

Reviewed 20.11.2020

This is the risk assessment for:

1. **Abingdon Estate Agents, 5 Ock Street Abingdon, Oxon, OX12 0AL, (Hodsons)**
2. **Didcot Estate Agents, 220 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon, (Hodsons)**
3. **The Old Bank, 137 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 8RQ (Slade Legal)**
4. **The Greenhouse, Stratton Way, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 3QP (Slade Legal)**
5. **7 ST. Martins, Wallingford, Oxon, OX10 0AN (Slade Legal)**

Date of risk assessment Thursday 13 May 2020 / Reviewed 20.11.2020

Reason for Risk Assessment (COVID 19 / Return to work):

Tracey Waite / Amanda Hodson / Lisa Hedges

Company Name: Law & Property Lawyers Ltd t/as Slade Legal or Hodsons

Branch Managers

Branch Manager, 5 Ock Street: Warrick Baldwin,

Branch Manager: 220 Broadway: Warren Copping (Assistant Manager)

Head of branch:

The Greenhouse: Tim Healy & Lisa McQueen

Wallingford: Helen Duthie

Didcot: Tom Eeles

Director: Tim Healy has overall and final responsibility for health and safety.

Branch Managers and individual employees have day to day responsibility for ensuring a safe working environment.

A full staff member list for each branch can be found with HR dept.

Products

Legal Services & Residential Property Sales

Usual trading hours Estate Agents

- Monday - Friday 9:00 am – 6:00 pm
- Saturday - 9:00 am– 5:00 pm
- Sunday – 10:00 am – 4:00 pm (Abingdon, Ock Street Only)

Trading Hours Legal Offices

- Monday - Friday 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Risk Assessment

As an employer, we have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety.

Supporting Documents

Employees can find a copy of this Risk Assessment and full range for supporting documents dealing with our processes and COVID-19 at G Drive / HR / Coronavirus / Risk Assessment. The Risk Assessment will also be found on our Slade Legal & Hodsons websites.

These are organic documents and we expect both the supporting documents and this Risk Assessment to feature regular and timely updates as and when required.

Background

On Sunday 10 May 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy. This laid out an indicative roadmap and a very loose timetable of adjustments to current measures in relation to social distancing. Without warning, on Tuesday night 12 May 2020, the Government suddenly announced that Estate Agents could start trading from Wednesday 16 May 2020.

The effect of these new measures required preparations to make sure that the physical space at our offices was adapted so as more of our people returned to the workplace, we could function safely and that both our people and our clients could operate in a "COVID-19 Secure" environment."

Our People

One of the key starting points for the business was to consult with our employees and accurately establish the risks and risk level currently affecting our individual employees, to build up an accurate picture of our overall position and help with our workforce planning. A voluntary COVID-19 questionnaire was sent to all 73 staff members on 12 May 2020 for return to tracey.waite@slade-legal.co.uk , by Monday 18 May 2020.

Our Offices - General

Our offices are a mixture of modern offices, mid-century offices and historic buildings.

Ordinarily our offices present a low risk environment is so far as there is no heavy machinery, heights or lifting, or use of industrial chemicals. There is a safe way in and out of the buildings and low risk of being locked in. Risk of random violence and or aggression from the public is a possibility. Based on each branch's history this is not considered high risk.

Our buildings tend to be well lit from the outside of the premises. Window lights remain illuminated all day and at night in the Estate Agents and main entrances to all buildings are situated at the front of the buildings. All buildings are alarmed. In good weather front doors may be propped open. In bad weather, front doors remain closed. All offices are based on main thoroughfares.

What are the COVID-19 hazards for our employees and the public at our premises?

- Risk from the public (i.e. clients, contractors, visitors,) by transmission of infection to other people either by airborne methods, inadvertent direct touch, close proximity, sharing of surfaces and items, and by visiting our work premises and our employees visiting client's houses.

Who might be harmed and how?

- Any employee, consultant, worker, client, contractor, delivery person or any other type of visitor to our premises could be at risk of infection of COVID-19.

What are we already doing?

- Allowing those staff who can work from home to do so;
- Providing equipment needed for employees to work safely and effectively at home (for example pcs & laptops);
- Allowing staff who are considered High Risk, Moderate Risk and who were shielding, to be at home;
- Keeping in contact with people who are / were furloughed and who are working from home, including their wellbeing;
- For staff present at the office, ensuring the guidance on social distancing and hygiene (handwashing with soap and water often, for at least 20 seconds) should be followed.
- Offices closed to the casual public (and making separate arrangements made for the drop off and pick up of items)
- Signage on front doors of all buildings – advising we are not open to the public in the usual way and how to safely contact our employees and visit our sites
- Additional signage in toilets reminding people to wash their hands (with examples)
- Email signature signage – advising where possible, visitors contact the firm by telephone or email rather than attending personally at the offices to not visit our offices if displaying known symptoms of Coronavirus.
- Provision of handwashing facilities (running water, soap and paper towels) at all buildings
- Hand sanitizer present on all floors in all buildings
- Anti-bacterial hand wipes on each floor
- Professional cleaning of offices

Do we need to do anything else to control this risk? What further action may be required?

Ongoing Planning (Management Team / No end date)

- Identify the minimum number of people needed to carry out work tasks safely and review regularly
- Plan for clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding) workers who must not work outside the home. (Shielding not a requirement at 20.11.2020 – although discretion applied on a case by case basis).
- Plan for people working at home who have someone shielding in their household.
- Help employees at increased risk to work from home, either in their current role or an alternative role; where people at increased risk cannot work from home, offering them the safest available roles.
- Plan for people who need to self-isolate as and when this arises.

Cleaning

- Deep Clean Estate Agents office - scheduled (Abingdon EA 13.05.2020) Didcot (14.05.2020)
- Regular professional cleaning schedules for all branches up and running with Branch Managers in EAs utilizing Cleaning Logs to monitor issues and encouraged to provide regular feedback to Office Manager.

Ventilation (Before reopening)

Checked whether a need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels. ([Confirmed N/A our air conditioning systems do not need adjustment to our offices 14.05.2020 AH/ TW](#))

Open windows and doors frequently to encourage ventilation, where possible.

PPE

- Maintain good supplies of hand sanitizer, anti-bacterial wipes, hand drying cloth, plastic foot coverings, gloves and face-coverings.
- Installation of screens at front desks, receptions and other destinations where appropriate.

Face Coverings

Wearing a face covering is optional and was not required by law, including in the workplace (Changed 05.11.2020 – new government guidance issued.) See Risk Assessment Guidance on the wearing of face coverings issued W/C 16.11.2020). Key points arising: Mandatory wearing of face coverings at work when coming into contact with members of the public and or people you do not normally see, including when travelling between offices.)

If an employee chooses or is required to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash hands before putting them on and taking them off.

We support the use of face coverings safely if employees choose to or should wear one. This means:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you have touched it.
- Continue to wash your hands regularly.
- Change and wash your face covering daily.
- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste.
- Practice social distancing wherever possible.
- You can make face-coverings at home and can find guidance on how to do this and use them safely on GOV.UK.

Travel

- Discourage car sharing & non-essential travel between offices
- Encourage staggered arrival and leave times to maintain ideally a 2 m social distancing or 1 m+ with mitigating factors.
- Consider separate entry/exit points where possible
- Encourage handwashing on arrival and departure and provide hand sanitizer.

Work areas

We will assess and physically arrange our work areas so that we can assign one person to one work area, to keep people 2 m apart, where possible or 1 m+ with mitigating factors.

We may use screens in public facing areas such as Receptions and front desks in Estate Agents and we may mark areas using tape or similar to help people keep a 2 m distance or 1 m+ with mitigating factors.

We will provide signage to remind people to keep a 2 m distance;

We will avoid people working face-to-face, for example working side-by-side.

We may assign shift teams and keep people to shift teams to limit social interaction.

Regular and frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment (for example cleaning at the end of each use of shared equipment such as copiers, printers, scanners, hole punchers, staplers, post room equipment). Identify objects and surfaces that are touched regularly and decide how frequently you clean them.

Handling goods, merchandise and other materials, and onsite vehicles

Cleaning procedures for goods and merchandise entering the site.

Introducing greater handwashing and handwashing facilities for workers handling goods and merchandise and providing hand sanitiser where this is not practical.

Restricting non-business deliveries, for example, personal deliveries to workers.

Moving around the offices

We permit only essential trips within buildings, sites and properties, to maintain social distancing as much as possible.

We may restrict the amount that people rotate between jobs and equipment.

We will limit the number of people who use lifts to a single person at any time.

We will reduce the number of people in high traffic areas including lifts, reception areas and walkways.

We may mark areas using tape or similar to help remind people to keep a 2 m distance or 1 m+ with mitigating factors.

Meetings

We will continue to use remote working tools to avoid as many in-person meetings as possible.

Only absolutely necessary participants should attend meetings and should maintain 2m separation throughout or 1 m+ with mitigating factors.

Avoid avoiding sharing pens and other objects.

We will provide hand sanitiser in meeting rooms.

We encourage holding meetings outdoors and in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.

For areas where regular meetings take place, we may use floor signage to help people maintain social distancing

Common Areas

We will review the common areas used in the business including toilets and kitchens.

We may remove tables and chairs, and stagger lunchtimes, creating additional space for people to take their lunch breaks in; marking areas using tape or similar to help people keep a 2 m distance; or 1 m+ with mitigating factors, to encourage workers to stay on-site during working hours.

Where a 2 m physical distance cannot be maintained, or 1 m+ with mitigating factors, we will assess how to keep common areas clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces.

Staff are encouraged to bring in their own food and immediately wash up any utensils afterwards.

1. Identify and list objects and surfaces that are touched regularly and decide how frequently you clean them.
2. Setting clear guidance for the use of toilets and kitchens to make sure they are kept clean

Good hygiene

1. Use of signs and posters to increase awareness of good handwashing technique.
2. Provide regular reminders on avoiding touching your face and to cough/sneeze into your arm.
3. Setting clear guidance for the cleaning of toilets and kitchens to make sure they are kept clean.
4. Set clear guidance on how to handle goods, merchandise and materials and when cleaning procedures need to be followed.
5. Set clear guidance on how clients will be dealt with when they visit our premises

Emergencies

In an emergency, for example, an accident or fire, people do not have to stay 2m apart if it would be unsafe.

People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.

Managing visitors & contacts

Encouraging visits via remote connection/working where this is an option.

Where site visits are required, site guidance on social distancing and hygiene should be explained to visitors on or before arrival.

Limiting the number of visitors at any one time.

Limiting visitor times to a specific time window and restricting access to required visitors only.

Determining if schedules for essential services and contractor visits can be revised to reduce interaction and overlap between people.

Maintaining a record of all visitors.

Revising visitor arrangements to ensure social distancing and hygiene, for example, where someone physically signs in with the same pen in receptions.

Valuations & Viewings

Valuations & viewings will be completed in accordance both with the government's guidelines to the letter and the seller's instructions, either virtually (where possible) or by +2m face to face.

Where a face to face meeting is required, all processes will be used to implement a safe appointment for all. This will involve assessing any risk associated with the visit before the valuation takes place. We will not visit properties where it has been identified that a member of that household may have COVID-19 symptoms and or be self-isolating and or shielding.

Viewings should limit the number of people to no more than two members of the same household at any one time, with no children under 16 in attendance.

Travelling in the same car as anyone else is not permitted. Viewers should always be met at the property.

Where a property is vacant and a key is being used, the key should be wiped when it is taken from the key cabinet, wiped after the viewing and wiped again before it is placed back in the key cabinet.

Where a valuation or viewing is conducted, handshaking and or physical contact must be avoided. A 2 m distance will be observed. A new pair of protective gloves should always be worn. There is the option of wearing protective foot coverings and protective face masks which have been supplied. PPE may be offered up to clients, although it's not anticipated that there will be a big up take.

Where possible, all marketing will be via digital resources and follow up e-mail, unless the vendor had indicated they are happy to receive paper valuation packs.

Drinks and refreshments should be declined.

Explain to clients the actions the business is taking to reduce the risk of transmission of infection.

At the end of a valuation or viewing appointment, gloves should be safely disposed of into a plastic bag. Hand sanitiser should be applied, and any equipment wiped over that has been used during the visit.

On arrival back at the office, employees must immediately wash their hands with soap and water before doing anything else.

Employees may consider changing screen savers to a reminder to wash hands.

At the end of the day and after the last appointment, employees should wipe over the inside of their vehicles including steering wheel, gear lever, handbrake and all other regularly used controls.

Staff should never attend the office or any appointment if they are feeling unwell and are reminded to follow government guidelines in relation to the current pandemic.

Communications

Provide clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working and promotion of good mental health.

UPDATED 26.05.2020

1. To include specific section on Valuations
2. To include specific section on Viewings

Updated 20.11.2020

1. To include change in 1m+ mitigating factors (where a 2m rule is not possible)
2. To include shielding not a government requirement at 20.11.2020
3. To include update in the mandatory wearing of face coverings in certain circumstances (meeting members of the public and meeting people you don't normally see)