



# COVID-19 Risk Assessment

To support phased re-opening of USS offices from 21 June 2021 – update at 7 May 2021

As an employer, USS has a common law duty of care towards its employees and to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm occurring to them. It also has a statutory duty to put in place systems which ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that employees may work without risk.

A risk assessment was undertaken in accordance with UK government guidance to help direct USS' approach to managing the risks to staff members arising from COVID-19. This coincided with the partial re-opening of USS' premises on 20 July 2020.

Since this time, when COVID-19 case numbers were falling, we have seen a significant increase in the number of cases and a tightening of government restrictions. For office environments this has meant a reinstatement of the guidance to work from home if you can and the need to observe additional requirements arising from local lockdowns. During this period, USS advised its staff to attend offices only if they needed to and most staff continued to work from home.

We are now preparing to re-open USS' offices in accordance with the UK government's 'COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021' and roadmap (22 February 2021). USS staff members are currently attending USS offices either where they need to or for supporting their mental health and wellbeing.

The risk assessment will be updated as and when these arrangements change. A summary of the outcome of the risk assessment is outlined below.



## BACKGROUND

USS established a small project group to identify risks to staff arising from COVID-19. Since March 2020, and for most of the intervening period, almost all USS staff have been working from home (“WFH”) with a small minority of staff members designated as ‘key workers’ in attendance at USS’ offices.

From 20 July USS’ offices were re-opened to allow a minority of staff members to work from the office if they needed to. However, the strong expectation was that most staff members would continue to WFH in the short to medium term.

As the virus progressed into its ‘second wave’, USS continued to advise its staff members, in accordance with the government’s advice, to WFH if they can. However, staff members can use USS’ office premises if they need to, including to support the management of their mental health and wellbeing. Business travel remains very restricted and is only undertaken where there is a strong business need. Similarly, USS is only receiving business visitors into its premises where the activities addressed by the visit cannot be performed in any other way.

USS recognises there are risks to staff arising from COVID-19 both from a prolonged period of home working and when working in the office. Risk assessments were prepared to address both these scenarios.

To support the office re-opening, the risk assessments were summarised into an employee-friendly format. USS ran a consultation process with all staff members in early July 2020 to obtain feedback on the new working arrangements. Further consultations will be implemented as needed.

These documents, together with other project activities, continue to guide USS’ approach to managing COVID-19 risks effectively.

## Results of the risk assessment:

The risk assessment broke down into eight sections. These are described in the table below:

Section	Risks	Outcome
1. Working from home	There are risks in relation to ensuring staff members can work effectively from home or that we encourage staff members to return to the office (“RTO”) too soon.	All risks have been mitigated.  USS continues to follow the direction provided by the UK government.
2. Protecting people who are at higher risk	We recognise risks that arise to vulnerable persons, from exposure to the virus (at the office or at home) and to persons with protected characteristics.	All risks have been mitigated.  We recognise that this is an area of risk that has changed over time and we will keep monitoring to ensure USS guidance keeps pace.
3. Social distancing in the office	We recognise risks that arise from performing normal work duties in the office environment. This section	All risks have been mitigated.



Section	Risks	Outcome
	covers a diverse range of risks including, <i>inter alia</i> , risks arising from: inadequate social distancing and hygiene, commuting, use of communal spaces and office occupancy.	There has been close liaison with USS premises building management and implementation of social distancing and hygiene measures.
4. Receiving visitors	USS recognises risks in respect of two categories of visitors: business visitors and office support visitors.	<p>All risks have been mitigated.</p> <p>USS is only receiving business visitors on a restricted basis, so risks in relation to this category are mostly avoided or mitigated with appropriate social distancing protocols.</p>
5. Office readiness	There are risks in relation to ensuring office infrastructure and systems are working safely and effectively, cleaning arrangements are adequate, and waste is disposed of appropriately.	<p>All risks have been mitigated.</p> <p>Key checks were implemented prior to the office re-opening on 20 July 2020 and have continued since.</p>
6. Personal Protective Equipment ("PPE")	We recognise there are risks in relation to the wearing (or not wearing) of PPE.	<p>All risks have been mitigated.</p> <p>This is an area of risk where the risk response could change, alongside the science, and we will keep monitoring to ensure USS' guidance keeps pace.</p>
7. Travel	USS recognises there are risks in relation to business travel, the delivery of goods to USS premises and in poorly communicating these arrangements.	<p>All risks have been mitigated.</p> <p>USS only permits limited business travel where this is considered strongly beneficial to the achievement of business objectives. Most normal travel risks are currently avoided.</p> <p>USS has limited exposure to outbound physical goods delivery, these risks are transferred.</p>
8. Receiving goods	USS is a low consumer of physical goods but recognises there is risk on the receipt of physical goods to USS premises.	<p>All risks have been mitigated.</p> <p>USS has limited exposure to inbound physical goods delivery, these risks are transferred.</p>



Section	Risks	Outcome