Red: throughout the week only people designated the same colour desk will be present. There will be weekly rotations between red and yellow and the same colour across the Firm
- You must only come into the office on your allocated week – any attendance will therefore be every other week
- There will be signage on the floor indicating where your chair should be
- Only every alternate desk will be used, you should not move to another desk regardless of whether it is empty
- Please use the anti-bacterial wipes placed around the office, to self-clean your workstations during the course of the day
- Do not borrow anyone else's IT equipment or phone chargers

#### Clean Desk:

- We have learnt over the past few months that we do not require the paper we previously thought we needed
- To enable thorough cleaning and to move forward to become a paperless, tidier and more agile and environmentally sustainable workplace a Clean Desk Policy will now be in place
- Contractually we are required to maintain client confidentiality at all times, therefore it is incumbent on each of us to ensure that all sensitive and confidential data is secured, a clean desk policy is instrumental to this
- At the end of each day your desk must be cleared of all paper, files and documents – these need to be stored in cabinets or your pedestal which should then be locked
- There should not be any belongings left under your desk
- Frequent and repeated breaches of the Clean Desk Policy may lead to disciplinary action
- We will be setting up a working group to help us create and sustain paperless offices – for more information or to take part please contact [hfoley@geraldeve.com](mailto:hfoley@geraldeve.com)

#### **Kitchen areas:**

- Additional cleaning materials will be provided and replenished regularly
- Please wipe down hard surfaces including worksurfaces and kitchen equipment after use
- Social distancing will need to be maintained in these areas – please do not exceed 2-person capacity in the kitchen at one time
- Please bring your own crockery and cutlery, you should clean these and keep them with you, personal items should not be stored in the kitchen
- Individuals can prepare their own drinks but please refrain from making colleagues drinks or doing the ‘tea run’
- New arrangements for the storing and disposal of food in tea points and kitchens will be in place and clearly signed
- Food brought in and stored in fridges must be contained within Tupperware, or in its original packaging, and brought in and stored on a daily basis only
- The storing of condiments is no longer permitted
- Microwaves will not be in use

#### **Printers**

- Avoid using your fingers to touch the screen – use clothing or a non-scratch implement
- Wipe printer screens with wipes provided

#### **Stationery & Coat cupboards**

- Please ensure that you take only what you require and do not share stationery items
- Do not leave anything overnight in the coat cupboards, please take your possessions home at the end of each day

#### **Deliveries**

- All deliveries to the building, including couriers and Royal Mail, will be directed to the tenant’s demise and deliveries will not be accepted by the reception team
- No personal deliveries or post should come to the office
- Employees should keep couriers and work-related deliveries to a minimum

#### **Air Conditioning**

- Adjusted the main air handling system so they run on 100% fresh air (avoiding recirculation) to minimise the risk of airborne contaminants and create healthy indoor air quality
- Adjusted the main fresh air and extract system to operate 24/7
- Ensured the exhaust ventilation systems to toilet facilities are operational 24/7
- Maintenance and provision have been undertaken in line with Covid-19 recommendations from REHVA (Federation of European Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning Associations) & CIBSE (Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers).

#### **Dress Code:**

- You should dress appropriately for your duties and work schedule for the day
- Please remember you are representing the firm and should be smart and presentable
- With less people in the office the temperature may not be the same as previously so please bring layers for your individual comfort

#### **Toilet and shower facilities**

- Alternate sinks and urinals have been closed off to control the numbers using the facilities and please follow signage and visual cues
- Close the toilet seat before flushing to minimise transmission of airborne bacteria
- Always remember to wash your hands when leaving the facilities
- There is no access to shower facilities at present, but this arrangement is subject to ongoing review, so please liaise with building management upon your return to the building
- Enhanced cleaning focusing on sanitising key touch points including taps, handles and WC cubicles

#### Emergency evacuation & procedures:

- There are currently no scheduled evacuations
- Should you need to evacuate the building due to a fire or other emergency please leave immediately and please revert to the regular evacuation process when vacating the building
- The current fire assembly point is not suitable to accommodate occupants and maintain social distancing, so it is recommended to disperse a safe distance away from the building, but remain in the vicinity to hear when it is safe to return to the office
- A member of the building management team/or security, will evacuate to the normal assembly point at St Phillips Square, and Fire Marshals should report to the assembly point to confirm floors have been cleared and receive instruction as to when it is safe to return to the building.
- **Note: It is important that Fire Marshals check emergency evacuation arrangements, and procedures, with building management prior to returning to the workplace and convey arrangements with colleagues**

#### What do I need to bring back to the office?

- Please remember your building access fob
- You will need to bring with you any firm ICT equipment that you had at home
- Bring to the office any confidential documents that you need to shred

#### Coming into the office for the first time

- Please speak to your manager if you would like to come into the office
- Please **do not turn up to** the office without speaking to your manager first as a desk will need to be allocated to you

## YOU AND YOUR TEAM

Each team will have different numbers of people in the office or working from home, this will mean we need to adapt as to how we work best together. Unlike in the past, where the majority were in the office, or all were working from home, a mix of both means we need to make sure we are communicating in the best way and keeping everyone up to date.

### **Rota scheme**

- A weekly rota scheme is in place to enable social distancing in the office – split between Red & Yellow desks
- It is essential you do not move from your allocated desk. Please note it may not necessarily be your old desk
- You do not have to come into the office every day on your allocated week, but you cannot change weeks you are in the office

### **Team Meetings**

- Some meetings now consist of members in the office and members from home, try to keep in mind that non-verbal cues are easier to read in person than they are virtually
- Internal meeting rooms must be used in line with social distancing and cannot accommodate the full number of people they may have done in the past
- If you use a meeting room please be mindful to only touch the furniture you use, and wipe down door handles after use

### **Annual Leave**

- As travel increases, and countries open their borders you may want to take some leave abroad
- Please speak to your line manager and book leave in advance, entering all leave into Cascade
- Please notify HR of your travel destination – this data will only be kept for a short amount of time to ensure we are aware of quarantine measures and any additional risks we need to take into account

### **New ways of working**

- If you are back in the office, it doesn't mean you need to slip back into old ways!
- Think about what has worked well digitally that you could continue in the office
- Ask other teams what has worked well for them and could be used across other areas of the business to be more efficient and productive
- Just because a printer is now available – doesn't mean you need to print everything! We want to work in a paperless environment

## YOU AND OUR CLIENTS

Supporting our clients is of the upmost importance, even if it is a call to say hello and keep in touch. Our clients will remember the advisors who showed empathy and who were there for them and this includes how we communicate with them about our safety protocols, our meeting arrangements and processing their data.

You may be asked to go on a site visit, meeting or inspection. Each of these should be risk assessed within your team, with virtual meetings being the first port of call. If you are required to go externally, and you are comfortable to do so please note the following information.

### Inspections

- Please make sure you are aware of the Firm's inspection protocol
- RICS guidance can also provide information (<https://www.rics.org/uk/news-insight/latest-news/coronavirus-and-rics-events/guidance-for-professionals/>)
- PPE is not necessarily required for every inspection or site visit, if you do need some protective equipment please speak to the facilities helpdesk – please give as much notice as possible if you require any kit

### External Meeting protocol

- We will not be hosting external visitors during the first phase of our reopening process. Once we can, advance notice will be needed so a risk assessment can be carried out
- If you are requested to attend a client site, only do so if you feel comfortable and it is required
- All non-essential travel should not take place; this includes travel to other offices

### Data protection of Client Information

- To be COVID secure you may be asked by clients or building managers if you have any symptoms of COVID19, or are a member of a vulnerable group – this is standard procedure so please be honest, never feel under pressure to attend a meeting or office if you are feeling symptoms of COVID19
- If you have any concerns about how they are handling your data, ask them what their data policy is
- Similarly, you may be required to ask this of clients, please only keep this information for as long as it is required. This information should not be transferred to anyone else at any time.
- For more information please read <https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/news/covid19/covid-19-data-protection-and-reopening-the-property-market.pdf>
- And the Firm's data protection policy which can be found [here](#)
- If you have any questions about data protection, or the handling of client data please speak to Gill Dixon (email [address link](mailto:address@geralve.com))

Thank you for reading this information – we know there is a lot to take in, and it will take time for new behaviours to become second nature, but it is essential for your own health, and that of your colleagues and family, that we all play our part in keeping the office a safe environment. We will update this and other documents in line with Government guidance developments. If you have any questions, please contact [workplace@geralve.com](mailto:workplace@geralve.com)

For more information on H&S - please read our policies [here](#)

