



COVID-19: Transmission and environment

Partnership for Research in Occupational, Transport, Environmental COVID Transmission (PROTECT)

Theme 3: Sector-specific studies

COVID-19 at Work Study

The COVID-19 at Work Study is one of several projects being conducted within the National Core Study on Transmission and Environment, funded by the UK Government. Teams from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), the Institute of Occupational Medicine (IOM), the University of Manchester and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are involved in this project. It lies within a Theme of linked Sector-Specific Studies which are summarised along with the other themes on this project website.

This project will assess the number of cases of COVID-19 across the food production sector. Over four stages of data collection, we aim to identify features which are linked to an increased risk of COVID-19 infection, as well as mitigation measures implemented across different sub-sectors and facilities.

Stage 1 will involve a short baseline survey, sent via email to businesses in the food processing sector. Site-based data will be collected on past incidence (development of new cases) and prevalence (existing cases) of COVID-19 within the workplace. The survey will also explore workplace characteristics and practices.

Stage 2, approximately 2 months later, will follow up with those facilities who completed the stage 1 survey, and who consented to be re-contacted. Telephone interviews will carry out a more in-depth survey. Counts of new cases will be collected (since stage 1 completion), along with more detailed information on potential routes of transmission and measures adopted to mitigate transmission risks.

Stage 3 will involve semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the food-processing sector (e.g. research/policy experts, trade associations, government agencies/regulatory bodies, trade unions). These interviews will seek to understand the impact of COVID-19 on this sector, as well as establishing an industry level perspective of work areas considered high risk for COVID-19 transmission, barriers and opportunities to reduce viral transmission at work and information/support available to industry.

Stage 4 will consist of interviews with key people, across a subset of facilities who consented to be re-contacted from stages 1 & 2.

The results of this study will identify factors that influence the transmission of COVID-19 related to specific occupational settings. These findings will inform sector-specific recommendations to improve workplace practices to allow for safe operation.

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