Update

The Welsh Government has updated its guidance for those defined as clinically extremely vulnerable from coronavirus (COVID-19) – previously known as ‘shielding’ on 23 December 2020.

The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool has been updated in light of this change. The changes that have been made:
- Advice on vaccination has been included
- Step 2 Understand your risk – what your score means in your workplace setting – advice for the ‘very high risk’ category has been updated

Background

The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool has been developed in collaboration with clinicians, equality practitioners, community groups and workforce colleagues to protect health and social care staff from harm in the workplace setting. The frequently asked questions have been developed in collaboration with trade unions.

The approach of the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool is a self-assessment in the first instance. This supports and empowers our workforce to consider their own health and wellbeing status and the resultant score gives an indication of their likely level of risk and the safeguards they should expect in their workplace setting.

Whilst these FAQs set out some of the areas, they do not cover everything. There is supporting guidance available separately for the health and social care sector.
FAQs

Shielding / Clinically Vulnerable

Q1 I am in the clinically extremely vulnerable group, do I need to undertake a new assessment?

A1 It remains vital that we protect our workforce defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable (previously referred to as shielding) from COVID-19. The risk assessment has been updated to reflect the changes in shielding advice.

If you are defined as clinically extremely vulnerable (previously referred to as shielding), you will automatically score 7 on the risk assessment tool, putting you at very high risk. You are advised to follow the latest national guidance:


and for NHS staff, refer to NHS Employers FAQs:


Q2 I don’t have the Welsh Government ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ letter, but I have been advised to ‘shield’ by a specialist. What do I score?

A2 A letter has been sent by Welsh Government to all those on the Shielding Patient List. If you have not had the latest clinically extremely vulnerable letter from Welsh Government but have been working from home on medical advice – the risk assessment tool advises that you should continue to do so. You should now arrange to discuss with your line manager. You may also wish to discuss your health conditions with occupational health service or your GP.

Q3 I have had the Covid-19 vaccine, can I go back to work?

A3 The vaccine does not change your risk assessment score, the decision on whether or not you go back to work depends on your risk assessment. All staff should continue to follow the official and clinical advice such as social distancing, hand hygiene and face masks even
if they have been vaccinated. This is because, while a full course of the vaccine will reduce
your chance of becoming seriously ill with Covid-19, we do not yet know whether it will stop
you from catching and passing on the virus.

Information on the vaccine is available from Public Health Wales at:
COVID-19 vaccination information - Public Health Wales (nhs.wales)

Q4 I am in the clinically vulnerable group (instructed to get the flu jab each year). How
does the risk assessment affect me now with the changes in advice for the clinically extremely
vulnerable?

A4 If you are in the clinically vulnerable ‘people at risk’ group the advice is the same as it is
to the wider population. However, if you have been working from home or on modified
duties, the risk assessment tool advises that you should continue to do so and you should
arrange a discussion with your line manager.

If you are in the clinically vulnerable group and have not been working from home or on
modified duties, you should undertake the risk assessment and discuss the outcome with
your line manager.

It is recognised that there can be a wide spectrum of severity within each medical condition
and, you may wish to discuss your health conditions with your line manager, occupational
health service or GP regarding mitigating actions in your workplace, modified duties or
whether you should work from home.

More information on this group is available at:
https://gov.wales/people-increased-risk-coronavirus

Q5 I'm over 70, do I score a 4 or a 7?

A5 If you are over 70 and are clinically extremely vulnerable, you will automatically score 7
on the risk assessment tool putting you at ‘Very High Risk’, indicating that you should work
from home.

If you were not in the clinically extremely vulnerable group then you should continue to
complete the risk assessment tool where you will receive a weighted risk factor if you are
aged 70-79 as well as relevant scores for any additional risk factors applicable to you.
A6 A Covid secure environment is one in which actions have been taken to reduce the risks of transmitting Covid-19. Guidance about this has been given by Health and Safety Executive and it is important that employers consider how they can make changes to reduce the risk.

HSE guidance:  
Making your workplace COVID-secure during the coronavirus pandemic (hse.gov.uk)

Q7 How do I complete the risk assessment if I don’t have an NHS Wales e-mail account?

A7 You don’t need to have an NHS Wales email account.

NHS employees can now access the risk assessment tool by visiting the NHS Electronic Staff Record system (ESR).

You can also complete the risk assessment tool electronically on the Learning@Wales national e-learning platform. If you are new to Learning@Wales, you will be able to create your account immediately in order to complete the Risk Assessment. You will also be able to access a range of other e-learning modules that are available online:  
Once completed you will be given the choice to print or email your completed form.

If you require support to set up an account, there is a helpdesk available via email, telephone or live chat under the ‘help and support’ icon.

Employers can also contact the helpdesk and complete a bulk upload form which will provide access for all employees.
Q8 I completed the previous risk assessment tool, do I need to do it again?

A8 If there is a change in your circumstances you should undertake the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment.

The guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable has been updated. This risk assessment tool has been updated to take into account these changes.

The Risk Assessment can be reviewed at any time if circumstances change but it is recommended that it is reviewed within six months.

Q9 I have not completed a risk assessment before do I need to complete this now?

A9 Yes, the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment is for everyone working or volunteering in health and social care in Wales, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or were previously shielding.

Q10 If I have already discussed with my line manager what my risks are or/and had a formal risk assessment, can I have another one using the new risk assessment?

A10 Yes, the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment should be discussed with your line manager and repeated depending upon your personal circumstances. If you have any changes to your health or working environment, a new risk assessment should be completed. If you are a PA, you should discuss with your employer.

Q11 How does this risk assessment link to the NHS / other risk assessments that have been used?

A11 The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment was developed to provide a tool for all health and social care sectors. It is based on current government guidance and research, and supplements other risk assessments. It is part of a holistic approach to assessing risk and should form one part of a wider conversation with line managers or employer if you are a PA.

Risk Assessment Score

Q12 What if I don’t agree that the risk assessment adequately represents my level of risk?

A12 If you are unhappy with the outcome of the risk assessment then this needs to be discussed with your line manager. It may also be appropriate for you to discuss your concerns with the Occupational Health service / doctor that advises your employer/GP. If
you need additional support to challenge your assessment outcome please contact your Workforce / HR department and/or your trade union representative.

**Q13** The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment has scored me at a lower risk and I’m not protected in the same way I was with my previous / initial risk assessment. What should I do?

**A13** The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment uses the most recent Government advice and research, so this may have impacted on your current risk. Arrange to meet with your line manager to discuss the outcome of your assessment. It may also be appropriate for you to discuss your concerns with the Occupational Health service / doctor that advises your employer/GP. If you need additional support to challenge your assessment outcome please contact your Workforce / HR department and/or your trade union representative.

**Q14** The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment has scored me higher now than I did previously, where do I stand?

**A14** There are many similar assessment tools, your COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment personal score gives an indication of your likely level of risk and the safeguards you should expect in your workplace setting. Once you have completed the self-assessment arrange a time to discuss any concerns you may have, with your line manager.

**Q15** I fear that my risk score will lead to me being discriminated against now or in the future, what should I do?

**A15** Employers have a duty of care to their staff and a legal duty to act upon the outcome of a risk assessment by taking appropriate mitigating steps to protect you from harm.

The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment is intended to protect you in the workplace and would advise that you complete the risk assessment and then have an open and honest discussion with your line manager to outline your concerns.

If you feel as though you are being discriminated against in any way, then please follow the appropriate policies and procedures within your organisation. If you need additional support please contact your Workforce / HR department and/or your trade union representative.

**Q16** I have been identified as high risk but I want to carry on working in the same situation?

**A16** We understand why you would want to do this, it is commendable, but your employer has a duty of care to protect you in the workplace. It is important to discuss with your line manager if your workplace can be made safer and if it is reasonable for you to continue. Please remember it is to protect you and other staff in the working environment.
### Discussion on your Risk Assessment

| Q17 | A17 | I do not wish to disclose my health concerns to my manager/employer. | The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment is in place to protect you as a member of staff from potential harm from COVID-19. It is a personal self-assessment and it is important you discuss the outcome with your line manager. Every individual has a personal responsibility and managers have a duty of care to ensure their staff are safe within the workplace. If you do not trust or have confidence in your manager, then please follow the appropriate policies and procedures within your organisation. You can consider talking to a trade union representative, someone from the Workforce / HR team and/or Occupational Health Service / doctor who advises your employer. |
| Q18 | A18 | I have filled in the risk assessment but my manager hasn’t met with me to discuss it. What should I do? | If this is the case, it is recommended that you e-mail or write to your line manager with your concerns and arrange a date to meet. The discussion with your line manager is an important part of the risk assessment process. If you feel as though you are being discriminated against in any way, then please follow the appropriate policies and procedures within your organisation. If you need additional support please contact your Workforce / HR department and/or your trade union representative. |
| Q19 | A19 | I have filled in the risk assessment but my manager is unwilling to meet to discuss it. What should I do? | Your employer has a duty of care to protect your health and safety at work and this includes understanding if you are at extra risk from COVID-19. If your line manager is unwilling to meet with you, it is recommended that you e-mail or write to your line manager with your concerns and arrange a date to meet. If following this your line manager is still unwilling to meet, this should be raised with your Workforce / HR team and/or Occupational Health Service / doctor or with the Responsible Individual that advises your employer as appropriate. |
If you feel as though you are being discriminated against in any way, then please follow the appropriate policies and procedures within your organisation. If you need additional support please contact your trade union representative.

Q20 How could I raise concerns if I disagree with my manager about the conclusions reached at the risk assessment discussion?

A20 Every organisation will have its own process in place to raise and address any concerns you may have. You can raise a concern through the appropriate policies and procedures in your organisation. Your Workforce team will also be able to support you as will your trade union representative.

Allaying Staff Fears

Q21 What if my risk relates to mental health?

A21 Arrange to meet with your line manager to discuss a stress risk assessment and make an appointment with Occupational Health Service / doctor that advises your employer.


There are a range of resources that are available to support your health and wellbeing:

- Covid-19 Compassion Starts with Me – HEIW
- Public Health Wales – help and advice on looking after yourself and your loved ones during isolation.

Q22 What do I do if I still have concerns about PPE?

A22 If you have any concerns regarding PPE please speak to your line manager in the first instance. If you are unable to discuss this concern with your manager please contact the Infection Prevention Control Team or the appropriate person responsible for infection prevention in your organisation.

Guidance is available from Public Health Wales at:
Q23 What is the NHS / Social Care sector doing about social distancing?

A23 Government advice on social distancing is constantly being reviewed and the rules in Wales may be different to those in other parts of the UK. NHS and Social Care are required to continue to provide services and individuals have a responsibility to discuss on-going working arrangements with their manager. Further guidance on social distancing can be found at: https://gov.wales/taking-all-reasonable-measures-maintain-physical-distancing-workplace

Q24 A friend or family member has been seriously affected by COVID and this has heightened my concern, where can I get support?

A24 It is understandable that you will be concerned. It is important that you complete the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment, to consider your own health and wellbeing status – your personal score gives an indication of your likely level of risk and the safeguards you should expect in your workplace setting. Then arrange a time to discuss any concerns you may have, with your line manager. It may also be appropriate for you to discuss your concerns with the Workforce / HR Department and/or Occupational Health Service / doctor that advises your employer.

Q25 My manager believes the workplace is COVID-secure. However, I do not feel comfortable that the measures put in place make my workplace safe for me. What can I do?

A25 If you have concerns regarding the safety of your workplace for you, you can discuss with your manager about the measures you feel would make the workplace COVID-secure. This conversation could be supported by your trade union representative, Workforce / HR team and/or health and safety representative. You can also ask for a repeat risk assessment. If additional support is required, you may need further discussions with appropriate health and safety leads in your organisation or Occupational Health Service / doctor that advises your employer.

HSE guidance:
Making your workplace COVID-secure during the coronavirus pandemic (hse.gov.uk)
Welsh Government guidance:  

Additional Guidance and Support

Q26 Where can I seek guidance and support?

A26 Further guidance is available from

NHS Employers:

Welsh Government:
• https://gov.wales/workplace-guidance-employers-and-employees-covid19

Social Care:
• https://socialcare.wales/service-improvement/information-and-resources-to-guide-you-through-covid-19

You can also seek support from your line manager, Workforce / HR team and Occupational Health Service / doctor that advises your employer/GP. If you are a member of a Trade Union or professional organisation, they will also be able to provide support.