



Opening of Non-Essential Retailers in the UK: Is Your Shop “COVID-Secure”?

Insights

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As of June 15, 2020, non-essential retailers in the UK may reopen after months of being shut down. The government has published guidance for employers, employees, and self-employed persons on how to keep their workplaces “COVID-Secure.”

Retail-Specific Guidance

The UK government has released specific guidance for retailers to minimize the contact resulting from visits to stores or outlets. Retailers can reduce contact by:

- calculating the maximum number of customers that can reasonably follow 2m social distancing on the premises and limit the number of customers in the store;
- using outside premises for queuing when safe and possible; and
- continuing to keep customer cafes closed until further notice, apart from offering takeaway to be consumed off the premises.

Retailers handling goods or merchandise are encouraged to reduce transmission resulting from contact with objects in the store. Retailers should take the following steps:

- encouraging handwashing and providing hand sanitizer for customers;
- limiting customer handling of merchandise;
- setting up “no contact” return and refund procedures; and
- cleaning touchpoints after each customer use.

Clothing retailers are specifically called to minimize the risk of transmission in customer fitting rooms. The government has required that:

- Fitting rooms should be closed whenever possible unless essential (i.e. supporting key workers in buying critical protective clothing) and cleaned between each use.
- Retailers should limit contact between customers and employees during fitting (i.e. suspending fitting assistance) and create procedures to manage clothes that have been tried on (e.g., delaying their return to the shop floor).

Remember, the following guidance from the UK government applies to all workplaces, including retailers:

1. Carrying out a workplace risk assessment

All employers must carry out a workplace risk assessment prior to opening their facility. A government approved risk assessment can be found [here](#).

2. Developing cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures.

Employers should help employees follow the NHS's guidance on handwashing and hygiene by providing adequate handwashing stations and hand sanitizer around the workplace and washrooms. Employers should also ensure frequent cleaning of commonly touched surfaces and common areas.

3. Assisting employees in working from home as much as possible.

Although non-essential businesses can reopen in the UK, the government continues to recommend remote work arrangements when possible. Employers should take all reasonable steps to help employees work from home including:

- ensuring employees have necessary equipment;
- including remote employees in all necessary communications; and
- looking after employee health and wellbeing.

4. Maintaining 2m social distancing, where possible.

Employers can enforce social distancing by taking the following steps:

- posting signs to remind workers and visitors of social distancing guidelines;
- avoiding having employees share workstations;
- using floor tape or paint to mark areas to help people keep to a 2m distance;
- arranging one-way traffic through the workplace if possible; and
- allowing visitors by appointment only.

5. Managing transmission risk when impossible to keep employees 2m apart.

To manage transmission risk, employers should:

- consider whether an activity needs to continue for the business to operate;
- keep the activity time involved as short as possible;
- use screens or barriers to separate people from each other;
- stagger employee arrival and departure times; and
- reduce the number of people each person has contact with by using groups or fixed teams.

International retailers with shops or franchises in the UK should localize their COVID workplace safety policy based on the new UK guidance.

If you have questions or would like assistance in understanding the government's guidance, please contact a member of Fisher Phillips' [International Employment Practice Group](#).

Related People



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