

**March 2021**

**An Open Letter to Dundalk Businesses: From Dundalk Chamber, Department of Public Health HSE North East and Louth County Council**

A Chara,

On behalf of Dundalk's business community, we are determined and focused on enabling the town to recover quickly and successfully from the economic exhaustion of COVID-19.

This year has brought hope and optimism that the vaccination programme would lead to a recovery and a potential return to normality. However, the resurgence of COVID-19 driven by the new strains has reasserted the transmissible nature of this virus. For the coming period, business as usual will not be possible for many businesses.

Businesses of all sizes, in all sectors are struggling as are many of our public sector organisations and practitioners in health, education and our emergency services. This third wave has also compounded the physical and mental health of our public, including those who operate, own or work in businesses and organisations. We recognise that there is COVID-19 'fatigue', but we have to keep pushing forward.

We are collectively asking for businesses and their employees who remain open to re-double their efforts to help stop the spread of this virus.

Despite our wish to have business as usual, we agree that businesses should undertake the following actions:

- Adopt working from home in all instances, where it is feasible to do so.
- Where business continues on site, particularly in areas where larger numbers of the general public may interact with employees and each other, reassert and enforce strong management of COVID-19 safe precautions within those workspaces.
- Adapt working practices to minimise interaction between people in offices, on building sites and in other work settings.
- Maintain enhanced cleaning of all general work areas and frequently touched objects and surfaces at regular intervals using a detergent.
- Businesses need to reaffirm to employees about the COVID-19 supports in place, to facilitate self-isolation and stop spread from those with symptoms or those individuals identified as close contacts.
- Face masks should be worn by all employees in communal areas, such as break rooms, kitchens, changing areas and shared offices to help prevent COVID-19 transmission among employees.
- Remind employees to adhere to public health advice outside of the workplace.

In workplaces, break rooms are often small indoor spaces where employees take their masks off to eat and socialise. We need to change some of our break time habits of eating and socialising with

others. Frequent cleaning of break rooms, rest areas, and other communal areas should be implemented. Proper hygiene practices must always be adhered to when cleaning crockery and cutlery/surfaces and utensils. Cups, cutlery and other crockery should be cleaned with hot water and a detergent when there is no dishwasher in break rooms. By keeping communal areas clean and well ventilated, wearing your face mask until you are ready to eat, adhering to social distance guidance by keeping 2 metres apart and limiting the number of staff allowed in these areas, will help to limit transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.

We enclose an infographic highlighting the key points that need constant attention, which you might find useful to share with staff.

In addition, updates on guidance and supports in relation to COVID-19 are available at:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>

<https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Supports-for-SMEs/COVID-19-supports/>

Throughout this pandemic, we have risen to the challenge, changing operations and adding protective measures for a safe reopening of businesses in Dundalk. Our successful work in reopening the town after the first lockdown and the subsequent efforts in December, is testament to our commitment to achieve an open economy that protects lives and livelihoods. We can and will overcome this virus by individually and collectively playing our part, ensuring we can rebuild when the time comes to do so.

Whilst it seems this virus is relentless, there is a brighter horizon ahead. The vaccination programme remains the light at the end of the tunnel. Alongside a high vaccination coverage, comes a promise that gives everyone within our society the expectation of a better, more prosperous future. Meanwhile, we must all continue with all public health measures including social distancing, mask wearing, hand hygiene and minimising our contacts. We must all play a part in achieving this outcome.

Finally, we would like again to thank all staff and providers for your hard work and diligence in supporting the fight against COVID-19.

Stay safe.

***Sean Farrell***

President, Dundalk  
Chamber

***Dr Augustine Pereira***

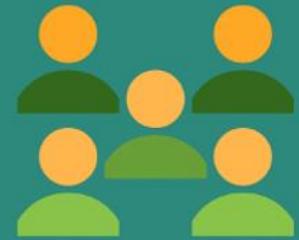
Director of Public Health,  
HSE North East

***Joan Martin***

CEO, Louth County  
Council

# Public Health Advice For Workplaces

The Department of Public Health, HSE North East are reminding workplaces of some of the guidelines and protocols you should be following:



## SOCIAL DISTANCING



Everyone, including customers, clients, and employees have to remain at least 2 metres apart, both inside and outside workplaces.



Adapt working practices to minimise interaction between people in the workplace.



Face masks must be worn by all employees, as well visitors in the workplace. Ensure face masks cover the nose, mouth and chin.

## HYGIENE PROTOCOLS



Enhanced cleaning of all general work areas and frequently touched objects and surfaces at regular intervals using a detergent.



Ensure frequent and proper hand washing which include using soap and water and washing for over 20 seconds.



In between washing, use an alcohol based hand gel or rub (70% alcohol base).

## BREAK ROOMS/CANTEENS



Limit the number of employees allowed in communal areas, such as break rooms at any one time and stagger breaks to avoid congregation of employees.



Cups, cutlery and other crockery should be cleaned with hot water and a detergent when there is no dishwasher.



Frequent cleaning of break rooms, canteens, and other communal areas should be implemented.

## OPERATIONS & TRAINING



Keep employees informed about the prevention measures in place. Provide information and advice about COVID-19 in different languages.



Employees should not attend work if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. That must be made clear.



Employees need to adhere to public health advice outside of the workplace, to prevent COVID-19 transmission.