

ANSONS SOLICITORS LIMITED

**CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: Government Plan B – 12/12/2021
HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENTS
ALL 4 SITES/OFFICES**

Preamble

The Firm is committed to protecting the health and safety of its employees, contractors, and visitors.

The last Risk Assessment was reviewed and updated on 16th September 2021.

The Government previously produced its Covid-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021 with the intention of learning to live with Covid-19 and relying on vaccination protection (including the new booster programme) as opposed to further lockdowns as the main line of defence against the virus.

The Government aim was to sustain the progress made and prepare the country for future challenges over the autumn and winter period by continuing its successful pharmaceutical intervention programmes (vaccination, therapeutics), continuing to “Test, Trace and Isolate” where necessary, supporting the NHS and social care by managing pressures on services, continuing to provide clear guidance on how the population can help protect itself and continuing to support the worldwide vaccination programme. This was the Government’s “Plan A”.

However the Government recognised that the pandemic can change course rapidly and unexpectedly and that certainty is impossible to predict. In addition the winter period is always generally a challenging time for the NHS and the impacts of Covid-19 on top of the usual increase in emergency demand during that period adds to the uncertainty. Other seasonal viruses may return with vigour this winter.

The Government therefore produced a contingency plan in case its Plan A is not sufficient – “Plan B”. This plan prioritised measures to help control transmission levels whilst minimising the impact on the economy and communities generally. Such plans may include:

- Rapid communication around concerns over increasing risk levels;
- The possible introduction of mandatory vaccines;
- Mandatory legal face covering requirements in certain settings; and
- If necessary, asking people to work from home again.

In November 2021 a new Covid-19 variant, now called “Omicron” was first identified in Southern Africa. This has now spread globally and is present in the UK. Omicron is said to be a variant that spreads more rapidly in the population than other previous variants and is likely to take a significant foothold in the UK over the next month. It is displacing the Delta variant as the main variant of concern, appears to be highly transmissible and less susceptible to current vaccines.

in response to the risk posed by the Omicron variant the Government announced its intention to switch to its Plan B with effect from Monday 13th December as follows:

- The vaccination booster programme is being significantly accelerated;
- People are required to wear a face covering in most indoor public places, at large venues and on public transport;
- Office workers should work from home if they can;
- People are required to show a Covid pass at certain venues and large events;
- There are new rules on isolation in relation to Covid cases involving the Omicron variant

Ansons has reviewed the new guidance and in particular those aspects that affect the workplace. In reviewing whether people can or cannot work from home effectively consideration has been given to the safety of its staff and the effective operation of the Business, including, for example, available space and safe working office environment, absences from the office due to holiday leave or other reasons, access to equipment necessary for the role, the effective supervision of junior staff and staff general mental health & wellbeing. All such requirements impact on the ability of the firm to continue the effective and accessible delivery of our services to the public.

Given the above the Risk Committee remains cautious in its approach, so that Ansons does what it reasonably can to continue to operate a safe working environment for the protection of the entire workforce.

This Risk Assessment is completed following the wider Health and Safety Policies and Procedures and is supported in part by specific risk assessments where there are identified other areas of risk within the business.

		<p>Each office (Halesowen currently being closed) is working on a suitable socially distanced basis with additional protection being put in place for those considered to be most vulnerable(i.e. separate office facilities being made available).</p> <p>Where a face to face meeting is required – measures taken to protect health and safety, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •ensure that the social distancing rules as in force from time to time are complied with at all times, and; •Face masks to be worn at all times during meetings. Screening also to be used wherever possible. Fee earners are to ensure appropriate screening is available for their meeting •Full details and logs of clients visiting the offices will continue be kept, and Track 	<p>(unless exempt). People attending for ID purposes may remove masks temporarily to certify ID.</p> <p>5. Continue to emphasise Hands-Face-Space-Ventilation in communications to Staff, the importance of ventilation throughout each office and regular sanitisation of contact hotspots.</p> <p>6. Continue restrictions on visitors to the office. Visitors to all offices are to follow strict guidelines on mask wearing at all times during their visits and to comply with social distancing. Preference being re-introduced for meetings being held electronically with face to face meetings only being held as a last resort.</p>	<p>M/L</p> <p>M</p> <p>L</p>	<p>Risk Committee</p> <p>Risk Committee</p> <p>Risk Committee</p>	<p>13/12/21</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>13/12/21</p>	<p>10/12/21</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>10/12/21</p>
--	--	---	---	------------------------------	---	--	--

		<p>and Trace QR codes will continue to be provided for visitors to each office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all 3rd party Contractors visiting the office to be required to wear masks at all times (unless exempt). <p>Suitable screening has been re-established in reception areas which remain open.</p> <p>Meetings will continue to be by appointment only. Notices will continue to remind visitors not to enter our premises without wearing a mask (unless exempt) or if positive or are otherwise experiencing Covid-19 symptoms.</p> <p>Spacing in Office:</p> <p>(A) Crowding has been reduced through a firm wide review of seating arrangements so that in so far as is</p>	<p>7. A small re-introduction of home working for a number of fee earners has been re-introduced in order to enable offices to create more space. Homeworking has had to be balanced against, amongst other things, the requirements of the Business, the access of staff to equipment required to perform their duties on a daily basis and the effective supervision of more junior staff. The management and Risk team have been wary of mitigating the concerns caused by previous large scale homeworking which led to significant issues in the operations of the Business.</p> <p>This places importance on our Covid secure office procedures and more is being be done to re-enforce those procedures.</p>	M	Office Managers	Ongoing	Ongoing
				M	Risk	Ongoing	Ongoing

			<p>reasonably possible staff remain socially distanced when working in the offices.</p> <p>(B) Communicate rules- regular update emails and risk assessment displayed and on the intranet.</p>	<p>Home working equipment is to be retained by staff members at this time. A facility for storage of equipment is available for anyone who needs to return their equipment at this time. Overall site presence will be constantly under review by the Risk Committee.</p>		<p>Committee , Office Managers</p>		
			<p>Risk Committee in place and able to meet frequently to identify and deal with issues as and when they arise or the guidance changes.</p>	<p>Special consideration and homeworking priority will continue to be given to any staff in higher risk categories.</p>	H	<p>Risk Committee</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
			<p>Cleaners remain engaged and attending daily (during business days).</p>	<p>8. Continue to ensure staff with coronavirus stay away from the office- reminder emails to be sent to remind of the protocol- staff to contact Head of HR/Managing Director if symptomatic, contacted by track and trace or think they have been exposed or if any family members living with them are</p>	L	<p>Office Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
			<p>Staff are to be encouraged to use the kitchen facilities and other key workplace pinch point areas in a sensible manner and to respect the wishes of their co-workers. All staff to ensure contact hotspots are sanitised after</p>					

		<p>use with appropriate cleansing wipes/spray.</p> <p>Designated Office Managers identified for each office at Cannock, Lichfield, and Mere Green and assigned with the role of monitoring the safe operation of each of the offices.</p> <p>All staff are assigned a specific desk in a single office. General movement of staff between offices is not permitted (save in exceptional circumstances and with prior written permission from the Risk Committee). Movement between the rooms in each office has been minimised.</p> <p>Decided against (i) signage given low density in each office, (ii) compulsory mask wearing.</p> <p>There has been a review at all (and across) the offices and seating arrangements</p>	<p>symptomatic of test positive.</p> <p>9. Spacing in Office:</p> <p>(A) Increased numbers in all offices has meant that there is less space for those that need to work on site currently. However office space is such that numbers on site do not impact significantly on our ability to host Covid secure offices and the impact during the run up to the Christmas shutdown is also considered low due to various staff members being on leave.</p> <p>(B) Consideration continues to be given to our Covid secure office procedures including work station positioning, room numbers, entry and exit points, touch hotspots, antibacterial wipes and alcohol handwashing facilities,</p>	<p>L</p> <p>M/L</p>	<p>Risk Committee</p> <p>Office Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
--	--	--	--	---------------------	--	-------------------------------	-------------------------------

		<p>considered and steps taken to ensure that staff are seated safely, including where necessary moving staff around the relevant offices and with particular emphasis given to those in higher risk categories. Appropriately distanced Covid seating arrangements, still apply and 1 employee, who is considered higher risk, has been allocated an office.</p> <p>Any non-disposable towels removed from communal areas in the offices and replaced with paper/disposable towels</p> <p>Open door policies to be encouraged (wherever possible and security permitting) to give maximum visibility and ventilation around the offices for those who are in attendance</p> <p>Internal meetings between staff based in different offices, or 3 or more employees/staff</p>	<p>mask wearing etc., to ensure staff continue to benefit from the utmost safety precautions when on site. Configuration plans for each open office are constantly being monitored and reviewed.</p> <p>(C) Staff have been advised to “dress for warmth” with offices being required to be well ventilated by windows remaining open at all times (save Mere Green that has air con). Staff are to be reminded of the importance and necessity of maintaining good ventilation</p> <p>10. Extremely clinically vulnerable staff members will either work from home or be given separate office space when working on site. Other employees who have been office based but</p>	<p>M/L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>Risk Committee /Managing Director</p> <p>Office Managers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
--	--	---	--	---------------------	---	-------------------------------	-------------------------------

		<p>shall continue to be dealt with remotely utilising the technology available where-so-ever possible. Any face to face meetings subject to social distancing rules and mask wearing, as above</p> <p>Screens have been installed in relevant meeting rooms and disinfecting kits are also available for clean down after use.</p> <p>Given the mprovement in Covid statistics at the last review staff were no longer required to wear face masks whilst standing or away from their workspace and but were encouraged to speak to colleagues via telephone even if in the same room.</p> <p>Movement around offices made minimal and reduced close contact.</p> <p>Staff suffering from Coronavirus symptoms must</p>	<p>considered lower risk will return to socially distanced workstations in the open office.</p> <p>11. Ongoing review to ensure that there is an adequate supply of sanitising products available, and to be positioned around the buildings in meeting rooms, communal areas, contact hotspots (i.e. doors, printers, kitchen equipment), at entrance and exit points to the buildings.</p> <p>12. Regular re-enforcement emails to staff to encourage appropriate use of sanitisation stocks, "hands face space ventilation".</p> <p>13. Staff on site to be encouraged to raise any issues or concerns around any Covid Secure Office</p>	<p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>Risk Committee /Managing Director</p> <p>Risk Committee /Managing Director/ Office Managers</p> <p>Risk Committee /Managing Director</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>13/12/21</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>10/12/21</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
--	--	---	--	----------------------------	---	---	---

			<p>self isolate until receipt of a negative test result or expiry of the self isolation period.</p> <p>In addition to the above measures we are monitoring the vaccine and booster uptake position for staff within each office and the firm generally to assist with decision making around Covid policies and procedures,</p>	<p>procedures with the Risk Committee or office managers, such as dwindling supplies of sanitising products, unidentified risks, non-observance of office safety requirements.</p> <p>14. The government's free lateral flow test scheme remains an option but is not currently in operation. However, it will be kept under regular review in the event that the local and/or national Covid infection rates deteriorate and staff will be encouraged to take lateral flow tests regularly and manage their own risk and their risk to others in doing so. Staff will be directed to free lateral flow test service providers (see below).</p> <p>15. It is likely that certain personnel will continue</p>	<p>M/L</p>	<p>Managing Director</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
--	--	--	---	--	------------	--------------------------	----------------	----------------

				work between offices for reasons including general governance and oversight purposes as may be required or directed by the Managing Director. Anyone (primarily directors currently) involved in inter office travel will undertake a lateral flow test on each occasion prior to attending a new office setting.	M	Risk	Ongoing	Ongoing
Catching the Corona Virus or allowing or facilitating its spread through our staff outside of offices.	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home visits have ceased. 	1. The measures in place will continue for the foreseeable future until it is safe to remove such practices. Meetings will be held electronically wherever possible.	L	N/A	N/A	N/A	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When delivering items social distancing is practised and physical contact or close proximity avoided. 	2. Continued use of electronic documents and services where possible.	L	All Staff	Ongoing	Ongoing	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting/delivering DX and Post and dealing with banking. The Managing Director/Risk Committee may direct any individual considered to be at risk 	3. Compliance with Coronavirus outbreak policy.	M/L	All Staff. Directors to enforce	Ongoing	Ongoing	

			of spreading the virus within the office environment to work from home for a period until that risk is removed.	4. All Face to Face Business Development has been suspended.	L	Risk	13/12/21	10/12/21
Mental health risks	All Staff	M/H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff continue to be encouraged (and in some cases required) to take holiday and the approval of holiday remains central to ensure fairness and that those who need it can take it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued top down messages to staff about the Firm, the future, our position and plans to move forward. 	M/L	Directors and Associate Directors	Ongoing	Ongoing
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff encouraged to use any holiday entitlement in a fair manner having due regard to the requirements of their department and co-workers. 	L	Heads of Department/Managing Director/H R Director	Ongoing	Ongoing
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued policy for staff who wish or need to report incidents arising out of the present situation. 	L	All	Ongoing	Ongoing

Lone Working	Staff could suffer injury or ill health whilst working alone	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lone Worker Policy in place. • Lone Worker Risk Assessment in Place. • Staff generally retain mobile phones and can contact another person if any issues. 	Continue to lock the front door outside of working hours.	L	All	Ongoing	Ongoing
Lateral Flow Tests	Linked to risk of infection and spread of the virus amongst staff and visitors	H/M (based on no measures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is currently no intention to roll out a mandatory Lateral Flow test policy. 	<p>Staff attending offices are now going to be encouraged to take regular lateral flow tests to enable them to monitor their risk of Covid-19. This will not be a mandatory requirement but a policy of encouragement for their own safety and the safety of those they work with and may come into contact with.</p> <p>Staff will be directed to the availability of free lateral flow tests in the community - i.e community pharmacy https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests</p>	M	Risk/Managing Director	13/12/21	13/12/21

COMPANY: ANSONS SOLICITORS

Date of Risk Assessment: 12 December 2021

RISK ASSESSMENT CARRIED OUT BY THE RISK COMMITTEE, AND THIS ASSESSMENT SUBSEQUENTLY DRAWN UP.

Signature: 

Name: Neil Jones

Position: Director.

Date: 12th December 2021