



Huw Merriman MP
Chair – Transport Committee

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Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

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Date: 16 February 2021

Dear Mr Merriman

Thank you for letter of 2 February following a hearing of the Transport Committee on 27 January to discuss the recent media reports about Covid 19 at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). I agreed to write with further details around some of the issues raised by Committee members.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to all DVLA staff who have worked so very hard during this period to support the efforts to keep essential services running while also supporting the wider Covid response. Without our staff, the DVLA is simply a collection of buildings and we will continue to put staff safety first as we have throughout the pandemic.

The current number of live Covid cases among all DVLA staff remains very low. As of 16 February, there are just three live cases across the whole of our current workforce of over 6,000 staff.

The DVLA is a digital organisation with over a billion customer interactions, including the digital vehicle enquiry service, the vast majority of which are carried out online. Our online services have continued to operate extremely well and we have quickly developed and launched new digital services in response to the pandemic. These include new services allowing keepers to change the address for their vehicle and apply for a new V5C (vehicle log book) online, which previously could only be done on paper. Take up for these new services has been high. There are further new online services in development which we plan to launch in the spring. This will help to further reduce incoming paper applications resulting in reduced pressure on our on-site operational resources. However, the national scale of the organisation and the services we provide means that we still receive around 60,000 items of mail each day, often including important identity documentation.

There are critical activities carried out by the DVLA which it is not possible for staff to do from home. This includes, but is by no means limited to, the processing of paper applications for driving licences, including those for key workers who rely on their cars. These applications often include key identity documents such as passports, so it is vital that they are opened, processed and these important documents returned to customers. Such documents are often needed for other applications, for example new jobs or benefits applications, and any delay

in returning physical copies could severely impact a person's ability to work or access support. Our databases of drivers and vehicles update the Police National Computer daily, which helps police forces across the country tackle crime.

In recent months, the DVLA has also taken on several Covid-related activities that require staff on site. The data we hold (which is held on secure databases) is now used by other agencies when processing claims for services such as Universal Credit or the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme. We also assist several other public bodies, including the NHS, in printing and sending mail. This includes vital letters sent from NHS bodies to people across the UK on shielding and vaccinations. Since April 2020, we have printed and mailed over 4.7 million items on behalf of other public sector bodies, which would not have been possible without staff in the office.

The safety of our staff is of paramount importance and has been throughout, and we have put in place an extensive and increasing range of safety measures across all eight of the DVLA's buildings to ensure that the essential public services we provide can continue, albeit with longer processing times in some cases. These include reconfiguring desks to ensure staff can maintain social distancing, which has been made possible by utilising all available accommodation vacated by those staff who are working from home, as well as leasing an additional building in the area. Floor plans have been shared with Public Health Wales (PHW) and Swansea Council's environmental health team who have also visited the site multiple times. In response to a request for a statement from the Observer on 30 January, Swansea Bay University Health Board confirmed a high level of compliance with control measures and did not identify any additional concerns over the control regime in place (see **Annex A**).

We will continue to make changes to the site as recommendations change and as we learn more about the threat of new variants.

One-way systems have been put in place throughout the site and social distancing markers are on the floors, especially in areas like lift lobbies and catering outlets, which are only providing takeaway food. Communal areas, for example rest areas, catering seating areas and meeting rooms, are all closed. Lift use is limited to a maximum of two people at a time in large lifts and single use where the lifts are smaller and staff are encouraged to use the stairs where they are physically able to do so. As the number of positive cases increased in the autumn, we divided all floors into zones (or bubbles) with no mixing of staff between zones. Each zone has a dedicated controller who is responsible for ensuring that rules are followed and that social distancing is maintained.

Staggered start and finish times are in place to control the flow of staff in and out of buildings at any one time. Air conditioning has been reconfigured to use external fresh air only with no recycling of air. Cleaning regimes have been put in place in line with Welsh Government guidance and manufacturer advice is followed for the World Health Organisation's recommended cleaning products. In addition to an enhanced cleaning regime, housekeepers are in place to clean high contact points throughout the day and a card system is used to provide visible evidence to staff that cleaning of a desk has taken place. Recommendations by the environmental health team have been implemented and additional cleaning hours are being introduced with more cleaning staff being recruited by the DVLA's cleaning contractor. All staff are provided with individual hand sanitisers and sanitising stations are also in place across all floors and around the estate. In addition to the enhanced cleaning regime, staff

can also access disinfectant wipes if they wish to use them themselves for additional reassurance.

The DVLA has also taken advantage of a UK Government pilot scheme to test workers using rapid lateral flow tests of those without symptoms. Since January, 4,160 of these tests have been carried out with DVLA contact centre staff, with no positive results identified. We have recently received agreement from the Department of Health and Social Care for the scheme to be extended to DVLA staff working across our estate. We are working rapidly on the logistics of managing the rollout of the scheme across the estate with a view to start testing as soon as possible.

The Committee asked a number of specific questions to which we have provided answers below:

Timeline and full statistics of Covid-19 cases

- When was the first positive Covid-19 case by a worker at your Swansea offices reported?

The first recorded positive case among DVLA employees was on 11 March 2020.

- Please provide a timeline since March including detailed information on:
 - a) The date on which each employee positive Covid-19 case was notified to the agency; and
 - b) In each case, whether the employee was a permanent homeworker or office-based at the time they received the positive result

A timeline of positive cases since March for all DVLA employees, both office-based and working from home, is at **Annex B**. There have been 577 positive cases amongst DVLA employees between March 2020 up to 4 February 2021. The figure is slightly higher than I reported at the Committee hearing as we have received new notifications since then and we have also done further work to verify the figures to ensure accuracy.

The vast majority of positive cases occurred from September onwards. Covid testing was not initially widely available to the public. As such, the positive cases that we saw at the very beginning of the pandemic were limited to staff who had either returned from a high risk country and tested positive or had been hospitalised by the illness. A number of staff were on sick leave displaying Covid-like symptoms in the early stages of the pandemic, but we do not know how many of these had actually contracted the disease.

Cases in Wales began to increase from September, with the return of schools and the relaxation of lockdown measures. Following a series of local lockdowns at the end of September, the Welsh Government introduced a two-week national firebreak lockdown between 23 October and 9 November 2020 in an effort to curb the spread of the virus. At the end of the national firebreak most restrictions were relaxed allowing all retail businesses to reopen, including close contact services such as hairdressers and beauty salons. People were able to meet in groups of four in regulated indoor places such as bars, pubs, cafes and restaurants. Up to 15 people were able to participate in organised indoor activities (such as exercise classes) and up to 30 people were allowed to participate in these activities in an outdoor setting. Sports and leisure facilities including gyms and swimming pools were

reopened as well as entertainment venues such as cinemas, bowling alleys, casinos and amusement arcades. Places of worship reopened, house viewings and moves were permitted and visits to care homes were reintroduced subject to local circumstances. Cases in South Wales then began to increase and this trend was reflected among the DVLA's workforce, with the number of positive cases peaking in December. This was followed by a further national lockdown in Wales starting on 20 December.

Factors behind employee transmission

- [What evidence has been provided to support the claim that a significant number of DVLA employees contracted the virus outside the workplace?](#)

The increasing trend in Covid infections in the local community between September and December was reflected in the infection rate at the DVLA. Before Christmas, infection rates in the Swansea Bay University Health Board area were very high with 845 cases per 100,000 population in the week of 7-13 December. In the same week, there were 87 positive case notifications among DVLA employees, the highest number in one week. **Annex C** shows the rates of infection in the Swansea area and the number of positive cases at the DVLA over the same timeframe. The trend of cases at the DVLA is very similar to that in the wider local community. PHW acknowledged in a press release in December that an increase in cases at DVLA was inevitable because the DVLA is a large employer, the number of cases in the community increased and staff have links outside the workplace. The press release is attached at **Annex D**.

In addition to NHS Wales's test, trace and protect procedures, as part of our internal Covid monitoring analysis, we ask employees who inform us of a positive test whether they are aware of having previous contact with another person who has tested positive. Of the cases since September, 226 confirmed that they were aware of being in contact with another positive case. Of these, 172 said that they had had contact with a confirmed positive case outside of DVLA, for example family or friends. Only 16 said that they had been in close contact with a DVLA work colleague who had subsequently tested positive and a further 14 reported that they had had contact with a relative who worked at DVLA who had tested positive. 24 people did not know where they had had contact with a positive case but were pinged by the NHS Test and Trace app.

The only outbreak that has been declared at any of the DVLA's eight buildings was that in the contact centre on 21 December following a confirmation of 62 cases from the beginning of December. Action was taken to provide a PCR test for all contact centre staff on a precautionary basis between 21-23 December. While PHW did not require or suggest that we close the contact centre, DVLA decided to do so over the Christmas period from 24 December to 4 January.

Working from home or in the office

- [A timeline of the number of staff working from home since March and how the numbers have changed over that period](#)

Monthly working from home figures are outlined at **Annex E**. Following the announcement of the first lockdown on 23 March, staff who could work from home did so and have remained working from home ever since. Around 1,400 staff working almost exclusively in support

areas such as Human Resources, Finance, Commercials, Policy and Communications and IT were able to work from home immediately, and this number has increased over the following months.

In common with all organisations, our site was not Covid secure at the start of the pandemic, so we prioritised staff safety, as we have throughout, and sent home most operational staff who could not work remotely, on paid special leave. By 6 April, 452 staff were on site to process emergency transactions for key workers, including health workers and lorry drivers. As mitigating measures were introduced the number of people on site increased gradually, and only after consultation with the trade union. The Welsh Government lifted its shielding advice on 16 August, at which point DVLA employees in operational roles who could not work from home and who had been shielding since the start of the pandemic were also able to return to work under the Welsh Government guidance.

As cases in the community and at the DVLA started to rise, out of an abundance of caution in October we asked staff who had previously had a shielding letter if they would prefer to work from home on other non-operational duties or special paid leave if those could not be found. On this basis we subsequently sent 170 staff home, while 25 people in this category elected to remain working in the office. On 22 December, when the Welsh Government advice changed and those with shielding letters were told not to leave the house for work, those remaining people were mandated to not attend the office.

With the increased prevalence of new Covid variants, we have continued to review the number of staff on site and further reductions have and continue to be made. These are determined by reassessing the risk profiles of staff on an individual basis and utilising the Welsh Government's All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool. A copy is attached at **Annex F**.

We have had constant engagement with Swansea Council and PHW since we first proactively contacted PHW in September for advice as cases began to increase. Representatives from Swansea Council and the Health and Safety Executive have undertaken a number of site visits and have made recommendations in relation to desk configurations and other issues, which have been implemented. We will continue to work closely with these organisations and are grateful for their expert public health guidance.

- [The total number of staff from the full workforce who are required to be on-site to work, including those on flexible hours and part-time staff;](#)
- [The number of staff who are required to work on-site at the same time;](#)

The number of employees on site fluctuates daily due to leave, working patterns and sickness absence and as we employ a significant number of part time staff who do not work every day. As a snapshot in time, the number of staff on site on Monday 25 January over a 24-hour period was 2,402 staff across our entire estate of eight buildings situated across the Swansea area. Of these, 1,683 were full time staff and 719 were part time. Of that total, 224 worked the evening or night shift. The maximum on site at any one time on that day was 2,178 across the whole estate of eight buildings. Most staff are able to work flexible hours which helps to further stagger start and finish times and further manage the flow of staff in and out of the buildings at any one time.

- [Of the staff required to be working on-site:](#)

- How many are processing hard-copy documents?
- How many are needed for security-sensitive work (such as viewing databases with sensitive information)?
- How many are not in the above two categories and what roles are they carrying out?

We do not categorise employees separately into those who process hard-copy documents and those who access databases as most operational roles require employees to do both. Of the 2,402 staff working on site on 25 January, 2,083 were processing paper documents and/or accessing security-sensitive databases. Of the 319 remaining, 212 were managers working on site, with the remainder made up of critical support teams such as estates management, security and essential IT staff to manage onsite infrastructure.

- What efforts have been made to explore whether staff required to be in the office to carry out security-sensitive work (i.e. those in category b above) could do this work from home? What would be needed to enable these functions to be undertaken from home?
- What reasons explain why those staff in category (c) above are not able to work from home?

We have thoroughly reviewed our processes and systems and understand the limitations and opportunities for where there is scope for enabling more operational staff to work from home. At the same time, a great deal of work is also underway to increase digital take-up of our online services which will in turn reduce pressure on our operational staff. However, in view of the essential nature of the public services we provide, most of our operational staff are required to be in the office to deal with the 60,000 items of mail that we receive every day. These must be opened and processing them requires access to core databases. The volume of paper transactions we receive and the fact that some include identity documents such as passports or biometric residency permits or payments, makes it impractical and a security risk to distribute this mail to the homes of our staff.

The DVLA's core databases are part of the critical national infrastructure and the closest in the UK to a national ID database and contain for example details of names, addresses, dates of birth, photographs, signatures and medical information.

In line with all government departments, the DVLA is working through a long-term digital transformation plan. The biggest challenge is the scale and complexity of our IT and the amount of data we hold in our operations (49 million drivers records and 40 million vehicles records). At the same time as transforming our IT infrastructure we must continue to provide secure, large scale national public services.

- The proportion of staff in operational roles who could not either work from home or onsite in the early months of the pandemic, the total salary cost of those staff over that period, and the impact on productivity of these staff not working during this period

As we erred on the side of caution, most staff in operational roles who were not able to work from home remained at home on paid special leave throughout the early part of the pandemic. Paid special leave also covered absences due to shielding or being vulnerable, isolation periods, caring responsibilities and non-working days where people were available to work but were asked not to work to manage the numbers on-site (we introduced a rota system for this purpose). This cost approximately £22 million between March and July 2020. The lower number of operational staff on site led to an increase in the number of paper applications awaiting processing. This backlog was 1.5m paper applications at its peak in July. Staff have worked incredibly hard over the subsequent months to reduce this backlog, including

volunteering to work overtime during weekends. This voluntary overtime continues, for example on Saturday 30 January we saw around 450 operational staff members choosing to work overtime on site in order to assist DVLA customers, which has been consistent on available weekends throughout January and February.

- The frequency that the senior management team worked physically in the office from March 2020 to mid-January 2021.

There have been senior managers, particularly operational heads of group, working on site every day since the start of the pandemic. It is a legal requirement in Wales that those who can work from home, should do so.

Making offices Covid-secure

- How much has been spent as an organisation to make your offices Covid-secure (including the new rented building)

The DVLA has spent £3.6m to date making its existing estate Covid-secure and leasing a new building.

Impact on operations

- The turnaround times for different types of applications during the pandemic, and how this changed since March

The majority of our services are online. These online transactions continue to work well as they have done since the start of the pandemic with no delays for online services. Paper applications vary by service and are currently taking between six and eight weeks to process. Following significant reductions in staff on site during the first lockdown before the site was made Covid secure, backlogs occurred and were at their peak in July when we had around 1.5m applications awaiting processing. At that time customers were facing significant delays in their paper applications being processed which had a tangible impact on individuals such as those who had sent us their passport to renew their driving licence but needed it to be returned urgently. For example, in July we were processing paper applications for certain changes to driving licences (including changes of name and address) that were received in April. The position was the same for applications for a replacement vehicle log book. These delays led to a significant increase in complaints, including from Members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents.

Having a reduced workforce on site has an impact on how quickly we can process paper applications, so our online services will always be the quickest and easiest way to deal with us. We have encouraged our customers to use these wherever we can – including through a paid-for national advertising campaign and across our different media channels. We have also worked closely with stakeholders, trade bodies and charities to encourage their members to use our online services.

I have not seen the Strathclyde report as it is not yet available publicly.

Other information

We have updated our overall risk assessment throughout the pandemic. We have also carried out risk assessments for the individual buildings, for example the contact centre, the new building we have recently leased and our print and despatch facility building.

The DVLA's risk assessments are regularly reviewed and all relevant guidance is monitored and quickly built into working practices. The Welsh Government's guidance steers the approach and we will continue to incorporate changes as the guidance evolves. WE meet weekly with the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union to discuss health and safety matters, including changes to risk assessments. PCS is also invited to take part in visits from the environmental health team and the Health and Safety Executive.

We have made significant investment in making our estate Covid-secure, working closely with PHW, Swansea Council's Environmental Health team and the trade union. The Health and Safety Executive has also visited our site and considered that no enforcement was necessary. Throughout the pandemic, we have implemented Welsh Government advice and legislative requirements fully, including the workplace guidance for offices and contact centres. We continue to work closely with PHW, Swansea Council's environmental health team and the Health and Safety Executive. These organisations regularly review the measures in place and when advice is revised, it is acted upon and changes made quickly. We have also had confirmation from Public Health Wales and Swansea Council that DVLA has fully complied with all actions and there are no further actions outstanding.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Lennard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julie Lennard
DVLA Chief Executive

Annex A – Statement on DVLA outbreak response from Swansea Bay University Health Board (30/01/2021):

An Outbreak Control Team has been meeting since 21st December 2020 to monitor the situation in the Swansea Vale Call Centre premises of DVLA. This has been led by Swansea Council as the statutory agency for infectious disease control under Welsh legislation and supported by Public Health Wales.

This OCT has also maintained oversight of issues across the DVLA workforce and estate in succession to an Incident Management Team which fulfilled that function previously.

Issues arising at the DVLA have been regularly reported into the Regional Incident Management Team. The Regional IMT monitors the COVID-19 pandemic across the Swansea Bay University Health Board footprint and is chaired by the Health Board Executive Director of Public Health.

It was reported to the Regional IMT on 29th January that:

- a. there have been no further cases of COVID-19 in DVLA staff employed at the Swansea Vale Call Centre for the previous 14 days; and,
- b. as a result of the lateral flow device testing deployed for DVLA staff at Swansea Vale there had been no positive tests to date; and,
- c. DVLA has procured additional office space to enable return to work of staff who are required to attend for business reasons into a socially distanced COVID secure environment; and,
- d. the most recent compliance visit undertaken by Swansea Council officers reported a high level of compliance with control measures and did not identify any additional concerns over the control regime in place.

The Regional IMT noted this report and that it was considered that no additional actions were required at this stage.

Ends

Hi both,

Please find attached our statement in response to the outbreak query from The Observer.

Thanks,

Uwch Swyddog Cyfathrebu a Marchnata / Senior Communications and Marketing Officer

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Bae Abertawe / Swansea Bay University Health Board

Pencadlys Bae Abertawe / Swansea Bay Headquarters

1 Talbot Gateway, Port Talbot, SA12 7BR

<https://bipabm.gig.cymru/> <https://sbuhb.nhs.wales/>



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Annex B

COVID-19 Positive Case Data:

As at 4 February 2021

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
On-site	4	0	1	0	0	0	19	90	92	230	51	2	489
WFH	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	20	16	35	9	2	88
Total	5	1	1	0	0	0	23	110	108	265	60	4	577

The positive COVID case data is based on:

- DVLA COVID tracker - positive tab
- Date of the Positive result
- WFH figures based on staff location recorded as WFH

The COVID tracker is a live database. New notifications have been received since the Transport Committee hearing and the DVLA has done further work to verify the figures to ensure accuracy.

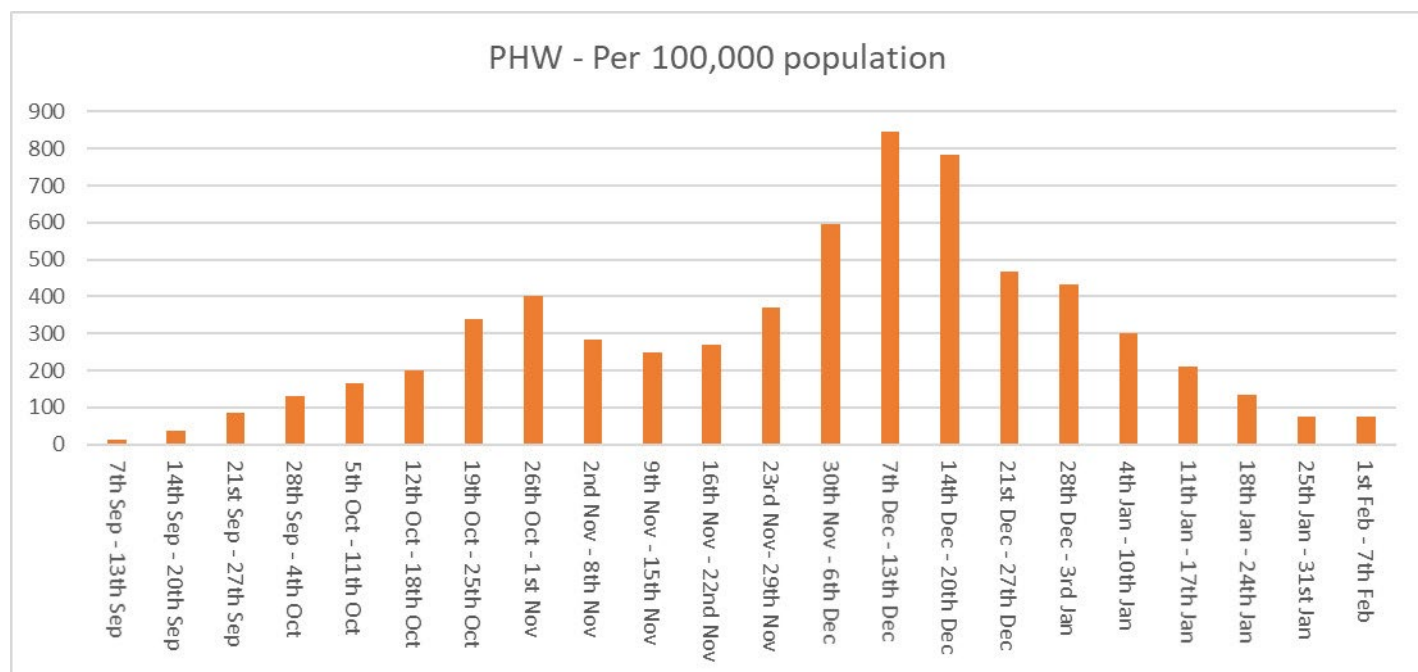
Annex C

COVID-19 Positive Case Data:

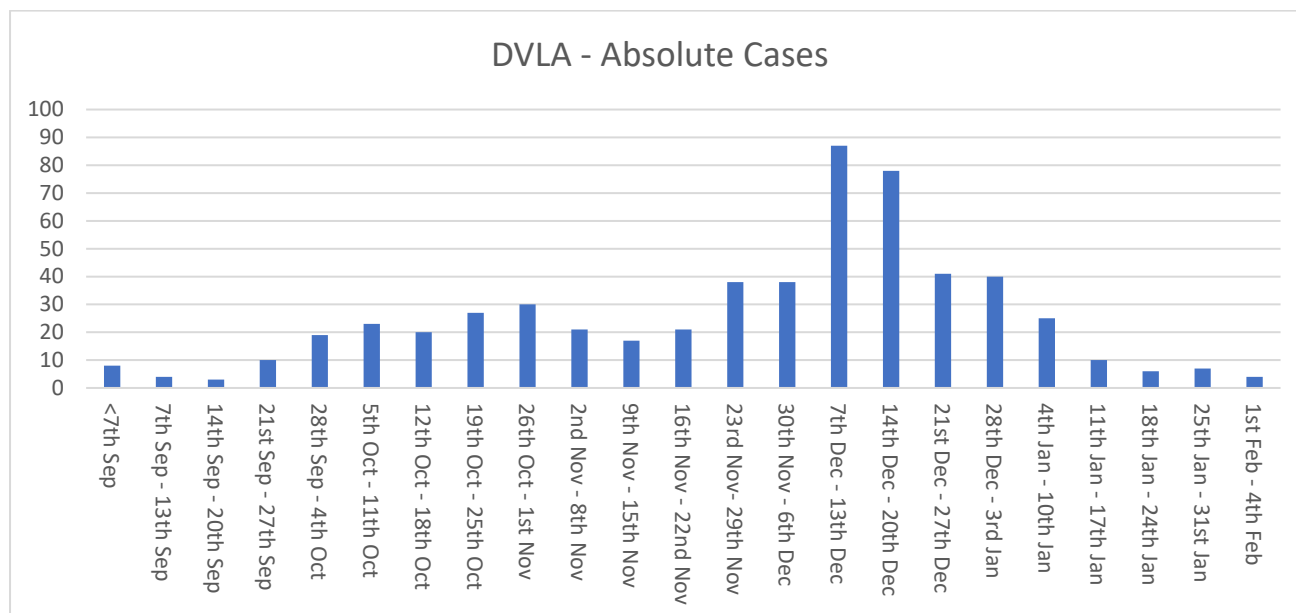
The firebreak lockdown in Wales ended on 9 November 2020 when a new set of national measures were introduced which relaxed most restrictions including;

- All retail businesses reopen including close contact services such as hairdressers and beauty salons.
- Being able to meet in groups of four (not including children) in regulated indoor places such as bars, pubs, cafes and restaurants.
- No alcohol to be served in any of these venues between 10pm and 6am and where premises have a licence to sell alcohol, they will have to close at 10.20pm.
- Avoid non-essential travel but no legal restrictions on travel within Wales
- Up to 15 people can take part in an organised indoor activity (such as exercise class) and 30 in an outdoor setting
- Sports and leisure facilities can reopen including gyms and swimming pools
- Entertainment venues can reopen (cinemas, bowling alleys, casinos and amusement arcades but theatres and nightclubs remained closed)
- Places of worship reopen
- House viewings and house moves allowed
- Visits to care homes permitted subject to local circumstances

The graph below shows the PHW data for Swansea Bay UHB per 100,000 population since September



The graph below shows Covid-19 positive cases for DVLA over a similar time period.



Key Events:

- 21-27 September: Swansea Local Lockdown
- 5-10 October: Tighter social restrictions
- 23 Oct – 9 November: Wales Firebreak
- 21-27 December: Wales Tier 4 lockdown

Source:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection#!/vizhome/RapidCOVID-19virology-Public/Headlinesummary>

PHW data includes Swansea Bay University Health Board only (covers Swansea and Neath Port Talbot).

DVLA data is our own HR Management Information. The information in the graph used to populate positive COVID cases up to 4 February 2021 uses figures for actual positive test results received by individuals following a test. The date used is the day that the positive test result notification is received by the individual.

**GIG**
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Wales

STATEMENT

Monday 21 December 2020

Coronavirus Outbreak Declared at DVLA Telephone Contact Centre, Swansea.

Since the 1 September a total of 352 cases of COVID-19 amongst DVLA staff have been identified. As a large employer this is inevitable as the numbers of cases in the community increase and staff also have links outside the workplace. However following the reporting of 62 confirmed cases of COVID-19 amongst workers at the DVLA Contact Centre, Swansea Vale since the 1 December a decision has been made to declare an outbreak.

In partnership with Swansea Council, Swansea Bay University Health Board and the Health and Safety Executive, Public Health Wales has been meeting regularly to assist the DVLA with managing the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace. Testing facilities have already been deployed by Swansea Bay University Health Board to the site from Monday 21 December until Wednesday 23 December for staff working at the contact centre.

Siôn Lingard, Consultant in Health Protection for Public Health Wales, said:

"Public Health Wales can confirm that NHS Test Trace Protect has been responding to 62 confirmed cases of Coronavirus in employees at the DVLA Contact Centre in Swansea Vale since the 1 December. We are all working in close collaboration with our partner agencies and our priority is to reduce the number of cases in this workforce.

"We would like to encourage all staff at the Contact Centre to take up the offer of testing available on the site until Wednesday 23 December. Finding cases early is key to reducing transmission and risks to those around you. But workers in any workplace may be at risk from infection in social or household settings.

"We remind members of the public in Wales that under tier 4 of Welsh Government's [tiered response to coronavirus](#) everyone has a vital role in preventing the spread of Coronavirus. They can do this by always observing social

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distancing guidelines, washing hands regularly, and adhering to the new restrictions.

"Under the new restrictions, people must stay at home, except for very limited purposes. People must not visit other households or meet other people they do not live with. Those that need to go into a workplace can reduce their risk of infection by following COVID safety precautions at all times.

"We remind the public that the more people that you mix with, the higher the risk of both transmitting and contracting Coronavirus.

"If you or a member of your household develop a cough, fever or change in sense of taste or smell, you must self-isolate immediately and book a free Coronavirus test, either by calling 119 or [by clicking here](#).

ENDS

For press enquiries contact the Public Health Wales Communications Team on 0300 003 0277 (24 hours).

Notes to Editors

Public Health Wales is an NHS organisation providing professionally independent public health advice and services to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Wales.

Public Health Wales has four statutory functions:

- To provide and manage a range of public health, health protection, healthcare improvement, health advisory, child protection and microbiological laboratory services and services relating to the surveillance, prevention and control of communicable diseases;
- To develop and maintain arrangements for making information about matters related to the protection and improvement of health in Wales available to the public; to undertake and commission research into such matters and to contribute to the provision and development of training in such matters;
- To undertake the systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of information about the health of the people of Wales in particular including cancer incidence, mortality and survival; and prevalence of congenital anomalies; and
- To provide, manage, monitor, evaluate and conduct research into screening of health conditions and screening of health related matters.

www.publichealthwales.org

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Annex E – working from home figures

	Working from home
6 April 2020	1382
4 May 2020	1525
1 June 2020	1864
6 July 2020	1822
3 August 2020	1727
7 September 2020	1722
5 October 2020	1862
2 November 2020	1935
7 December 2020	2043
4 January 2021	1989
25 January 2021	2119

All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool

All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool

Introduction

This COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool was developed for use in health and social care but can be used in any workplace. It is intended to be used to assess if you are at higher risk of developing more serious symptoms if you come into contact with the COVID-19 virus.

We want to help you understand whether you may be at greater risk of developing more serious symptoms and to help you and your line manager choose the right actions for you based on your level of risk.

Your employer and/or voluntary organisation if you are a volunteer, has a duty of care to protect your health and safety at work and this includes understanding if you are in a higher risk category from COVID-19. This duty of care includes ensuring an equitable approach for all staff regardless of ethnicity or any other protected characteristics.

The next page sets out an overview of the risk assessment process. It has links to the latest guidance and information on the basic things that everyone can do to reduce their risk of COVID-19 infection.

Please use the resources as well as the Risk Assessment Tool to get the best results.

COVID-19 Understand your risk: Act to stay safe

What you need to do

Step 1 Check your risk – complete the Risk Assessment

Step 2 Understand your risk

A score of 0-3	Low Risk
A score of 4-6	High Risk
A score of 7 or more	Very High-Risk

Step 3 Identify the right actions for you

Step 4 Act now – Take the right actions

Observe Social distance

Practice Good Hand Hygiene

Rigorous Infection prevention and control

Deployment to a different area

Setting and PPE review

Workplace adaptation or Role redesign

Focus on your health and wellbeing

Control existing health conditions

Take Vitamin D supplement

Manage your weight

Boost your wellbeing

All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool

Who needs to use this tool?

This Tool can be used in any workplace in Wales.

Vaccination: 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’.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (previously shielding): Guidance for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable is regularly reviewed and is available [here](#). If you are included in the clinically extremely vulnerable group you will automatically score 7 on this Risk Assessment Tool putting you at Very High Risk. Current advice is that those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should work from home. You should discuss your individual circumstances with your employer. Further advice is also available from [Workplace guidance for employers and employees](#).

People at increased risk: If you are in the clinically vulnerable ‘[people at increased risk](#)’ group, and have been working from home or on modified duties, you should continue to do so. We recognise that the clinically vulnerable ‘people at risk’ group includes a wide spectrum of disease severity. You may wish to discuss with your Line Manager, Occupational Health or GP about your health conditions to discuss whether it is safe for you to return to work.

Pregnancy: All pregnant women (at any stage of gestation) should undertake an individual risk assessment. This is because pregnant women may be particularly vulnerable as it may place them at a greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus and should follow the latest [national guidance](#).

All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool – confidential once completed

How to use this Tool

The Tool asks a number of questions about you that are designed to identify whether you are at a higher risk from COVID-19. It asks some questions about your age, health, weight and ethnicity which may increase your risk of serious illness following an infection with COVID-19.

You may know the answers to the questions yourself, but if not you can discuss this with your line manager, workforce team, union representative, Occupational Health or advocate.

You may also want to consult your GP about the health conditions.

Please complete the questions and add up your score.

You should now arrange a time to discuss with your line manager. This may include a discussion with Occupational Health.

COVID-19 Understand your risk: Act to stay safe

We will continue to develop and improve the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool. If you have any comments or queries on the use or to improve the tool please email HSS.Covid19.WorkplaceAssessmentSubGroup@gov.wales

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Step 1

Check your risk

Consider each risk factor that applies to you and total your score

Risk factor	Score
Age – COVID-19 seems to have a bigger impact on people who are older.	
• If you are aged 50-59	1
• If you are aged 60-69	2
• If you are aged 70-79	4
Sex at birth – COVID-19 seems to have a bigger impact on males than females	
• Male	1
Ethnicity – COVID-19 seems to have a bigger impact on people from some ethnicities	
• Do you identify as one of the BAME or Mixed race groups as set out in this link	1
Existing Health conditions (Comorbidity) – COVID-19 seems to have a bigger impact if you already have other pre-existing health conditions.	
You may want to speak to your GP if you are not sure about these questions.	
• Cardiovascular disease Are you on any treatment for Hypertension (high blood pressure), Atrial Fibrillation (Irregular heart rate), Heart Failure, Previous MI (had a heart attack), had a stroke, or Transient Ischemic Attack (mini stroke)	1
• Diabetes Mellitus Type 1 or 2	1
• Chronic lung disease (including asthma, COPD, interstitial lung disease)	1
• Chronic kidney disease (any stage 1-5)	1
• Sickle cell trait, Thalassaemia trait or other haemoglobinopathy	1
Obesity – COVID-19 seems to have a bigger impact if you are overweight	
This link will help you work out your BMI – if your BMI is more than 30 OR If your waist circumference is:	
• South Asian Female more than 33 inches (84cm); Other BAME or white Female more than 34.5 inches (88cm) • South Asian Male more than 35 inches (89cm); Other BAME or white Male more than 40 inches (102cm)	1
Family history – COVID-19 seems to have a family susceptibility for some people, especially twins	
• Has a member of your immediate family (parent, sibling, child) been in ITU or died with COVID-19	1
Total score	

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Step 2 Understand your risk – what your score means in your workplace setting

	Score		
Workplace setting	Low Risk 0-3	High Risk 4-6	Very High Risk 7 or more
Discuss your workplace setting with your employer	Continue to work following all recommended hygiene and social distancing measures	Use the hierarchy of controls to mitigate risks: ➤ stay 2m away from others ➤ consider appropriate use of face coverings where social distancing is unreliable ➤ ensure frequent hand and surface hygiene ➤ stay at home and arrange testing if symptoms emerge.	Current advice is that those who are clinically extremely vulnerable should work from home. You will now need to discuss your individual circumstances with your employer.

Now arrange a time to discuss with your line manager to agree a plan and ensure you are appropriately protected. This may include a discussion with Occupational Health.

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Step 3 Identify the right actions for you

Now you have completed your COVID-19 Risk Assessment score please discuss with your line manager, occupational health, workforce team, union representative or advocate to ensure you are appropriately protected.

Use the hierarchy of controls to mitigate risks: work from home where possible; reduce daily number of face to face contacts; stay 2m away from others; consider face coverings in enclosed workplaces or where social distancing is unreliable; ensure frequent hand and surface hygiene; stay at home and arrange testing if symptoms emerge.

Things I can do myself

Do the important things to maintain your safety in the workplace

- Observe good hand hygiene, with frequent use of soap and water or alcohol-containing gel.
- Maintain a [distance of 2 metres](#) where appropriate to minimise the risks of the spread of COVID-19, in both formal and informal workplace activity.
- Ensure frequent surface hygiene.
- Stay at home and arrange testing if symptoms emerge.
- Observe isolation requirements for known or suspected COVID-19 cases.

Things my employer can help with

- Your line manager or union rep will help you use the tools and identify the right actions for you.
- Making adjustments
 - Can some or all of your duties be undertaken or completed in a different way
 - Can adjustments be made to enable you to work safely,
 - Can face-to-face contact with the public and home visits be limited or avoided
 - Ensure appropriate physical distancing within the workplace
- Will adjustments enable you to work from home

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Step 4 Act now – take the right actions

Following your discussions with your line manager record the agreed plan and ensure you set a time for review.

What reasonable adjustments have been identified and taken to mitigate your identified risks?

.....

Date adjustments were introduced*

.....

Date for review

.....

This may be time based or instigated by an event that impacts on your circumstances

* This should be signed and dated by both employee and line manager

All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool – confidential once completed

Welsh Government are committed to ensuring that we learn quickly so that we can best protect you from harm due to COVID-19.

Your help and support in consenting to us gathering the evidence from your risk assessment is vital to inform further analysis so that we can better understand the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 is having on some individuals. This information will be used for this sole purpose in relation to COVID-19 and to continue to improve our risk assessment. It will only ever be your anonymised information that will be shared.

Information provided in confidence will only be used for the purposes advised and consented to by yourself

COVID-19 Understand your risk: Act to stay safe

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