

Medmark response to Government of Ireland 'Return to Work Safely Protocol'

The Government published its ['Return to Work Safely Protocol'](#) on 8th May which includes a range of obligations for employers and also for us as your Occupational Health provider. We are committed to supporting our clients to comply with these requirements and ensuring your business can safely return to work.

We note that the protocol states that "as the advice issued by NPHEC continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures employers and workers need to address may also change". It also states that "the details are non-exhaustive and also subject to change". We will assist our clients as the situation evolves to ensure they are applying the most up to date guidance.

We have identified below the key obligations where Medmark can provide support and set out for each details of the appropriate solution available.

Obligation 1

"Establish and issue a pre-return to work form for workers to complete at least 3 days in advance of the return to work. This form should seek confirmation that the worker, to the best of their knowledge, has no symptoms of COVID-19 and also confirm that the worker is not self-isolating or awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test."

"Include the following questions on the form. If a worker answers Yes to any of them, they are strongly advised to follow the medical advice they receive or seek medical advice before returning to work"

"Workers must: Stay out of work until all symptoms have cleared following self-isolation."

Solution 1 COVID-19 Assessments

Medmark is available to provide advice on, and to symptomatic workers, to organise referrals for COVID-19 testing, and to review workers with regard to their progress towards recovery and a return to work. Access to this service is via our COVID-19 referral process.

Obligation 2

“Provide a COVID-19 induction training for all workers”

“A business’s occupational health service should also provide training and advice on the measures recommended to reduce the spread as well as dealing with any anxieties or concerns workers may have about COVID-19.”

Solution 2 COVID-19 Training

Medmark provides training covering all aspects of COVID-19 as required by the protocol. This training also acts as a means of addressing worker anxieties and concerns.

Obligation 3

“Implement temperature testing in line with Public Health advice”

Solution 3 Temperature Checking Training & Support

Medmark provide training of staff in the use and interpretation of temperature checks as well as providing guidance on suitable protocols. We also offer a follow up service for those that are identified as having a fever (pyrexia) and sent home.

Obligation 4

“Ensure the occupational health service, if provided, is available to address any worker concerns and communicate the messages about good hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing.”

“A business’s occupational health service should also provide training and advice on the measures recommended to reduce the spread as well as dealing with any anxieties or concerns workers may have about COVID-19.”

“Employers should ensure workers are made aware of and have access to any business provided Occupational Health service.”

Solution 4 Advisory Services

Medmark has available an advisory service for workers either directly to Medmark or via the business. The advisory service will provide a means of addressing workers concerns and queries as they return to work.

Obligation 5

“Take into account worker’s individual risk factors (e.g. older workers, presence of underlying medical conditions, etc.)”

“At Risk/Vulnerable Workers: If an at risk or vulnerable worker cannot work from home and must be in the workplace, employers must make sure that they are preferentially supported to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres. However, employers should enable vulnerable workers to work from home where possible.”

Solution 5 Risk Assessment of At-Risk & Vulnerable Workers

Risk assessment of [‘at-risk’ groups](#) - assessment of fitness to work of workers within ‘at-risk or vulnerable’ groups (such as those with long-term medical conditions, weak immune systems, over 60’s, etc). The worker completes our risk assessment questionnaire and emails it directly to admin@medmark.ie. One of our OH Physicians will review the questionnaire and where necessary contact the worker. The employer will receive a report with the fitness to work outcome.

Obligation 6

“Mental Health and Wellbeing: Employers should put in place support for workers who may be suffering from anxiety or stress.”

Support 6 Wellbeing Supports

To assist organisations to support the wellbeing of their workers Medmark have wellbeing supports available including:

- Wellbeing Webinars - we can deliver wellbeing webinars to your staff using Zoom, Microsoft Team, etc. We have a range of talks available from our experts, focusing in particular on mental health. We can also develop tailored talks to meet your specific requirements.
- Wellbeing Platform (POWR) - POWR (Positive Occupational & Wellness Resources) is a great tool to help workers stay psychologically strong and engaged during this time of uncertainty and stress. POWR creates health enhancing plans, across the 6 wellbeing paths of active, life, work, mind, sleep and food, based on the employees’ interaction with the tool. The plans and challenges in POWR are great to build confidence and the daily meditation and breathing exercises will help with various stress symptoms. It provides access to hundreds of articles, blogs, videos and simple exercises which are great to engage with at this time to work on physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. This [video link](#) provides an overview.

Obligation 7

We have identified a range of areas where employers will likely require general occupational health advice and guidance. These include:

- *Preparation of 'pre-return to work' form for workers to complete*
- *Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 in the Workplace and specifically putting in place a response plan in advance*
- *Employers must: include a defined response structure that identifies the team(s) responsible for responding to a suspected case in the COVID-19 response plan*
- *A business's occupational health service should also provide training and advice on the measures recommended to reduce the spread as well as dealing with any anxieties or concerns workers may have about COVID-19*
- *Provide instruction for workers to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during work*
- *Each workplace will appoint at least one lead worker representative charged with ensuring that COVID-19 measures are strictly adhered to in their place of work. The person(s) undertaking the role must receive the necessary training and have a structured framework to follow within the organisation to be effective in preventing the spread of the virus.*
- *Employers should keep up to date with the latest Public Health advice issued in regard to masks by Gov.ie/NPHET. Make face masks available to the worker in line with Public Health advice.*
- *Review and revise existing sick leave policies and amend as appropriate and in line with normal procedures.*

Solution 7 On-Going Advice & Support

Given the breadth of areas and issues where occupational health input and advice is required, we have available a service providing clients with rapid access to advice which is appropriate, effective and up to date with the latest guidelines and Public Health advice. A fixed fee applies for this support based on the size of organisation.

Existing Occupational Health and Additional COVID-19 Supports

- **Standard Occupational Health services**

Medmark is fully reopen for business including face to face occupational health consultations. We have measures in place to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of those attending our surgeries including physical distancing and the use of personal protective equipment by our staff. In order to ensure the safe delivery of our services, consultations will be delivered via both face to face and remote technology using video conferencing, phone, etc.

To book a consultation please continue to contact your local [Medmark clinic](#) in the usual way. Our administrative teams have been trained to assess each referral and will advise whether a face to face or remote consultation is appropriate. You will be asked to complete the referral as usual.

- **Risk assessment for 'home workers'**

Home workers are lone workers i.e. those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 requires the employer to undertake a risk assessment, which then determines whether an employee may work alone. The risk assessment should prescribe control measures to be implemented in order to eliminate or minimise the identified risks.

Medmark offers clients one of two options to perform risk assessments for home workers:

- The Online Risk Assessment, which is performed by the home worker and then reviewed by a Medmark clinician who then provides a report with recommendations to the employer.
- The Home Risk Assessment, which is performed by a Medmark clinician at the home worker's residence. A report with recommendations is also provided to the employer.

To discuss any of these supports are any other occupational health requirements during these challenging times please contact our Commercial Director Paul O'Grady at paul.ogrady@medmark.ie or on 01 6761493.