

BRANCH LIAISON SECRETARY

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Officers' Newsletter 193

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Dear All

We can now seriously start to consider face to face meetings in the not too distant future although there are still restrictions in place and the situation is likely to continue to change regularly. The text below provides some guidance taken from the government website and some common-sense comments that you have probably already thought about, but there is a short and simple checklist at the end of a few essential basics if you are able to go ahead with setting up meetings at your branch venue.

There is a note under 'Talking Points' in the August *RO* about Society meetings confirming that the position remains unchanged from that stated in the May *RO*. That is correct and the guidance below is intended for face to face meetings in England starting from September.

Face to Face Meetings - Easing of Restrictions

Government Regulations and Guidance are constantly being updated so it has been quite difficult to provide sensible advice up until now about the return to holding face to face meetings. There has been much in the news about having meetings with no more than 30 people although it is already possible to have larger groups in certain circumstances. This has now been clarified. Meetings with more than 30 people are allowed provided that the proper precautions are taken to help prevent the spread of Covid-19 ie that the venue is Covid-19 Secure.

You will already be aware that regulations and guidance are different for **Scotland** and **Wales**. So those meeting in Wales and Scotland will need to check about specific requirements that will apply. If there is a local lock-down in any area where the branch meets then you will need to comply with any specific local restrictions.

Each branch will have a different situation with regards to their venue as some venues will be able to accommodate our groups while others will not be able to put the appropriate precautionary measures in place. If you have not already done so, it is recommended that each branch contact their venue to find out about their plans to open. If a venue is not planning to open in the near future then it will be up to the branch whether it is viable or appropriate to seek another venue temporarily or continue with virtual or other contact with branch members. You can continue with these additional activities anyway if you have the resources. I have been impressed with branch ingenuity in maintaining contact under lock-down - the branch newsletters, virtual meetings and other activities that I am aware of.

The information contained in this newsletter is for use of RCTS Officers and Members only and should not be communicated outside of the Society

If a venue is opening, then you will, of course, need to check what protocols they are following and what requirements they have for us to be able to use their facilities including the use of WCs and kitchen areas. With social distancing the room previously used may not be large enough to accommodate the numbers of people who have previously attended. Assuming 'normal' numbers attending, in this event either a larger room may be required or where this is not possible, measures to restrict numbers attending may need to be considered eg booking in advance. Conversely, some may still feel that it is too risky to venture out to meetings so may choose not to attend - under current circumstances this is entirely reasonable.

Venues may require a risk assessment and completing one before the meeting is strongly recommended. A sample risk assessment for the meeting (based on an HSE example) and a sample personal risk assessment (a BMA example) are attached to this newsletter as appendix 1 and appendix 2. Looking at my own branch committee, there is only one member who is low risk with the rest being either medium or high risk! Given the demographics of members and visitors who attend meetings, people will need to decide for themselves whether they are prepared to take the risk of attending.

Hand washing or hand sanitiser will need to be used on entry and exit, face coverings will be mandatory in accordance with government guidelines and regulations, and a clear one way system in operation for accessing and exiting the meeting. You will need to check what the venue provides eg hand sanitiser at entry and exit, what the branch will need to sort out for itself and if additional cleaning after the meeting is required.

At least one toilet must be available at the venue or the meeting cannot go ahead. Within each toilet, provide a means for users to quickly wipe down the toilet handle, seat (if used) and taps after use, a box of antibacterial or disinfectant wet wipes with an adjacent litter bin, would be best. Toilet door handles should also be wiped down after touching them. If the venue already has protocols in place for toilets, then you should follow these using the cleaning materials provided.

It is **ESSENTIAL** that everyone attending provides their name and contact details as part of the track and trace requirements. These details will have to be retained for a set period of 21 days as per government guidance, after which they can be destroyed. This should provide reassurance for anyone concerned about their personal information and privacy ie we will not keep their information longer than necessary to comply with guidance and regulations. Suitable precautions about signing up safely will need to be considered and how this is done will be at the discretion of each individual branch but separate sign in sheets are recommended rather than the book that is made available at some branches. A sample of a simple sign in sheet is included as Appendix 3 with this newsletter. Not providing the required name and contact details sadly means that the person will have to be refused admittance as it is a requirement for track and trace purposes.

Even if meetings can go ahead, it may be that activities will still be restricted for example with regards to refreshments, book sales or other facilities. The obvious comment here is 'do not provide any of this sort of facility if it cannot be done safely'. The sale of books and other RCTS items is not currently recommended at meetings as most of us do not have the facilities to manage this in a Covid-19 Secure way.

Anyone who is experiencing any Covid-19 symptoms should stay at home and self-isolate. In your announcements, it is **ESSENTIAL** to make it clear that anyone getting Covid-19 like symptoms after the meeting must contact a branch committee member to let them know so that all attendees can be contacted and advised about self-isolating.

Lastly but not least, make sure that your speaker is happy with the arrangements in place. Some adjustments to normal practices may be required to accommodate everyone's needs with regards to this eg handling equipment.

So in brief:

- 1 contact the venue to find out if and when they plan to reopen for meetings;
- 2 ask what protocols and requirements they have in place to ensure Covid-19 safety;
- 3 what does the branch need to provide or do;
- 4 will numbers be restricted and if so how will this be managed;
- 5 have you carried out a risk assessment;
- 6 sort out how to ensure that everyone will sign in and provide contact details;
- 7 is it possible to provide refreshments etc safely;
- 8 is the speaker happy with the arrangements.

I know the information in this newsletter is fairly weighty but it is essential that we comply with government guidance wherever we live around the UK. Then we can be prepared as far as possible for every eventuality, protecting ourselves and our members and guests and anyone else we come into contact with in the best way possible. The risk assessment is important and it is not as onerous as it looks – most of it is common sense but in order to comply with government guidance, the sample attached to this newsletter is a useful format - especially for recording what we have done to comply with the requirements.

Any queries please ask. If I do not know the answer, someone else will.

As this newsletter is quite long, other subjects have been held over until the next one.

Keep well, keep safe.

Kind regards

Irene

Appendix 1 to newsletter 193

Company name: Railway Correspondence And Travel Society – XXXXX Branch
Assessment carried out by:(Name/s)
Date assessment was carried out: XXXXX 2020

This is a SAMPLE and must be amended to local requirements.

Based on the COVID-19 Risk Assessment Template published by the Health and Safety Executive 07/20.

As a branch committee, you must protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect your members, visitors and others from coronavirus. This is called a COVID-19 risk assessment and it will help you manage risk and protect people. You must:

- identify what branch activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus
- think about who could be at risk
- decide how likely it is that someone could be exposed
- act to remove the activity or situation, or if this isn't possible, control the risk

When completing your assessment make sure you talk to your members and visitors to explain the measures you are taking. They can also provide valuable information on how you could control the risks.

You can use this document to help you make sure you have covered what you need to keep members, visitors and others safe. Once you have completed your risk assessment you will also have to monitor to make sure that what you have put in place is working as expected.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Controls	What further action is needed to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?
Virus spreading by persons.	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	Face coverings to be worn at all times unless outdoors and socially distanced.	As in the following sections.	All	At each branch meeting.
Catching or spreading coronavirus in common use areas.	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	Social distancing. Face coverings to be worn.	If it is not possible to maintain 2 metres social distancing then 1 metre plus mitigating measures (face coverings). Check venue protocols.	All	At each branch meeting.
Catching or spreading coronavirus by not washing hands or not washing them adequately.	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	Soap and water available in WC areas. Hand sanitiser at entry and exit points.	If your venue does not already have signage about good handwashing techniques, provide them yourself to encourage attendees to practice good handwashing techniques and to remind them to cough/sneeze into an arm and avoid touching their faces.	Branch Committee	Before attendees arrive for the meeting.
Catching or spreading coronavirus by contamination of: - Door handles - Switches - Other	Branch Committee Members/visitors	Check required protocols with the meeting venue and have a checklist handy at the meeting to ensure compliance.	Committee members to ensure that they are familiar with requirements.	Branch Committee	Before, during and after the meeting.
Catching or spreading coronavirus by contamination of: Toilet	Branch Committee Members/visitors	Check required protocols with the meeting venue and have a checklist handy at the meeting to ensure compliance.	The toilet door handle, any part of the door that has been touched, flush lever, and seat if used, should be cleaned after each use or as per venue protocols.	All	At each branch meeting.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Controls	What further action is needed to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?
Catching or spreading coronavirus by contamination of: Refreshment facilities	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	If it is practicable to safely provide refreshments, only specifically designated persons to do this. If it is not practicable, no refreshments to be provided.	Handling as little as possible by designated person(s) only.	Person serving refreshments. (Branch Committee to decide about provisions)	At each branch meeting.
Catching or spreading coronavirus in common use areas.	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	Check venue protocols and where practical use a one way system for entry/exit. Where not possible allow only one person at a time to pass through. Any others to wait at a distance until the area is clear.	None.	Branch Committee	At each branch meeting.
Catching or spreading coronavirus by contamination of equipment	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	For signing in recommend one or at most two people taking names and contact details.	None	Person designated to do signing in	At each branch meeting.
Catching or spreading coronavirus by contamination of equipment	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	Where there is a projector, laptop, PA system, only one person to set up each item and to be responsible for wiping it down and packing it away again after use.	None	Individuals designated to handle each item of equipment	At each branch meeting.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Controls	What further action is needed to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?
Exposure to workplace hazards because it isn't possible to get normal personal protective equipment	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	Normal personal protective equipment (PPE) is not required at branch meetings.	None.	N/A	N/A
Catching or spreading coronavirus by contamination of money.	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	Donations given by means of a lidded container. The container is not to be emptied until a minimum of 72 hours has elapsed since the last donation.	Branch treasurer to keep control of the donations container and hold it until a minimum of 72 hours has elapsed before counting / paying in to the branch account.	Branch Treasurer	At and after each branch meeting.
Track and trace all attendees	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	All attendees sign in and out with their membership number. Non-members have to provide telephone number and post code.	Data is kept for 21 days as per government guidance and then disposed of securely. (Compliance with General Data Protection Regulations)	All	At each branch meeting.
If someone develops COVID-19 symptoms following attendance at a branch meeting	Branch Committee Members/Visitors	The person must inform a member of the branch committee urgently. The branch committee must then advise all who attended the meeting. The venue must be advised accordingly to advise any others using the building at the same time and to enable any additional cleaning to be carried out.	A record must be kept of actions taken in case of future queries.	Branch Committee	When and if necessary.

Useful Links:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>

COVID-19 risk assessment tool

About this tool

This tool can help you to quantify your biological risk and should be used to facilitate your work-based risk assessment. It will also assist team leaders when allocating roles within clinical departments and GP practices.

Use of a risk stratification tool does not replace the need for a comprehensive risk assessment that employers must undertake in addressing the risks posed by COVID-19. The risk assessment should be done in a one-to-one setting, recognising this will require sensitive discussions. Those with responsibility for implementing the risk assessment should listen carefully to your concerns, provide support and consider any adjustments that might be necessary.

The risk model attributes a point for every approximate doubling of risk compared to the reference population¹. Adding the risk score from each category gives you a personal risk score.

The tool accounts for basic demographics such as age, sex, ethnicity and comorbidities. It does not incorporate other external factors, such as high-risk household members or those at higher risk of mental health issues. You should mention these factors, if relevant to you, in discussions you have with your employer about your risk.

The science upon which this tool is based is continuing to evolve and while we support the use of this tool it should not be used to the exclusion of [other tools and resources](#) that may also facilitate risk assessments.

Pregnancy

There is currently insufficient data to make any meaningful assessment about the risk of COVID-19 to either the mother or the unborn child, indeed the pandemic is not yet 9 months old. Until more information is available, we would recommend all people who are pregnant be regarded as high risk and offered the option to shield.

What you should do

1. Calculate your score.
2. Share this document with your line manager or colleague who will conduct your work-based risk assessment.

Legal disclaimer

Neither the BMA nor the authors of this tool accept any liability for the use of this tool whether arising out of tort law, including our negligence, or breach of contract or other cause of legal action save that nothing in this paragraph excludes or limits liability for personal injury or death caused by negligence.

¹ The risk stratification tool uses a Caucasian female <50years of age with no comorbidities as a reference.

Objective risk stratification (ORS) tool for individuals not already identified as “vulnerable” by the NHS Digital Shielded Patient List

Risk factor	Indicator	Adjustment
Age	>50	1
	>60	2
	>70	4
	>80	6
Sex at Birth	Female	0
	Male	1
Ethnicity	Caucasian	0
	Black African descent	2
	Indian Asian descent	1
	Filipino descent	1
	Other (including Mixed race)	1
Diabetes and Obesity	(Type 1 or Type 2) uncomplicated*	1
	(Type 1 or Type 2) complicated*	2
	BMI $\geq 35\text{kg/m}^2$	1
Cardiovascular disease	Angina, previous MI, stroke or cardiac intervention	1
	Heart failure	2
Pulmonary disease	Asthma	1
	Non-Asthma chronic pulmonary disease	2
	Either above requiring oral corticosteroids in previous year	1
Malignant neoplasm	Active malignancy	3
	Malignancy in remission	1
Rheumatological conditions	Active treated conditions	2
Immunosuppressant therapy	Any indication	2
Interpretation	Score	
Low Risk	<3	
Medium Risk	3-5	
High Risk	≥ 6	

*Complicated diabetes = presence of microvascular complications or HbA1c $\geq 64\text{mmol/mol}$

Reference

[Development of an Objective Risk Stratification Tool to facilitate workplace assessments of healthcare workers when dealing with the CoViD-19 pandemic.](#)

W David Strain, Janusz Jankowski, Angharad Davies, Peter MB English, Ellis Friedman, Helena McKeown, Su Sethi, Mala Rao OBE,

RCTS XXXXX Branch Meeting xx/xx/20

NOTE – Membership number or full contact details for Track And Trace is a pre-requisite for attending the meeting.

Name	Membership number. <i>If you are not a member state contact details</i>

Record Disposal Date :

To enable compliance with GDPR (21 days)