



Date of Knowledge (b) – Coronavirus Timeline

Date	Event	Implication
December 2019	The Covid-19 outbreak starts in Wuhan, China.	
31 January 2020	The first two cases of C-19 in the UK are confirmed.¹	Employers should have been aware of the issue in general terms; taken appropriate steps in relation to workers returning from China etc.
11 February 2020	11 February – A ninth case is confirmed in London. ²	
1 March 2020	A further 13 cases are reported, adding Greater Manchester and Scotland to the list of areas affected and bringing the total to 36, three of which are believed to be contacts of a case in Surrey who had no history of travel abroad.³	Employers should have been alive to C-19 as a domestic issue. However, no specific measures would necessarily have been required at this stage because the extent of the threat remained unclear.
3 March 2020	The government publishes its action plan for dealing with coronavirus. This includes scenarios ranging from a milder pandemic to	

¹ "Two coronavirus cases confirmed in UK"

² "Ninth coronavirus case found in UK"

³ "Coronavirus: Twelve more cases confirmed in England"

	a severe prolonged pandemic as experienced in 1918 and warns that a fifth of the national workforce could be absent from work during the infection's peak. ⁴	
5 March 2020	The first death from coronavirus in the UK is confirmed, as the number of cases exceeds 100, with a total of 115 having tested positive. ⁵ England's Chief Medical Officer, Chris Witty, tells MPs that the UK has now moved to the second stage of dealing with COVID-19 – from "containment" to the "delay" phase.⁶	By this stage, employers should have started to become alive to the fact that C-19 represented a potentially very serious and disruptive development. Risk assessments should have been updated to include the risk of transmission
7 March 2020	The number of cases rises to over 200. ⁷	
8 March 2020	A third death from coronavirus is reported, at North Manchester General Hospital, as the number of cases in the UK reaches 273, the largest single-day increase so far. ⁸	
12 March 2020	The UK Chief Medical Officers raise the risk to the UK from moderate to high.⁹ The government advises that anyone with a new continuous cough or a fever should self-isolate for seven days.¹⁰	Official increase in risk level, which should have been reflect in employers' planning/assessment. Specific guidance that those with cough/fever should self-isolate: employers' should put into place systems for their

⁴ ["Coronavirus: Up to fifth of UK workers 'off sick at same time'"](#)

⁵ ["Coronavirus: Older patient becomes first virus fatality in UK"](#)

⁶ ["More than a hundred people in UK infected with coronavirus"](#)

⁷ ["Coronavirus cases in UK rise to 206 today"](#)

⁸ ["Coronavirus: Man in his 60s becomes third UK death"](#)

⁹ ["Mildly sick people should stay home as coronavirus public risk set to 'high'"](#)

¹⁰ ["People with fever or cough told to self-isolate"](#)

		staff to take time off for this if need be.
16 March 2020	Prime Minister Boris Johnson advises everyone in the UK against "non-essential" travel and contact with others, to curb coronavirus, <u>as well as to work from home if possible</u> and avoid visiting social venues such as pubs, clubs or theatres. Pregnant women, people over the age of 70 and those with certain health conditions are urged to consider the advice "particularly important", and will be asked to self-isolate within days. ¹¹ <u>The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport states "it is advised that large gatherings should not take place".¹²</u>	Businesses should now have begun to put in place immediate arrangements to enable their staff to work from home; and to limit the number of staff required to attend site in-person.
21 March 2020	<u>The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Business Closure) (England) Regulations 2020 (SI 327)</u> come into legal effect at 2pm, enforcing the closure in England of businesses selling food and drink for consumption on the premises, as well as a range of other businesses such as nightclubs and indoor leisure centres where a high risk of infection could be expected.	
23 March 2020	In a televised address, Boris Johnson announces a UK-wide partial lockdown, to contain the spread of the virus. The British public are instructed that they must stay	Key date: full lockdown begins. Employers ought to have arrangements already in place so that staff can work

¹¹ "Coronavirus: PM says everyone should avoid office, pubs and travelling"

¹² "COVID-19 guidance for mass gatherings"

	at home, except for certain "very limited purposes" – shopping for basic necessities; for "one form of exercise a day"; for any medical need; and to travel to and from work when "absolutely necessary". ¹³	from home, unless this is impossible.
24 March 2020	The UK records its highest number of coronavirus deaths in one day, after a further 87 people die across the country, bringing the total to 422. ¹⁴	
25 March 2020	The <u>Coronavirus Act 2020</u> is passed.	
26 March 2020	<u>The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 (SI 350) (the 'Lockdown Regulations')</u> come into effect, significantly extending the range of businesses that are required by law to close with immediate effect including all retail businesses not on an approved list. The number of UK coronavirus deaths increases by more than 100 in a day for the first time, rising to 578, while a total of 11,568 have tested positive for the virus. ¹⁵	
29 March 2020	The government will send a letter to 30 million households warning things will "get worse before they get better" and that tighter restrictions could be implemented if necessary. The letter will also be accompanied	

¹³ "You must stay at home' UK public told"

¹⁴ "Coronavirus: Biggest daily rise in UK deaths – up by 87 to 422"

¹⁵ "UK virus deaths rise by more than 100 in a day"

	<p>by a leaflet setting out the government's lockdown rules along with health information.¹⁶</p>	
	<p>A significant rise in anxiety and depression among the UK population is reported following the lockdown. The study, by researchers from the University of Sheffield and Ulster University, finds that people reporting anxiety increased from 17% to 36%, while those reporting depression increased from 16% to 38%.¹⁷</p> <p>The number of people in hospital with COVID-19 passes 10,000.¹⁸</p>	<p>Risk assessments should start to includes measures to address the mental state of their work-force operating from home.</p>
<p>10 May 2020</p>	<p>The UK government updates its coronavirus message from "stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives" to "stay alert, control the virus, save lives".</p> <p>A new alert scale system is announced, ranging from green (level one) to red (level five).</p> <p>A recorded address by Boris Johnson is broadcast at 7pm in which he outlines a "conditional plan" to reopen society, but says it is "not the time simply to end the lockdown this week", and describes the plans as "the first careful steps to modify our measures". Those who cannot work from home, such as construction workers</p>	<p>Employers should have measures in place before allowing staff to return to work to minimise the risk.</p>

¹⁶ "Things to get worse, PM says in letter to Britons"

¹⁷ "Rise in depression and anxiety day after UK lockdown announced – study"

¹⁸ "Number of people in hospital with coronavirus passes 10,000"

		and those in manufacturing, are encouraged to return to work from the following day, but to avoid public transport if possible. ¹⁹	
11 May 2020		<p>The UK government advises people in England to wear face coverings in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not possible, such as on public transport and in shops.²⁰</p> <p>Government publishes guidance to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the coronavirus pandemic:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19</p>	<p>In the context of those employers still operating in-person, they should ensure that their staff are provided with face-masks if working at close-quarters.</p> <p>Government publishes various sector-specific guidance.</p>
12 May 2020		<p>Figures released by the Office for National Statistics and the devolved administrations indicate the death toll from COVID-19 exceeds 40,000 – including almost 11,000 care home residents – although week-by-week numbers continue to fall. In care homes in England and Wales, the year-to-date COVID-19 total reaches 8,312 but the weekly number (to 1 May) shows a decrease for the first time since the start of the pandemic.</p>	
14 May 2020		<p>Figures compiled by NHS England giving a breakdown of underlying health conditions among COVID-19 hospital</p>	<p>Relevant to the ‘who might be harmed/how’ element of a risk assessment – those with</p>

¹⁹ ["PM unveils 'conditional plan' to reopen society"](#)

²⁰ ["New face covering advice for people in England"](#)

	<p>fatalities between 31 March and 12 May indicate one in four had diabetes. Other common health conditions were dementia (18%), serious breathing problems (15%), chronic kidney disease (14%), and ischaemic heart disease (10%).²¹</p>	<p>diabetes/dementia/breathing problems/kidney disease/ischaemic heart disease are especially vulnerable.</p>
18 May	<p>The UK adds loss of smell and loss of taste to the list of COVID-19 symptoms that people should look out for.²²</p>	<p>Further symptoms to look out for in potentially infected employees.</p>
20 May 2020	<p>People with diabetes are being strongly advised to follow government advice after a study by NHS England found the condition was linked to a third of coronavirus deaths between 1 March and 11 May. Diabetics are not among the people who have been told to shield themselves, but some may be asked to do so if they are deemed to be at high risk because of a combination of health conditions.²³</p>	<p>Again – employees with diabetes are especially vulnerable.</p>
24 May 2020	<p>Samples from blood donors in London during the past week (reported by Public Health England on 4 June) show antibodies indicating exposure to COVID-19 in around 16% of people.²⁴</p>	<p>Prevalence of C-19 in the general population; relevant to statistical decision making.</p>
2 June 2020	<p>Public Health England releases its report into the disproportionately high number of people from ethnic minorities dying from COVID-19. The report finds that</p>	<p>Employers ought to be mindful of the disproportionate impact of C-19 on BAME background.</p>

²¹ ["Quarter of Covid-19 deaths in English hospitals were of diabetics"](#)

²² ["UK adds loss of smell to coronavirus symptoms list"](#)

²³ ["Diabetic people offered support amid coronavirus"](#)

²⁴ ["National COVID-19 surveillance report: Week 23"](#)

	age, sex, health, geographical circumstances and ethnicity are all risk factors, with those of Bangladeshi origin experiencing a particularly high number of fatalities.	
15 June 2020	<p>The remainder of the <u>Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2020</u> (SI 588) comes into effect, allowing the general re-opening of English retail shops and public-facing businesses apart from those that are on a list of specific exclusions such as restaurants, bars, pubs, nightclubs, most cinemas, theatres, museums, hairdressers, indoor sports and leisure facilities. Outdoor animal-related attractions such as farms, zoos and safari parks may open. Places of worship may again be used for private prayer (but not for communal worship). English libraries still have to remain closed.</p> <p>The <u>Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings on Public Transport) (England) Regulations 2020</u> come into effect, requiring travellers on public transport in England to wear a face covering.²⁵</p>	Beginning of lock-down relaxation
23 June 2020	The Prime Minister announces that social distancing rules for England will be relaxed from 4 July, with people required to stay a	

²⁵ "New rules on face coverings coming in on Monday will help keep passengers safe"

	metre apart but advised to maintain two metres distance whenever possible. He also confirms that pubs, restaurants, hotels and hairdressers can reopen on the same day, but social distancing must be maintained. ²⁶	
24 June	The UK government publishes new advice for businesses on how to safely reopen their premises on 4 July: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/the-visitor-economy	Employers should be astute to digest and apply the guidance as best they can, as reopening increases.

²⁶ "Lockdown to be relaxed in England as 2m rule eased"