

# **JOINT SECTOR PROTOCOL FOR PROPERTY SERVICES PROVIDERS**



# GUIDANCE

The Joint Sector Protocol for Property Services Providers is intended to consolidate practical guidance available on the 18th of May 2020 on how to safely manage business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic. It relates only to property services providers (PSPs) and the valuation sector and how they can safely engage with clients and members of the public. Any other professional involved in the delivery of associated property services must have their own protocol in place.

While this Protocol also provides guidance for the workplace, it should be read in conjunction with 'The Return to Work Safely Protocol' issued by Government to ensure the particular circumstances of each workplace is appropriately addressed. Both Protocols are live documents and subject to change from time to time.

Non-compliance with the provisions of this Protocol by any party must result in the cessation of the property service. Where the party concerned fails to further co-operate, An Garda Síochána should be engaged. Staff should have the required emergency numbers available to them at all times.

Any information collected and/or retained must be in accordance with data protection legislation.

The enforcement of this document is not the responsibility of the authors of this guidance.

18<sup>th</sup> May 2020

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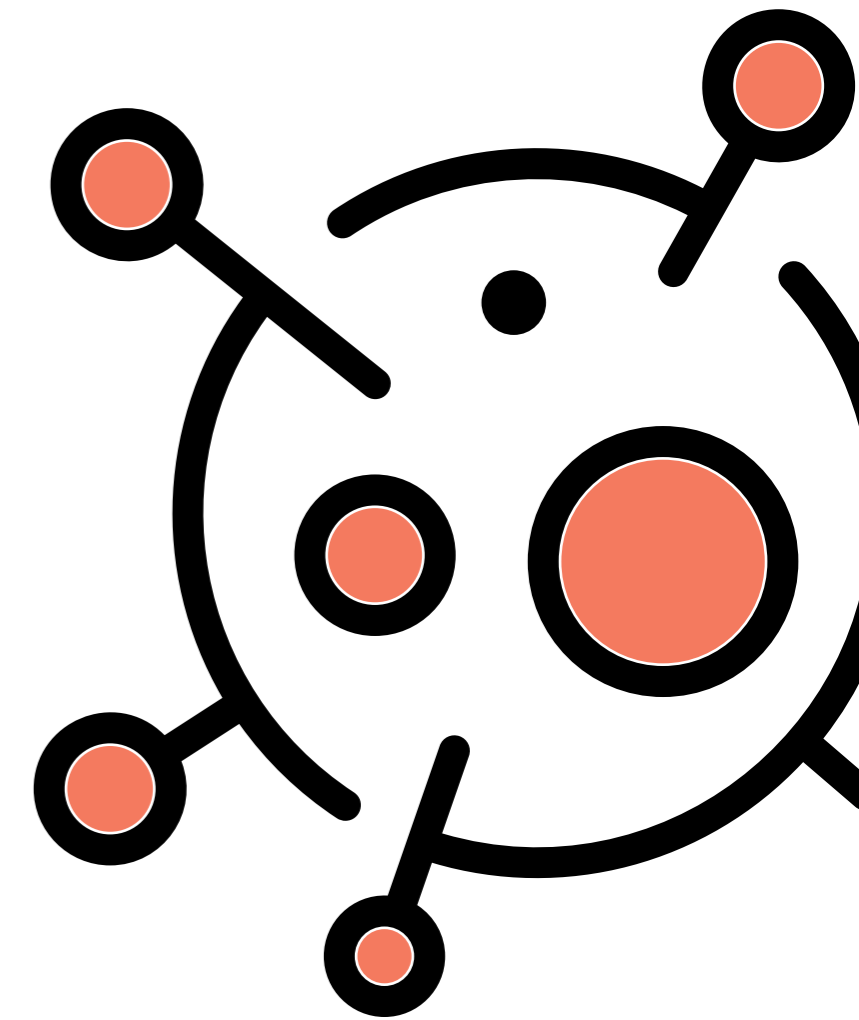
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# JOINT SECTOR PROTOCOL FOR PROPERTY SERVICES PROVIDERS

This protocol is intended to ensure that the strictest of precautions are taken in the best interest of Clients, Consumers, Employees and Employers, to provide the highest standards of safety in the sales, lettings, valuations and management of property.

# CONTENTS



<b>Licence Type A:</b> <i>Auction of Property other than Land</i>	<b>1</b>
<b>Licence Type B:</b> <i>The Purchase or Sale, by Whatever Means, of Land</i>	<b>3</b>
<b>Licence Type C:</b> <i>The Letting of Land</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>Licence Type D:</b> <i>Property Management Services</i>	<b>15</b>
<b>Guidance for the Workplace</b>	<b>19</b>

# LICENCE TYPE A: AUCTION OF PROPERTY OTHER THAN LAND

(Auction of Fine Arts and Chattels)



Viewing of Property other than Land	2
Preparation and Conducting of Auction of Property other than Land	2
Closing of Sale	2

## Viewing of Property other than Land

(In conjunction with property owner or their nominated representative)

- » Where possible, all viewings should be undertaken online.
- » Where this is not possible, viewings are only permissible where they are pre-booked by appointment.
- » HSE Covid-19 official images and signage erected prominently inside the auction room.
- » Name and phone contact details of viewing party recorded in advance of viewing.
- » Maximum 2 people per party and no young children (under 16).
- » Time restricted appointments with sufficient time allowed between appointments to avoid any potential cross over of viewers.
- » 2 metre yellow ground marking to highlight required physical distance spacing outside viewing area.
- » Hand sanitising facility at the entry point of viewing area with signage requesting visitors to use hand sanitiser before entry.
- » Handling of items for auction should be avoided where possible.
- » Where this is not possible, the viewer must provide and wear their own gloves before handling items. Viewers must be informed of this when appointment is arranged.
- » Cleaning of the auction items as appropriate for the particular item must be undertaken after each viewing.
- » All brochures and property details should be available and sent on request by email to interested parties.
- » Where possible auctions should be held online.
- » Where this is not possible interested parties to an auction must register with the auctioneer prior to auction.
- » Registered attendees only admitted.
- » Covid-19 signs must be placed in very visible positions.
- » No shaking of hands or personal contact during viewing.
- » Where hand paddles are in use, these must be sanitised before, during and after the auction.
- » Hand sanitiser must be available for use by all attendees before, during and after the auction.
- » The auction room must be large enough to accommodate physical distancing.
- » 2 metre yellow ground marking to highlight required physical distance spacing outside auction room as queues may form.
- » Possibility of staggering arrival times to the auction to be considered based on specific lot interest.
- » Physical distancing must be adhered to at all times to include entry and exit and the auctioneer must arrange numbers and distance spacing in the auction room to facilitate this.
- » Auctioneer must announce HSE guidelines to attendees before commencement of the auction.

## Closing of Sale

- » Where items are purchased at auction, contract signing must be completed with physical distancing taking place.
- » Payment by debit/credit card should be encouraged. Cash should be accepted in limited circumstances.
- » Arrangements for collection of auction lots must be by appointment only and where physical distancing can be observed.

## Preparation and Conducting of Auction of Property other than Land

- » Arrangements for delivery of auction lots to the auctioneer must be by appointment only and physical distancing must be observed.

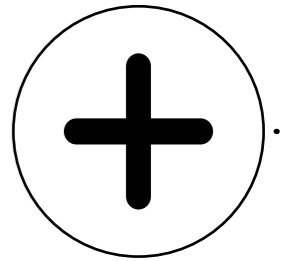
# LICENCE TYPE B: THE PURCHASE OR SALE, BY WHATEVER MEANS, OF LAND

(e.g. Purchase/Sale of Residential and Commercial Property)



<b>Conducting Viewings for New Home Showhouses</b>	4
Preparations for show house	4
Prior to viewing	4
During viewing	5
Post viewing	5
<b>Conducting viewings/valuations/inspections for Second hand dwellings and commercial buildings</b>	8
What to Prepare Prior to Arranging Viewings	8
Arranging an Inspection	8
During viewing	10
Post viewing	10
Preparation and Conducting of Auctions of Land	10
Closing of sale	10

# CONDUCTING VIEWINGS FOR NEW HOME SHOWHOUSES



## Preparations for Show House

(In conjunction with property owner or their nominated representative)

- » HSE Covid-19 official images and signage erected prominently inside and outside the show unit and in common areas of apartments.
- » 2 metre yellow ground marking to highlight required social distance spacing outside unit or in common area.
- » Hand sanitising facility available at the entry point of each show unit with signage requesting visitors to use before entry.
- » List of contact points prepared for each unit, itemising each point that requires sanitation between viewings. (Door handles, handrails, bannisters)
- » Cleaning record sheet to be prominently displayed in each show unit.
- » Consideration of removal of doors to small rooms such as utility, storage spaces or alternatively remove and cap all door handles internally where possible to minimise contact points.
- » Doors to general rooms to be secured in the open position at all times.
- » Property windows to be open to ventilate the show unit (all weather).
- » No bathroom facilities provided.

## Prior to Viewing

- » Pre-booked private appointment viewings only.
- » Name and phone contact details of viewing party recorded in advance of viewing.
- » Maximum 2 people per party and no young children (under 16).
- » Time restricted appointments (15-minutes recommended) with sufficient time allowed between appointments to avoid any potential cross over of viewers.
- » Links to brochure and site plans sent by email to viewers ahead of viewing. HSE Covid-19 official instructions to be included in all correspondence.
- » Contact viewer(s) in advance to confirm booking and set out controls in place and that HSE Covid-19 official instructions must be adhered to during viewings. Viewers should also be advised:
  - not to park close to residents' cars or driveways by mounting the kerbs or close to an area where children are playing.
  - that they must not attend if displaying any COVID-19 symptoms, are self-isolating or have returned from overseas in the last 14 days.
  - that they should remain a reasonable distance from the property (e.g. remain in car) until given permission by PSP to enter.

## During viewing

- » Greet viewing party outside the property, at 2 metre spacing markers.
- » No shaking hands or personal contact.
- » Viewing party are given access to the property, instructed to use hand sanitiser upon entry and allowed to walk through unaccompanied.
- » Reconvene with viewing party outside the property to answer questions, at 2 metre spacing markers.
- » Viewing party to be diverted to phone\video meeting if they have extensive questions.

## Post Viewing

- » Property owner to facilitate a sanitisation cleaning once per week of property. Record of date and time of same to be displayed in each unit.
- » PSP to sanitise listed and agreed contact points after each viewing.
- » PSP to record time and date on the cleaning record sheet.





## CONDUCTING VIEWINGS/VALUATIONS/ INSPECTIONS FOR SECOND HAND DWELLINGS AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

### ARRANGING AN INSPECTION

- » Agree an inspection or valuation appointment time with the prospective client.
- » Confirm whether prospective client is cocooning or in an at risk category and if so, identify any additional precautionary measures that may be required.
- » Confirm whether prospective client has returned from travel abroad or has had symptoms of COVID-19 over the last 14 days. If so the PSP should not commence to provide the property service for a minimum of at least 14 days.
- » Agree whether the property will be vacant at time of inspection/valuation.
- » Where the property is occupied, social distancing must be adhered to.
- » On entry and exit from the property, hands must be sanitised.

### What to Prepare Prior to Arranging Viewings

#### *Property owners/occupiers*

- » Confirm whether prospective client is cocooning or in an at risk category, and if so, identify any additional precautionary measures that may be required.
- » Confirm whether prospective client has returned from travel abroad or has had symptoms of COVID-19 over the last 14 days. If so the PSP should not commence to provide the property service for a minimum of at least 14 days.
- » Advise property owners/occupiers of the HSE guidelines and this protocol and request any particular in-house requirements they may have in advance.
- » Agree with the owners/occupiers that they will not be in the property at the time of viewing.
- » To mitigate against unnecessary physical interactions with clients/occupiers, ask to have access keys/fobs for the property placed in a secure location for collection.
- » Agree with owners/occupiers and note all touch points in the dwelling for the PSP to sanitise after viewing (e.g. door handles, light switches etc.)
- » Ask property owner(s)
  - to secure in the open position all doors to avoid viewers touching handles;
  - to open some windows to ventilate the property;
  - to turn on lights; and
  - to open all storage units. It is recommended that these remain in an open position to avoid contact with viewers.
- » Agree with owner/occupier the use of official Covid-19 signage at locations throughout the property to act as a useful reminder to viewers to follow the HSE rules.
- » Ensure hand sanitising facility at the entry point of the property.

## Viewers

- » Pre-booked private appointment viewings only.
- » Name and phone contact details of viewing party recorded in advance of viewing.
- » Maximum 2 people per party and no young children (under 16).
- » Time restricted appointments (15-minutes recommended) with sufficient time allowed between appointments to avoid any potential cross over of viewers.
- » Links to brochure and site plans sent by email to viewers ahead of viewing. HSE Covid-19 official instructions to be included in all correspondence.
- » Contact viewer(s) in advance to confirm booking and set out controls in place and that HSE Covid-19 official instructions must be adhered to during viewings. Viewers should also be advised:
  - not to park close to residents' cars or driveways by mounting the kerbs or close to an area where children are playing.
  - that they must not attend if displaying any COVID-19 symptoms, are self-isolating or have returned from overseas in the last 14 days.
  - that they should remain a reasonable distance from the property (e.g. remain in car) until given permission by PSP to enter.

## Commercial Buildings

- » Longer viewing times may be required for Commercial Buildings.
- » Undertake the viewing/inspection/valuation outside of normal business hours if at all possible, so as to limit interactions with occupants and have contact points for access arranged well in advance.
- » Consider where possible, the use of Virtual Technology ahead of viewings to pre-qualify viewers.
- » Where possible, address queries ahead of viewings e.g. (rates, service charges, floor plans, insurance etc.)

## During Viewing

- » PSP's should ask viewers to remain a reasonable distance from the property (e.g. remain in car) until given permission by PSP to enter.
- » Greet viewing party outside the property, at 2 metre spacing markers
- » No shaking hands or personal contact.
- » Viewing party is given access to the property and instructed to use hand sanitiser upon entry.
- » Remind viewers that toilets are not for public use.
- » For vacant property, particularly smaller units, agents may decide to wait at the entrance to allow viewers to walk around.
- » For occupied units, agents may decide to remain in the property whilst observing physical distancing (2 metre rule).
- » Reconvene with viewing party outside the property to answer questions, at 2 metre spacing markers.
- » Viewing party to be diverted to phone/video meeting if they have extensive questions.

## Post Viewing Tasks

- » As agreed with property owner/occupier the PSP will sanitise listed and agreed contact points.

## Preparation and Conducting of Auctions of Land

- » All brochures and property details should be available on-line and sent on request by email to interested parties.
- » Interested parties to an auction must register with the auctioneer prior to auction.
- » The auction room must be large enough to accommodate social distancing.
- » 2 metre yellow ground marking to highlight required social distance spacing outside auction room as queues may form. Possibility of staggering arrival time to the auction to be considered.
- » Social distancing must be adhered to at all times including entry and exit and the auctioneer must arrange numbers and distance spacing in the auction room to facilitate this.
- » Covid-19 signs must be placed in very visible positions.
- » Registered attendees only admitted.
- » Where hand paddles are in use, these must be sanitised before, between and after use.
- » Hand sanitiser must be available for use by all attendees before, during and after the auction.
- » Auctioneer must announce HSE guidelines to attendees before commencement of the auction.

## CLOSING OF SALE

- » In the event of a customer purchasing a property at auction, contract signing must be completed with social distancing taking place.
- » Payment should be by inter bank transfer.



# LICENCE TYPE C: THE LETTING OF LAND

(e.g. Letting of Residential and Commercial Property)



<b>What to prepare prior to arranging viewings?</b>	<b>12</b>
Property owners/occupiers	12
Viewers	12
Commercial Buildings	13
During viewing	14
Post viewing	14
Rental agreement reached	14

# WHAT TO PREPARE PRIOR TO ARRANGING VIEWINGS

## Property owners/occupiers

- » Confirm whether respective client is cocooning or in an at risk category and if so, identify any additional precautionary measures that may be required.
- » Confirm whether prospective client has returned from travel abroad or has had symptoms of COVID-19 over the last 14 days. If so the PSP should not commence to provide the property service for a minimum of at least 14 days.
- » Advise property owners/occupiers of the HSE guidelines and this protocol and request any particular in-house requirements they may have in advance.
- » Agree with the owner/occupier that they will not be in the property at the time of viewing.
- » Agree with owner/occupier and note all touch points in the dwelling for the PSP to sanitise after viewing (e.g. door handles, light switches etc.).
- » Ask property owners/occupiers:
  - to secure in the open position all doors to avoid viewers touching handles;
  - to open some windows to ventilate the property;
  - to turn on lights; and
  - to open all storage units. It is recommended that these remain in an open position to avoid contact with viewers.
- » Agree with owner/occupier the use of official Covid-19 signage at locations throughout the property to act as a useful reminder to viewers to follow the HSE rules.
- » Ensure hand sanitising facility at the entry point of the property.

## Viewers

- » Pre-booked private appointment viewings only.
- » Name and phone contact details of viewing party recorded in advance of viewing.
- » Time restricted appointments (15-minutes recommended) with sufficient time allowed between appointments to avoid any potential cross over of viewers.
- » Links to brochure/rental information sent by email to viewers ahead of viewing. HSE Covid-19 official instructions to be included in all correspondence.
- » Contact viewer(s) in advance to confirm booking and set out controls in place and that HSE Covid-19 official instructions must be adhered to during viewings. Viewers should also be advised:
  - not to park close to residents' cars or driveways by mounting the kerbs or close to an area where children are playing.
  - that they must not attend if displaying any COVID-19 symptoms, are self-isolating or have returned from overseas in the last 14 days.
  - that they should remain a reasonable distance from the property (e.g. remain in car) until given permission by PSP to enter.

## Commercial Buildings

- » Longer viewing times may be required for Commercial Buildings.
- » Undertake the viewing/inspection outside of normal business hours if at all possible, so as to limit interactions with occupants and have contact points for access arranged well in advance.
- » Consider where possible, the use of Virtual Technology ahead of viewings to pre-qualify viewers.
- » Where possible, address queries ahead of viewings e.g. (rates, service charges, floor plans, insurance etc.).



## During Viewing

- » PSP's should ask viewers to remain a reasonable distance from the property (e.g. remain in car) until given permission by PSP to enter.
- » Greet viewing party outside the property, at 2 metre spacing markers.
- » No shaking hands or personal contact.
- » Viewing party is given access to the property and instructed to use hand sanitiser upon entry.
- » Remind viewers that toilets are not for public use.
- » For vacant property, particularly smaller units, agents may decide to wait at the entrance to allow viewers to walk around.
- » For occupied units, agents may decide to remain in the property whilst observing physical distancing (2 metre rule).
- » Deal with answering questions outside the dwelling, whilst observing 2 metre distance.
- » Viewing party to be diverted to phone/video meeting if they have extensive questions.

## Post Viewing Tasks

- » As agreed with property owner/occupier the PSP will sanitise listed and agreed contact points.

## Rental agreement Reached

- » In the event of a viewer agreeing to rent the property, contract signing must be completed with physical distancing taking place.
- » Payment by debit/credit card EFT should be encouraged. Cash should be accepted in limited circumstances.

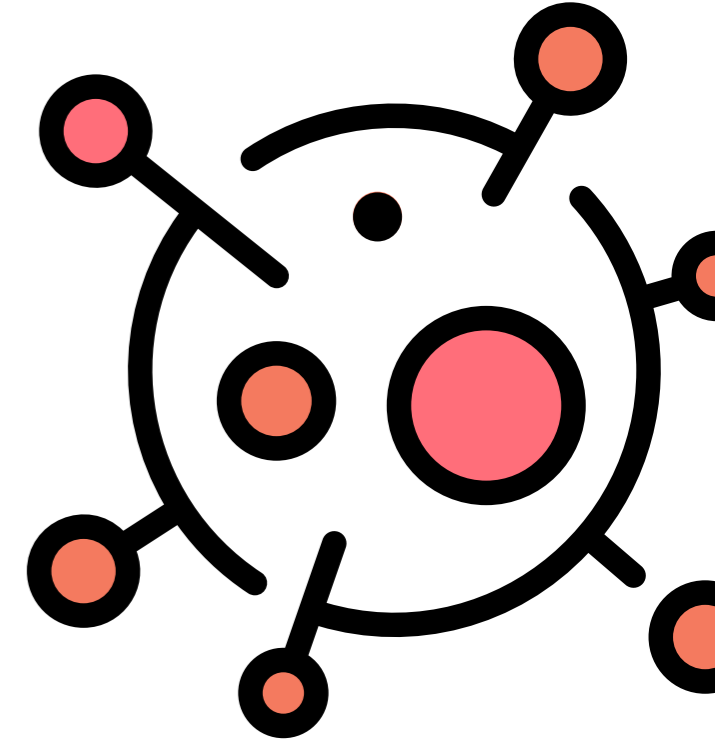


# LICENCE TYPE D: PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SERVICES



<b>Guidance for Property Managers</b>	16
<i>The owners' management company and unit occupiers</i>	16
<i>Suppliers and Contractors</i>	17

# GUIDANCE FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS



## THE OWNERS' MANAGEMENT COMPANY AND UNIT OCCUPIERS

- » COVID-19 signage should be prominently displayed in common areas.
- » Encourage contractors to post cleaning checklist sheets in the common areas showing priority cleaning to door handles, elevator buttons, light switches, ledges, post boxes, handles and handrails.
- » Consider closing common areas that do not support residents' basic needs, like entertainment rooms.
- » Encourage occupants to practice physical distancing.
- » Cleaning Requirements: Follow the guidance of the HSE and Government concerning any additional cleaning of the common areas or apartments/houses.
- » Lifts and Stairs:
  - Place queuing marks in elevator lobbies to reinforce physical distancing.
  - If an elevator cab is not large enough to accommodate 2 metre spacing, consider designating elevators for "up" and "down" use to avoid longer ride times.
  - Consider programming elevators to return to the ground floor for faster loading.
- » Confirm whether unit occupier is cocooning or in an at risk category and if so, identify any additional precautionary measures that may be required.
- » Where a unit occupier has returned from travel abroad or has had symptoms of COVID-19 over the last 14 days, the PSP should identify any necessary precautions which may be required.
- » Physical distancing should be observed on receipt of deliveries.
- » Maintain ongoing communications with owners and service providers to inform them of ongoing practices related to COVID-19 e.g. additional cleaning.

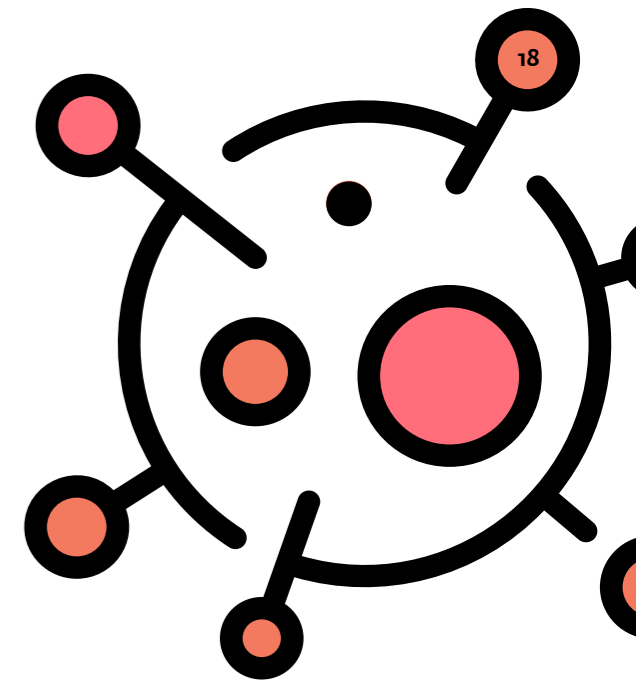


## Suppliers and Contractors

- » Require suppliers/contractors to share their health and safety plans and new protocols.
- » Identify back-up suppliers where possible in case of personnel shortages or supply chain interruptions.
- » Property managers should assess whether an impending service request is essential.
- » If possible, limit suppliers and or contractors access to a single point of entry in your building.



Property managers should assess whether an impending service request is essential, and postpone the service if it is not urgent.



# GUIDANCE FOR THE WORKPLACE

This guidance has been drawn from the 'Return to Work Safely Protocol' issued by Government and should be read in conjunction with that Protocol to ensure the particular circumstances of each workplace are appropriately addressed.

That Protocol sets out in very clear terms for employers and employees the steps that must be taken before a workplace reopens, and while it continues to operate to fully comply with the COVID-19 related public health protection measures identified as necessary by the HSE.



COVID-19 Prevention and Control Measures to Minimise risk to Workers	20
In Advance of Return to Work	20
In the Workplace	21
Customer Facing Measures	21

## COVID-19 Prevention and Control Measures to Minimise risk to Workers

### In Advance of Return to Work

Employers must:

- » Develop and/or update a business COVID-19 Response Plan, to include:
  - An update to their occupational health and safety risk assessments and safety statement.
  - Addressing the level(s) of risk associated with various workplaces and work activities in the COVID-19 Business Plans and Occupational Health risk assessments. For example, where, how and what sources of COVID-19 might or could employees be exposed to, including the general public, customers and fellow employees.
  - Assessing and taking account of employee's individual risk factors (e.g. older employees and presence of underlying medical conditions, employees in at risk category).
  - A response plan to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19.
  - Controls necessary to address the risks identified.
  - Contingency measures to address increased rates of employee absenteeism, implementation of the measures necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, changing work patterns etc.
  - Consultation with employees and communication of finalised plan.
- » Develop or amend policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of employees who may have symptoms of COVID-19, as appropriate (possible temperature taking, and isolation in vacant office and/or workspaces).
- » Agree with employees and/or their Representative Bodies as necessary, any temporary restructuring of work patterns that may be required to implement the COVID-19 prevention measures in the workplace.

- » Where more than one employee is employed, appoint at least one lead worker representative whose role is to work collaboratively with the employer to assist in the implementation of measures and monitor adherence to the measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19.
- » Provide training to all employees on COVID-19 HSE guidelines especially on, physical distancing, no hand shaking or personal contact, hand washing, cough and sneezing into the elbow and the use of hand sanitiser.
- » Establish and issue a pre-return to work form for workers to complete at least 3 days in advance of the return to work.

Employees must:

- » Familiarise themselves and adhere to business COVID-19 Response Plan and related policies and procedures.
- » Undertake training as provided by Employer.
- » Complete and return the pre-return form.

## In the Workplace

Employers must:

- » Provide for physical distancing across all work activities, for example:
  - Physical distancing should be arranged in the office between desks and working areas, employees should be at least 2 metres apart.
  - Office meetings where at all possible should be conducted online and where meetings are office based, physical distancing must be observed.
  - If employees are to queue at machines like printers, coffee machines, or faxes there should be 2 metre ground markings so physical distancing takes place.
  - Consideration also required to be given to other areas such as staff canteens so that physical distancing is observed i.e. tables, coffee machines etc.
- » Ensure proper hand hygiene facilities are in place and provide tissues as well as bins/bags for their disposal.
- » Implement appropriate cleaning measures, for example:
  - Ensure contact/touch surfaces such as table tops, work equipment, door handles and handrails are visibly clean at all times and are cleaned at least twice daily.
  - Implement modified cleaning intervals for rooms and work areas. This applies especially for washroom facilities and communal spaces. Cleaning should be performed at least twice per day and whenever facilities are visibly dirty.
  - Provide workers with essential cleaning materials to keep their own workspace clean (for example wipes/ disinfection products, paper towels and waste bins/ bags).
  - Increase number of waste collection points and ensure these are emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.
  - Modify use of hot desks to ensure that these are made available to identify staff and have appropriate cleaning materials in place for workers to clean the area before using.
  - An itemised contact point list e.g. door handles, toilet flush handles must be clearly noted on a cleaning record sheet to be prominently displayed in the office to show cleaning record.
  - Provide anti-bacterial wipes and hand sanitiser at machines such as printers, coffee machines and faxes for use by each employee using such machines

to clean down common phone dials and machine keyboards when finished.

- » Hand sanitiser should be freely available at set points throughout the office for use by employees.
- » COVID-19 HSE Guidelines must be prominently displayed.
- » For organisations without air conditioning adequate ventilation is encouraged, for example, by opening windows where feasible etc.

Employees must:

- » Adopt good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
- » Follow the public health advice and guidance, as well as any specific direction from the employer.
- » Adhere to physical distancing in the workplace.

## Customer Facing Measures

- » Attendance at PSP's office must be by appointment only.
- » Visitors must only be admitted in accordance with physical distancing guidelines.
- » COVID-19 HSE guidelines must be prominently displayed in the reception area of the office and hand sanitiser and bacterial wipes must be available.
- » Ground markings should be in place for clients/customers standing at counter areas.
- » Physical barriers, such as plastic sneeze guards, should be installed to ensure that contact between workers and customers is kept to a minimum.
- » If clients visit a private office, that office should always be capable of catering for physical distancing.
- » Arrangement for signing of official documentation relating to property services should be conducted online or by appointment only where physical distancing can be observed.
- » A cleaning regime must be implemented to ensure that contact points for workers and customers are always kept visibly cleaned.
- » Signage erector (staff who erect and remove sign boards) must adhere to Covid-19 HSE guidelines and practice physical distancing at all times. Any necessary dealings with clients should be conducted on the telephone. If access is required through closed or electric gates, these should be wiped clean with a sterilised wipe on entry and on departure.

# DISCLAIMER

**This guidance does not take primacy over statutory regulations or official health advice.**

- » This guidance should only be read in conjunction with current official advice from government, its agencies and the HSE guidelines.
- » The Authors of this document will not be liable for any losses (financial or otherwise) (direct or indirect) arising from adoption or implementation of this guidance.
- » Property Services Providers and Valuers should carry out their own risk assessment of their business activities and this guidance is only to act as a supplement to the latest official government and HSE advice.
- » Parties using this guidance for their business activities do so whilst taking legal advice to ensure that its applicability is acceptable to each circumstance.
- » The Authors do not accept any liability that this guidance will ensure full compliance with the latest regulations.

# **JOINT SECTOR** **PROTOCOL** **FOR PROPERTY** **SERVICES** **PROVIDERS**