



Adapting to Covid-19

Operational update. Nov, 2021

Adapting to Covid-19

Operational update. July, 2020



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About this document

This document contains a summary of the steps being taken by Alba Science to protect its staff, volunteers and the general public from the ongoing Covid-19 global pandemic.

This document can be made freely available and will be updated from time to time as we continue to adapt to the changing social circumstances and government regulations.

Whilst this document contains abbreviated sections of existing company policies, it should serve only as a summary of these. Existing policy documents should be consulted for further information.

The contents of this document are subject to regular review.

Further information

For questions or further information on anything contained in this document, please contact us. Contact details are provided on the last page.

1. Entering and leaving the office



Entering the office

Entry to the building will be through the central door at the front of the building. This door will always be kept open when the office is open.

The corridor between the front door and inside doors will contain a hand-sanitiser station to be used whenever entering. Masks will also be made available in this area and must be worn before proceeding to the inner doors.

The inner doors will be manned. Only staff or expected visitors, such as volunteers will be permitted. Unexpected visitors or delivery agents will be asked to wait at the inner doors to be attended to.

Signage will be provided in this area.

Once inside the office, staff should move swiftly to their work area to avoid congestion in common spaces.

Leaving the office

Exit from the building will be through the central door, as it is with entry. If there is currently someone entering the building, you should wait until the other person has entered.

Waste baskets are provided throughout the building for disposal of masks or other items. All staff should also use the provided hand-sanitiser station before leaving.

One-way system

On some occasions, it may be necessary to implement a one-way system for entry and exit. Where this is the case, exit will be through the left-front door at the bottom of the stairs. Signage will be provided to direct staff and visitors accordingly.

2. Movement around the office



Moving around the office

Movement around the office is important and necessary to maintain good working and social relationships with your colleagues.

It is important however, that we reduce congestion, in order to maintain a safe and comfortable working environment, as well as to adhere to social-distancing rules.

Staff are encouraged to be more conscious than usual of their movements around the workplace, including the use of common and public areas.

Be aware of items that have been touched, such as door-handles and other items of equipment. Be sure to wipe or clean items and surfaces as needed.

The use of technology such as video-conferencing is encouraged as an alternative to physical meetings, where possible.

Working spaces

All staff should have their own desk area with enough space to comfortably work without breaking the social distancing policies.

Everyone is encouraged to review their own working area and to adjust these as needed, or to move desks if necessary, in order to provide an environment in which they feel comfortable and safe. Assistance will be provided to help move.

Social distancing

We are obliged to conform to the latest Government advice on social-distancing rules. This will be actively implemented by management and advice issued accordingly.

We should always adhere to these rules when interacting with our colleagues and members of the public.

3. Use of kitchens



Kitchen facilities

Kitchen facilities will remain available for use by all staff. Staff are encouraged to limit numbers of staff present in the kitchen at any one time.

Staff are encouraged to bring lunches to work which make minimal use of the kitchen facilities, such as pre-cooked or cold meals. This not only reduces the risks from exposure to shared kitchen items but also reduces the amount of time the kitchen is use by a single person.

All staff should consider scheduling their usage of kitchen facilities with their colleagues around busy times, such as lunch.

Everyone using the kitchen facilities should clean all surfaces they have contacted and place in the dishwasher all items they have used, ensuring that when they leave the kitchen area, it is clean and ready for use by someone else.

Dishwashers

Dishwashers are more effective at cleaning kitchen items than washing by hand, due to the high temperatures used, so their use is encouraged.

Kitchen items such as crockery, cutlery, pots and pans should be placed into the dishwasher for cleaning after use.

Dishwashers will be activated twice per day or as required.

Other appliances

Other kitchen appliances such as kettles, toasters and microwaves can be used, provided that surface contact points such as handles and buttons are wiped after use.

4. Use of bathrooms



Staff bathrooms

Everyone should ensure that they clean all surfaces in bathrooms that they have come into contact with, such as handles, taps, etc.

Wipes will be provided to facilitate cleaning.

The use of contactless hand-dryers (where available) is encouraged.

Public bathrooms

Public bathrooms are available at present for use. This may change to reflect latest Government advice. Changes will be implemented by management accordingly.

Everyone should ensure that they clean all surfaces in bathrooms that they have come into contact with, such as handles, taps, etc.

5. Use of common areas



Meeting rooms

Meeting rooms will remain available, however staff are encouraged to keep the size and duration to a minimum.

The use of technology such as video-conferencing is encouraged as an alternative to physical meetings, where possible. Assistance can be provided to facilitate this.

Volunteer waiting rooms

Volunteer study appointments will be scheduled in order to minimise the number of volunteers in waiting rooms at any one time. Social-distancing rules will apply (where applicable) in these areas. Staff will advise.

Public spaces

Public spaces, such as entranceways, waiting areas and stairwells are considered to be high-risk areas, due to their increased potential exposure to a high number of people as they move throughout the building.

Care should be taken to reduce contact with surfaces and items in common areas. Washing of hands or use of hand-sanitiser is encouraged whenever employees have made contact with common items such as door-handles or handrails.

Regular specialist cleaning of public spaces will be implemented.

6. Use of computer equipment



Personal computers

All staff members working on-site will be provided with a computer system at their desk for their exclusive use where possible.

It is important that personal computing equipment is not shared with other staff members. This includes the use of keyboards, mice and touch-screens.

If any staff members require additional or alternative computing equipment, this should be requested from their line manager.

Cleaning computing equipment

Staff members are responsible for maintaining the hygiene of their own computing equipment. Contact points such as keyboards, mice and touch-screens should be cleaned using supplied wipes at the end of each day.

The existing clear-desk policy will remain in effect. All staff should ensure that their working environments are clear at the end of each day to allow cleaning of desks and other surfaces to be completed out of hours.

Shared computers

Some computer systems are used on-study for purposes including data collection, imaging and access to documentation.

The use of these computer systems whilst on-study should be restricted where possible so that they are not shared amongst multiple staff members.

The project manager for each study should review the provisions for computer systems prior to study commencement and request additional or alternative devices as required.

Where the sharing of a computer system is unavoidable, each member of staff should wipe the contact points (keyboard, mice and touch-screens) after each use using the supplied wipes. This applies even when other precautions, such as the use of gloves have been taken.

At the end of each day, all contact points on shared computers such as keyboards, mice and touch-screens should be cleaned using the supplied wipes.

7. Use of other office equipment



Telephones

It is important that, where possible, telephony equipment is not shared with other staff members. Staff should use call transfer and messaging services rather than 'handing the phone' to another staff member.

Telephone contact points such as handsets and buttons should be wiped immediately after usage by a person other than the usual telephone owner. Devices should also be wiped at the end of each day.

Printers

Printers are usually shared by several members of staff. Where possible, users should use their print-dialog control panels to make changes to the printer settings, rather than using the touch screens on the printers themselves.

Users should minimise contact with printer devices as far as is practical. In all cases, all contact points should be wiped immediately after use using the supplied wipes.

Other equipment

Staff will use a variety of office and technical equipment during a typical day. This can range from small desk items such as scissors and staplers, to larger items such as camera equipment and clinical devices.

In addition, most staff will likely come into contact with fixed infrastructure items such as light-switches, alarm code panels, door handles etc.

All staff should be mindful of which items they have been in contact with and should ensure that items and contact points are wiped, as necessary.

8. Personal protective equipment



Supply of PPE

The company will make personal protective equipment (PPE) available to all staff, volunteers and other visitors to our test centre. Cleaning and other hygiene materials will also be provided where necessary, together with appropriate instructions for use.

PPE equipment provided will include gloves, face masks, visors, gowns and hand sanitisers.

Training will be provided to all staff in the use of the various items of PPE. All staff members will be responsible for ensuring that they understand how to use items of PPE and are aware of when they should use and dispose of these items.

Signage

The company will provide appropriate signage throughout the building to ensure that areas where PPE is required are clearly identified. Signage will include posters, warning signs and other markings designed to restrict and guide the flow of persons through the building, such as floor markings.

Wearing of masks

Masks will be provided to all persons when entering the building. Persons not wearing a mask will not be permitted entry.

All staff should wear a mask at all times when they are moving around the building and not at their own working area.

Staff remaining at their desk may remove their masks if they wish to, provided that social distancing rules are followed and that a mask is worn when they leave their desk. This includes short trips to bathrooms, kitchens or other facilities on-site.

All volunteers will be required to wear a mask at all times whilst in the facility.

All staff working in clinical areas such as assessment rooms, dispensary or common areas must wear a mask at all times.

Study-specific PPE

The project manager for each study will agree on the required PPE to be used and will be responsible for ensuring that their team members adhere to the usage instructions for these.

9. Hand washing and sanitising

Hand washing

Washing of hands is a very effective way of preventing transmission of the virus.

Hand-sanitiser stations will be placed throughout the building for use by staff and volunteers.

Hand washing guides will be displayed next to all hand-sanitiser stations showing the recommended technique for washing hands thoroughly.

Staff should be conscious of their personal hygiene and be mindful of washing hands and using the provided hand-sanitiser stations when appropriate, particularly before and after close contact with volunteers or other staff members.

All staff will be required to wash their hands when entering or leaving the building. A hand-sanitiser station will be provided at all entrances and exits.

10. Monitoring your health



Keeping us informed

The company has a duty of care for all staff. It is very important that staff keep us informed of any changes to their health and circumstances, whether related to Coronavirus or not. Staff are encouraged to contact the human resources manager to report any updates.

Health screening

The company may provide testing for staff to determine if they currently have or have previously had the Coronavirus.

Where testing is provided to staff, it will be done at the expense of the company. Compliance with any testing will be mandatory.

Staff members may be requested to complete a health questionnaire from time to time as part of the ongoing health screening policy. Any health information provided will be treated confidentially and in line with existing policies and procedures.

Self-isolating and shielding

Members of staff who are self-isolating due to potential virus exposure or who have been instructed to shield on medical grounds should not enter the office building without the prior approval from senior management.

Staff should inform their line manager immediately where they have been instructed to self-isolate or to shield. The company will review each case individually and will assist as far as it can in enabling these individuals to continue to work from home.

In some cases, it may not be possible for some staff members to fulfil their duties from home. Where this is the case, the company will discuss the available options with the staff member.

11. Working conditions



Travelling to work

Staff have a responsibility to be available at their normal workplace during business hours in order to fulfil the requirements of their job.

Staff should consider the most appropriate means to get to and from work, bearing in mind some disruption and restrictions to some public transport services.

Staff members are responsible for making their own childcare and personal arrangements to allow them to attend their workplace as usual during their contracted hours.

Team working

The company will try to reduce the number of staff onsite at any time by arranging the staff into teams. Shifts may be used to facilitate this.

Working from home

The company is taking a pragmatic approach to working from home and will, where possible, encourage and assist staff members to do this.

All staff members who are not required to be in the office and are able to continue their work from home will be encouraged to do so in order to reduce the number of people in the building at any time. This includes administrative and non-technical staff.

12. Holidays and sickness



Holidays and sickness

Existing policies and procedures for using holidays and for reporting sickness remain in place for all staff, including staff members who may be working from home.

Staff are reminded that if they are unavailable for work due to illness, they should contact the human resources department as usual.

If you are unable to attend work

Staff members who are unable, for whatever reason, to attend their normal workplace should discuss their situation with their line manager as soon as possible.

The company will make every effort to agree a compromise which suits both the staff member and the company, provided that this is both sensible and practical. Note, however, that it may not always be possible to do this and the company is under no obligation to amend working arrangements for any staff member.

13. Communication



Keeping everyone informed

As we proceed through the coronavirus pandemic together, it is important that there are strong communication lines so that all staff can remain informed of ongoing developments and can all contribute toward a common discussion.

All staff are encouraged to actively engage in the ongoing conversations about how the company is adapting to the changing working and business environments.

Any concerns or suggestions for improving the working environment, the way studies are run, or any other aspect of the business should be made directly to the Managing Director.

Concerns

Any staff member who has any concerns or suggestions related to health and safety or Coronavirus are requested to report these to the CEO or other senior member of staff as soon as possible.

Health & safety committee

The company has convened a health and safety committee comprised of several members of staff. This committee will meet to discuss existing issues and concerns at the discretion of the executive management.

Details of the health and safety committee members are available to all staff on request from the HR Manager.

Updates

The Managing Director will periodically update all staff to keep them informed of any changes to existing policies and procedures. Since not all staff members have full email access, an existing WhatsApp group has been created for this purpose.

14. Study appointments



Volunteer appointments

We are trying to reduce the amount of waiting involved during studies. It is therefore necessary for us to implement a strict appointment system for all our volunteers attending our test centre.

Volunteers will now be allocated an appointment window for all their study appointments.

Volunteers should not enter the test centre before their appointment time.

When a volunteer is about to enter the test centre, if someone else is currently vacating the premises, they should let them leave first before entering.

Volunteers should not wait outside the facilities before and after their appointment for any longer than is necessary.

These rules have been introduced to protect all our volunteers and staff and to ensure that we adhere to social-distancing rules and government guidance.

Entering the test centre

The volunteer entrance is through the central front door.

The corridor between the front door and inside doors of the test centre will contain a hand-sanitiser station to be used whenever entering. Masks will also be made available in this area.

Volunteers should wear their own masks when attending the test centre.

Volunteers will be required to sanitise their hands and to wear a mask prior to approaching the reception desk.

Waiting rooms

Once volunteers have registered with the receptionist, they may be asked to wait in a waiting area. If this is the case, they should adhere to current social distancing requirements.

15. Study procedures



Study procedures

It is very important that all volunteers follow the instructions given to them by our study personnel throughout their attendance.

We have planned all studies and the movement of our volunteers and staff throughout them in order to best protect everyone's safety.

The full co-operation of all our volunteers with our instructions is required.

Bathrooms closed

Unfortunately, our bathrooms are closed and not available for public use. This has been done to protect our volunteers.

In circumstances where study volunteers are required to use a bathroom as part of the normal course of a study, clean facilities will be provided.

Personal Protective Equipment

Volunteers should wear their own masks when attending the test centre. We will provide all volunteers with additional Personal Protective Equipment for use during all assessments on our studies which involve close interaction, closer than the 2m social-distancing rules.

PPE provided may include a combination of masks, visors, eye-protection and gowns. Volunteers will be instructed on the use of all PPE and other hygiene measures, such as the use of hand-sanitiser.

Social distancing

We are obliged to conform to the social-distancing rules which dictate a minimum 2m space between people where other PPE measures are not in place.

All volunteers must adhere to these rules at all times whilst on our premises, or otherwise as directed by our study personnel.

16. Volunteers



Keeping us all safe

The health and wellbeing of our volunteers and staff is the most important thing to us.

We have conducted a comprehensive review of our business activities, particularly the conduct of studies involving our volunteers, and have made numerous changes to how we work in the best interests of the safety of our volunteers, staff and the wider community.

Keeping us updated

If a volunteer is on one of our studies, it is important that they let us know of changes to their health.

If they are diagnosed as having, or having had Covid-19, or if they are self-isolating, it is important that they let us know.

Study payments

Volunteers will be informed at the start of any study how they will be reimbursed for their expenses.

We have traditionally done this by cheque, but we are experimenting with alternative contact-free payment types, such as by direct bank transfer.

17. Sponsors



Our studies are running

We are open for business as usual, although we are adapting to social-distancing rules, so things are a little different.

We continue to run our studies as best we can within the social-distancing restrictions and lockdown rules placed upon us.

As restrictions are gradually being relaxed, we are able to design and schedule new clinical studies.

You can contact us as normal by phone, email or one of our social media channels to discuss upcoming study availability.

Study monitoring

We are able to accommodate study monitors on any of our studies, in accordance with social-distancing rules.

Special arrangements can be made to help in the monitoring and auditing of ongoing studies without the need for onsite attendance. This can include the use of remote data and file access and use of video conferencing technology.

Visitors

We are able to receive visitors at our premises, but current travel restrictions make these impractical for most. If you would like to visit us, please get in touch.

18. Building and facilities



Deliveries

Deliveries are accepted as usual. Deliveries should be dropped off at the reception area.

Mail collection

Daily Royal Mail (and other) collections will continue as normal. Prior to the mail collection time, bags of mail will be placed in the reception area along with other supporting documents for collection.

If a courier arrives for the collection of an item, care should be taken to observe the social-distancing rules.

Waste collection

Waste collection services will continue to be provided by existing suppliers. However, the impact of the current situation on our suppliers may mean that these collections are not run to their usual schedule.

Management will liaise with suppliers to arrange waste collections and will keep staff members informed of when these will be.

Recycling

Recycling services will continue to be provided by existing suppliers. However, the impact of the current situation on our suppliers may mean that these collections are not run to their usual schedule.

Management will liaise with suppliers to arrange recycling collections and will keep staff members informed of when these will be.

19. Further information



Further information

For general questions or further information on anything contained in this document, please contact us.

A copy of this document can be downloaded from www.albascience.com/covid

Our address

Alba Science Ltd.
24 Broughton Street
Edinburgh
United Kingdom
EH1 3RH

Follow us

[@albascience](#) on twitter for our corporate page
[@albavolunteers](#) on twitter for our recruitment page

Call us

+44 (0)131 297 0000 for general enquiries
+44 (0)800 756 1046 for volunteer recruitment enquiries
+44 (0)7756 805 856 for business development or study enquiries

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recruitment@albavolunteers.com for volunteer recruitment
covid@albascience.com for covid-related enquiries

