

BACKHOUSE JONES LIMITED

COVID 19 RISK ASSESSMENT

Description of Task: Covid 19	
Location: Out of Office Appointments and Overnight Stays	
People Exposed: Fee-earners	
*Additional People Exposed: Clients	
Hazards Identified: • Covid 19	Risks Assessed: • Contracting Covid 19/Coronavirus
Risk Rating: Probability: Low Severity: Low Risk: Medium	
<p>Introduction</p> <p>This risk assessment is in addition to the Backhouse Jones COVID-19 Office Premises risk assessment and should be read in conjunction with that document.</p> <p>This risk assessment has been prepared to assess the risk to employees of Backhouse Jones who are involved in out of office appointments including client meetings, Court and Tribunal hearings, police interviews and all other appointments that require meetings outside of the office premises. This risk assessment also considers the risk involved in travelling to all out of office appointments.</p> <p>Due to the national nature of the work Backhouse Jones undertake, it is inevitable that overnight accommodation has to be used from time to time and this risk assessment considers the risks to employees when staying away from home.</p> <p>Employees to whom this risk assessment is relevant will be provided with a copy of this document in order that they are aware of the control measures.</p> <p>Backhouse Jones will supply relevant employees with washable facemasks, hand sanitising gel, sanitising wipes, disposable gloves and disposable plastic bags. You are responsible for ensuring that you maintain a sufficient stock of these items. You should liaise with the office to make arrangements for delivery of sufficient numbers of these items that you required.</p> <p>Out of office meetings</p> <p>There is a risk of transmission of COVID-19 through meeting clients in person. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 you must not attend any meetings, including Court/Tribunal hearings. You should inform a director immediately.</p> <p>To reduce the risk, meetings should be held remotely by either video conferencing or telephone. Due to the nature of certain cases it is not always possible to hold an effective meeting remotely. Where this is the case, meetings at client's premises can take place but in order to reduce the risk of infection the following control measures are to be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important that prior to visiting a site for the purpose of a meeting you are aware of what is expected of you when visiting those premises in terms of the control measures in place in order that you don't increase the risk at those premises through a lack of awareness of what will be required of you when on site. • In advance of the meeting, discuss with the client the location for the proposed meeting to establish that it is possible for social distancing to be observed during the meeting. If social distancing is not going to be possible due to the layout of the premises consider an alternative part of the premises or whether the meeting should 	

take place at alternative premises, including the Backhouse Jones office.

- If there is no alternative to a location where social distancing is not possible then ask those in the meeting to wear face masks and follow the procedure for wearing face masks as set out in the government guidance.
- Ensure you are not sitting opposite to each other during the meeting, if this is possible, if not try to sit as far apart as possible and wear a mask, also ask your client to wear one as well unless you can maintain 2 meters social distancing.
- When attending premises away from the office always respect social distancing where at all possible. Avoid congregating in small spaces.
- Shaking hands and any physical contact should be avoided. If physical contact does take place, sanitise hands as soon as possible.
- If the premises visited requires visitors to sign in, use your own pen and do not share the pen with a third party. Sanitise hands after signing in and after touching doors, rails, chairs etc.
- During meetings avoid where at all possible passing papers/documents/exhibits/stationary etc between the parties. Ask for an electronic copy of a document to be emailed where practical. If documents are passed between the parties, sanitise hands after touching those documents.
- Limit meetings to only those individuals who are necessary for the meeting.
- Take your own refreshments to meetings in a plastic bottle or flask where the venue's policy and procedures allow.
- If toilet facilities are required always wash hands with soap for at least 20 seconds and sanitise hands once returned to the meeting room.
- At the conclusion of the meetings, sanitise hands prior to getting back into the vehicle you are travelling in.
- If at any point you form the view that someone in meeting or on the premises that you have come into close contact with is showing symptoms of COVID-19 you should leave the meeting/site immediately. Sanitise your hands and notify one of the directors of Backhouse Jones.

Court/Tribunal Appointments

Court and Tribunals have issued guidance which should be reviewed in advance of attendance in order to familiarise yourself with that is expected of you and what procedures are in place.

Guidance has been issued by HMCTS which deals with how to ensure social distancing in the Court buildings, wearing face masks, procedures for security checks and cleaning measures:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/going-to-a-court-or-tribunal-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

Other tribunals have issued separate guidance/policies and procedures. The relevant guidance should be reviewed prior to attending Court and any clients, witnesses or others that you expect to be attending should be made aware of the court/tribunal requirements.

Meetings at court should take place in a space where social distancing is possible. Court facilities are such that this is not always possible. In those circumstances, wear face masks and ask clients to wear a face mask. Take sufficient numbers of face masks with you to provide to clients/those you are meeting.

Keep meetings/consultations in areas where social distancing is not possible to as short a time as necessary and limit numbers in the meeting to the minimum required.

Use hand sanitiser as soon as possible after touching doors, rails etc.

If a client or anyone else that you are or have been in close proximity with displays signs of the symptoms of COVID-19, you should leave the area occupied by them and speak to a representative of the Court or tribunal to explain the situation in order that a decision can be made in relation to the continuation of the hearing. Notify a director of Backhouse Jones at a convenient point.

Note the recent guidance regarding courts which appears to suggest that unless you are showing symptoms you can continue to attend court.

Travel

Where practicable drive to any meetings/court appointments. This is not always possible for appointments further away. If it is necessary to use public transport, employees should consult the policies and procedures the provider of the public transport has issued and follow those procedures.

Where practical journeys on public transport should be arranged to avoid peak times and busy terminus.

Face masks are to be worn when using public transport and government guidance in terms of using face masks is to be adhered to. Sufficient quantities of face masks and hand sanitiser will be provided.

If travelling with others on public transport sit side by side or behind each other rather than face to face, where seating arrangements allow.

Consider the use of disposable gloves when using ticket machines and chip and pin devices. Dispose of gloves immediately after use in bins or alternatively in a disposable bag that Backhouse Jones will supply you with. Sanitise hands and bank cards after using ticket machines, chip and pin devices and the like, even if disposable gloves have been used. Where possible use contactless payment, that may mean using personal bank cards as oppose to business bank cards which currently don't have contactless payment facility.

Where possible request electronic receipts for items paid for. Where you do receive a paper receipt, scan the receipt using a suitable app on a mobile device and dispose of the paper copy. Sanitise hands and mobile device after handling paper receipts.

When travelling by car the following control measures should be followed:

- Travel alone or if necessary, to travel with another person, that person should sit in a position in the vehicle that respects social distancing where possible, the current recommendation is that the passengers should sit side by side or diagonally apart. If practical face away from each other and open the windows. The use of face masks should be considered if social distancing is not possible within the vehicle. Face to face contact should be kept to a minimum and the vehicle well ventilated.
- Travel with another person is permitted if necessary, for work purposes, that will

include training a trainee for example or travelling with a paralegal who may also be working on a case. However, think about the particular journey and ask whether the passenger is necessary. For example, if the matter is very straight forward and likely to be a very short hearing, is it necessary to take the trainee, what would that person learn; compare this with a complex hearing where the trainee might experience a complex learning experience which needs to be observed to assist the training.

- Remote access for meetings for Paralegals and Trainees even if the solicitor is in attendance is a sensible alternative to traveling together so should be used as a safe alternative.
- When re-fuelling vehicles, social distancing should be observed, and disposable gloves used when handling the fuel pump. The gloves should be disposed of immediately after use in bins provided at the fuel station or alternatively in plastic bags provided to you by Backhouse Jones. When paying for fuel or any other items consider the use of disposable gloves and always sanitise hands and bank cards after transactions. Hands should be sanitised prior to entering your vehicle after any break stops.
- If sharing driving, sanitise the controls and all touch points with wipes prior to driver changes.
- If it is necessary to stop for meal breaks during a journey, hands should be sanitised prior to eating and afterwards.

Overnight stays

Where possible avoid staying away from home but where the working day exceeds 12 hours, or you feel tired, overnight accommodation should still be used.

Hotels should be contacted in advance of visits to establish their policies and procedures, especially their cleaning regime. Consideration needs to be applied to whether the procedures are satisfactory in terms of reducing risk. Main chain hotels with well established and well communicated procedures are preferable.

The hotel procedures must be followed.

Following check in and entry to your room, you should sanitise hands and any keys or key cards provided.

Dining arrangements in the hotel should be considered and if social distancing is respected in the dining areas, the hotel dining facilities should be used in preference restaurants external to the hotel. Consider room service where available.

Sources

The current website can be referred to assist in understanding the ever-changing environment and Local advised restrictions.

It is important to familiarise yourself with any local restrictions wherever you travel, for example Wales and Scotland have some slightly different restrictions to the general government restrictions in England.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-what-you-can-and-cannot-do/pages/getting-around/>

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/coronavirus-updates/coronavirus-restrictions-in-lancashire/>

<https://www.warrington.gov.uk/coronavirus-restrictions-warrington>

Monitoring Arrangements:


- Oversight by Directors/Practice Manager

Pertinent Legislation:

The Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020

Assessed By: Jonathon Backhouse

Date: Reviewed on 30-11-2020

Signature 

Designation: Director

Risk Ranking after Control Measures are in Place:

Probability: Low **Severity:** Low **Risk:** Low

