



For workers' survey

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## Information Sheet for Employers

### The COVID-OUT Study

COVID-19 Outbreak investigation to Understand Transmission

Your company has been approached to take part in the COVID-OUT study. The research is funded by the UK Government and will be carried out by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) (replacing Public Health England on 1 October 2021), University of Manchester and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

You do NOT have to take part in this study. It is voluntary.

If your company does agree to take part, this research will include asking your workers to share their COVID-19 testing results and the collection of more detailed information from them. Your workers' participation in this study is also voluntary. None of the information about individual workers will be shared with you without their permission.

Before you decide whether to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this information sheet and feel free to ask us if there is anything that is not clear, or you would like more information about.

#### **What is the purpose of the research study?**

This study will help us understand how the virus could spread in workplaces, and this will enable us to provide future guidance and information to make workplaces safer. To do this, we need to collect information from your workers and your workplace.

#### **Why has my company been approached?**

You have been approached because an increased number of COVID-19 cases has been identified at your site over a time period that could be an COVID-19 cluster or outbreak.

#### **What does the project involve if I agree to take part in the full study?**

Your workers will be invited to take part in this study. This includes workers that are now self-isolating or are off sick because of COVID-19.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to:

- Sign the employer consent form provided and indicate the parts of the study you will participate in
- Share information on workplace COVID-19 testing where available, including the numbers and dates of positive cases found among workers and the areas they worked
- Help us determine the best way to contact the workers on your site
- Assist in sharing information about the study to workers and to ask them to take part in this study

Only workers who provide their informed consent to this study will be included. Your workers' participation in this study is also voluntary. As part of this research study, participating workers will be asked for their consent to do the following:

- Complete a full study questionnaire to provide information on their work, health, COVID-19 symptoms, living and working conditions, method of travel to work, close contact at work and at home, their adherence to COVID-19 controls
- Provide consent to allow the study to obtain their COVID-19 test (PCR or LFT) results and further virus genomic analysis results.

The study will offer a small compensation (£20 voucher) to each participating worker who has completed the full study questionnaire.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, involvement in this research is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether your organisation is prepared to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and asked to sign a consent form on behalf of your organisation. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Similarly, individual members of staff are not obliged to participate in the research, and those that do are also free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Any information collected from you or your workers before withdrawal would still be used in the analysis and publication of the findings.

### **What will happen to the results?**

Questionnaire data from your site will be combined with those from other sites and scientifically analysed. The findings from the data analysis and subsequent reports/papers will be put into the public domain. Your site/organisation will not be identified in any publication resulting from this work. Any information used will be presented in a strictly anonymous format so that no one will be able to identify anyone or any organisation who took part in the study.

These anonymised results may also be used in future research whereupon no organisations or individuals will be identifiable. All data will be handled in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

### **What are the possible benefits for you?**

Everyone helping with this research will help us to work out how to stop the spread of the virus, and how to make workplaces more COVID-secure. This will help keep businesses open.

### **Who is organising the research?**

HSE and UKHSA are organising this research and are working in collaboration with the University of Manchester and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

### **What if there is a problem?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the study team who will do their best to answer your questions (see contact details at the end of this sheet). If you are still unhappy, they will advise you on how to make a formal complaint.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the NHS North East Research Ethics Committee (reference 20/NE/0282). The role of the committee is to protect the interests of study participants.

### **Study contact details**

If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, please contact the study team detailed below.

#### **HSE contact person**

**Joan Cooke (Study coordinator)**

[COVID-OUT@hse.gov.uk](mailto:COVID-OUT@hse.gov.uk)

#### **Health Data Research UK COVID-19 National core studies webpage**

<https://www.hdruc.ac.uk/covid-19/covid-19-national-core-studies/>

#### **PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study on Transmission and environment main page**

<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/covid19-national-project/>

#### **COVID-OUT webpage**

<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/covid19-national-project/rapid-investigation-of-outbreaks-and-evidence-synthesis/>