

VIRGO SOLICITORS LIMITED - COVID-19 Risk Assessment

This firm-wide risk assessment has been carried out in consultation with staff and is primarily aimed at establishing guidelines and practical measures we need to put in place as we envisage a return to office working. The assessment has enabled us to identify sensible measures to control the risks in our workplace of contracting and spreading Coronavirus, and it has helped us decide whether we have done everything we need to. We have focused on risks that are most likely to cause harm, rather than attempting to consider every eventuality. We have formulated a list of the likely risks as per below after undertaking an impact / likelihood analysis for each risk relevant to our workplace. We have put in place the steps necessary to mitigate each risk, taking into consideration preventative measures we already had in place to control the risks, and the additional measures we needed to implement in order to properly control the risks.

It is, of course, entirely possible that our risk assessment may determine that the risk to health and welfare of returning to the office environment would be so severe that it would be very difficult to implement sufficient measures to mitigate against the risks at the current time. This would rightfully mean that our current remote home working arrangements would have to continue for the foreseeable future. If this becomes clear, we may need to conduct a re-assessment at a later stage, perhaps when the pandemic situation improves and/or the government's guidance is updated.

The government's current guidance states as follows.

“Employers have a duty to consult their people on health and safety. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the work and how you will manage risks from COVID-19. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that you take their health and safety seriously....”

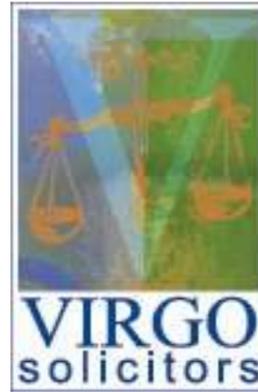
“At its most effective, full involvement of your workers creates a culture where relationships between employers and workers are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, workers should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer.

“Employers and workers should always come together to resolve issues.”

Against this background, we have used this assessment to help us break from the inertia of the past by dispensing with suboptimal old habits and systems. It is our aim to migrate to a new way of working and adopt new working methods to create safe, productive and enjoyable jobs and lives for our employees!

Dr. Abess Taqi – Solicitor & Notary Public

Director – VIRGO SOLICITORS LIMITED



Assessment completed by: DR. ABESS A.N. TAQI Job title/role: DIRECTOR – VIRGO SOLICITORS LIMITED/COLP & COFA

Reviewed by: Job title/role: MS. YEMEN SANGARI – SUPERVISING SOLICITOR

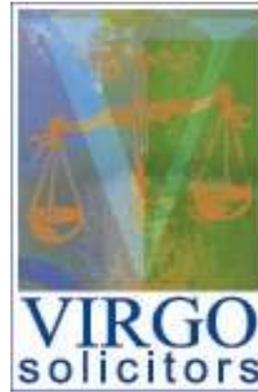
Approved by Job title/role: MRS. SENGUL TURGUT – PRACTICE MANAGER

Date last updated: 12th JUNE 2020

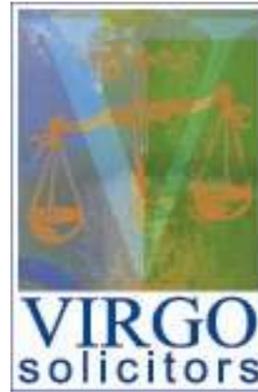
Date of next scheduled review: 12th SEPTEMBER 2020

Risk title	Description & consequence	Mitigation Steps	Action by who and by when?
Spread of COVID-19 in the firm	<p>This will result in multiple individuals (partners, associates and staff) becoming infected and possibly seriously or fatally ill</p> <p>Vulnerable workers could be worst affected¹</p>	<p>With reference to governmental health advice, it is noted that the virus is spread in large droplets by coughing and sneezing. All surfaces where the droplets land are infectious for about a week on average – everything that is associated with infected people will be contaminated and potentially infectious.</p> <p>Bearing this in mind, and in an effort to mitigate the spread of the disease, the following preventative steps have been communicated firm-wide in adherence with the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) seven – step workplace hygiene guide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Director and staff will make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe environment. ▪ Steps will be taken to review work schedules including start and finish times/shift patterns, to reduce the number of people on site at any one time. ▪ An upper occupancy limit of 30% for our office at any time has been set and should be adhered to at all times. ▪ Desks wiped regularly with appropriate disinfectant (provided) at all times. Desks assigned to an individual should not be shared with others. 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.

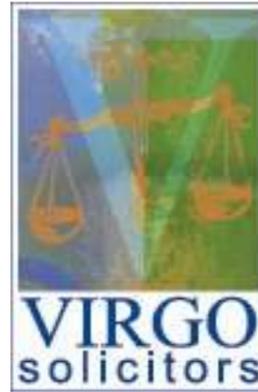
¹ Essential services workers need to be identified and a separate risks analysis considered for them, such as mail, document production/reprographics, reception and cleaning staff. Enhanced safety measures for these groups should be considered (e.g. plexiglass screens, enhanced cleaning, etc.)



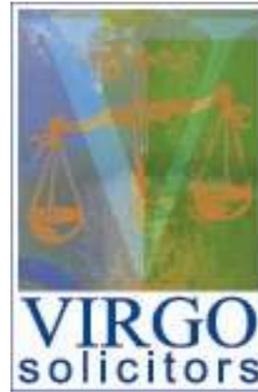
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If staff have to be in the office, they should stay two metres away from each other wherever possible. Social distancing markers and measures are in place in communal areas including kitchen and office reception to reduce the risk of transmission between staff. ▪ The use of screens or barriers to separate individuals from each other is being monitored. ▪ Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible is advisable. ▪ No one feeling ill will be allowed to come to work. ▪ Communication and awareness-raising posters referring to the above measures are prominently displayed on site. ▪ Enhanced cleaning regime implemented, including for toilets, pantries and frequent touchpoints such as door handles, light switches, reception area using appropriate cleaning products and methods. ▪ Hand washing awareness: see Office return to work posters displayed prominently on site. ▪ Sanitation products (hand sanitiser, cleaning wipes) provided including 'cleaning pack' for staff with hand gel, wipes etc. ▪ Posters, leaflets and other materials prominently displayed on the premises to remind everyone of the public health advice. 	
Spread of COVID-19 to clients or visitors	This will result in multiple individuals (partners, staff, visitors/clients and contractors) becoming infected and possibly seriously or fatally ill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No face-to-face events permitted on site. ▪ Face-to-face meetings discouraged with conference calls to be used as a matter of preference. ▪ Upper limit on meeting numbers determined by available room size. ▪ Meetings, if necessary, to be staggered so no congestion possible. ▪ Employees required to wear masks at all times during meetings. ▪ Avoid transmission during meetings, for example avoiding sharing pens and other objects. 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.



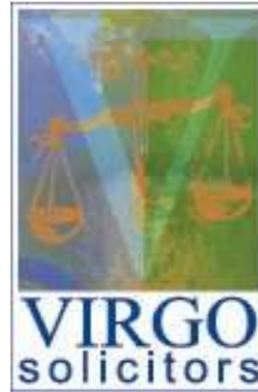
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seats removed from meeting rooms to ensure physical distancing. ▪ Enhanced cleaning regime, including before/between/after each individual meeting. ▪ Sanitation products (hand sanitiser, cleaning wipes) available inside each meeting room ▪ No catering/refreshments offered inside meeting rooms. ▪ Pre-meeting notification sent to all attendees asking them to stay away if feeling unwell. ▪ Temperature checks (not mandatory and carried out at our discretion) at office entrance aimed at keeping away any external attendee with an elevated temperature. ▪ Physical distancing in place in reception/waiting area and sufficient airflow maintained throughout. ▪ 40 minutes upper limit on meetings strongly advised. ▪ No cloakroom service – visitors should look after their own personal items. 	
<p>COVID-19 case (suspected) in our offices</p>	<p>This may result in the individual staff member experiencing medical distress on-site and could increase the risk of onward transmission of the virus among other people with whom the individual has been in proximity</p>	<p>If anyone becomes unwell with a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of sense of smell in the workplace, they will be sent home and advised to follow the stay at home guidance. The following are preventative steps relevant to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everyone in the relevant office to be informed. ▪ Partners and managers will increase the frequency of contact with those they supervise during this time. ▪ Majority of people will be instructed to work from home. ▪ No-one feeling ill is allowed to come to work. 	<p>Action communicated by COLP on 12th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.</p>



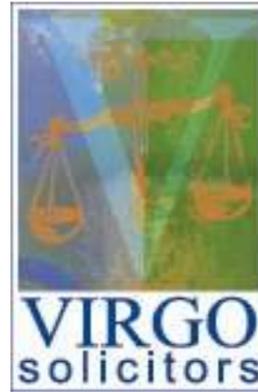
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OPTIONAL: Temperature checks at building entrance to be carried out to prevent anyone with an elevated temperature entering the office. ▪ Up-to-date contact information (including emergency contacts) for all partners and staff is being maintained. ▪ A record keeping ledger on who is in and where in the office on a given day is in operation to aid potential contact-tracing efforts and processes. 	
<p>COVID-19 transmission via communal resources or areas</p>	<p>This may result in increased risk of transmission, including to/from clients and visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborative working with landlord and other tenants in the office building is in operation to ensure consistency across common areas, for example, receptions, staircases etc. ▪ Stagger break times to reduce pressure on break and rest rooms etc. ▪ A special protocol is in operation to identify areas where people directly pass things to each other, for example office supplies – protocol aimed at finding ways to remove direct contact. ▪ Installation of screens to protect staff in receptions or similar areas is being monitored. ▪ Marketing material (brochures and literature), newspapers and magazines removed from client reception area. ▪ A special protocol in operation with regards to office library for cleaning all books, journals and other publications held in the open with disinfectant wipes. ▪ If advised that a member of staff or visitor has developed COVID-19 and was recently on the premises the management team will ask the local public health authority for advice, identify 	<p>Action communicated by COLP on 12th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.</p>



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		<p>people who have been in contact with them and take on any actions or precautions.</p>	
COVID-19 transmission via mail/packages	This may result in increased risk of transmission by handling of objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cleaning protocol is in place for all incoming mail and courier packages. ▪ Staff should clean any mail/post items delivered to their desks (wet wipes provided). 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.
Mental health problems and poor wellbeing	<p>This may result from increased stress caused by home-working and the lockdown, potential bereavements, increased caring responsibilities, elevated incidence of anxiety and depression associated with isolation, concerns about personal and family circumstances and job security</p> <p>Staff members of BAME background may feel more uncomfortable coming back into the office</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We will signpost to LawCare resources and the Law Society's mental health resources. ▪ We will increase the volume of guidance materials and resources available. ▪ We will raise awareness on any Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) offering access to additional resources and support. ▪ We have adjusted policies around home working and leave-taking to support working parents. ▪ Regular internal communications from senior leadership emphasising self-care and regular and inclusive communication is currently in operation. The emphasis is also on honesty and transparency about the difficulties the firm is facing and how to best manage these together. ▪ Regular communication of mental health information is available, and we operate an open-door policy for those who need additional support. ▪ Policies are in place to protect employees' health and safety at all times. 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.
Ergonomic injuries	<p>Insufficient chairs, screens, footstools, desks etc. may be available in the office [OPTIONAL: as a large proportion of these could have been taken home by staff]</p> <p>It may be difficult to perform workspace risk assessments whilst maintaining physical distancing or if people sit in different locations each time they are in the office</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The position on virtual self-administered workplace risk assessment module is being monitored. ▪ If possible, staff encouraged to bring their more portable ergonomic equipment (such as keyboards, wrist supports or mice) with them when working in the office. 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.



Risk title	Description & consequence	Mitigation Steps	Action by who and by when?
Public transport virus transmission	Crowded and unsanitary conditions on public transport services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individuals who feel that they cannot travel safely to/from the office will not be required to do so. Remote options should be first consideration. ▪ Private taxis made available for support staff who need to be in the office to support reopening. ▪ If staff members need to travel (for example to courts or to do site visits) they should not share vehicles or taxis, unless suitable social distancing can be achieved at all times. 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.
Car/bike park virus transmission	Narrow spaces in the firm's carpark or bicycle storage area may elevate the risk of person-to-person transmission	15% occupancy limit set in relation to available car park spaces in the firm's communal car park	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.
Safety and security at building entrance and exits	There is a risk that individuals waiting for extended periods of time at building entrances (and exits) due to physical distancing and temperature checks experience adverse weather-related health impacts or could be subject to opportunistic crime/harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stagger arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace. ▪ Staff encouraged to arrive early before temperatures rise and depart at less congested periods of the day. ▪ Maximum one (1) person occupancy for lifts (use of hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts advisable) but all staff encouraged to use the stairs wherever possible. ▪ Hand sanitiser available at entry and exit points. ▪ Building management to increase staffing at main entrance and increase contact with police. 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.
COVID-19-related stigma and harassment	Risk that there is an increase in targeted harassment or stigma directed at individuals who have been ill or are from a specific ethnic background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reporting channels to permit investigation and where proven appropriate misconduct procedures followed is in place. ▪ Director and Practice Manager to offer support to staff who are affected by COVID-19 or have a family member affected. 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The firm's anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies will be reviewed at the appropriate time and all staff will be reminded of the essential principles encapsulating the spirit of these policies. ▪ Publications about facts relating to COVID-19 are readily available and signposting of colleagues is an option, all of which aimed to dispel myths. ▪ Director and senior staff issue, and support messages, about values and diversity and inclusion. ▪ Reminder training on unconscious bias diarised. 	
Non-compliance with government regulations	Risk that a member of the firm ignores firm's guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The importance of the adherence to the rules is of paramount importance and has been emphasised. ▪ Strict enforcement of rules against people continuing to attend the office while feeling unwell. 	Action communicated by COLP on 12 th June 2020 to all staff members to take immediate effect until further notice.