

LIFE AFTER LOCK DOWN

PEOPLE PACK



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LIFE AFTER LOCKDOWN

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HR Introduction

It is expected that the substantial downturn in business due to Covid-19 will be felt for a significant period of time in most parts of the economy including opticians, once government restrictions are lifted. Undoubtedly this reduction in demand will be linked our ongoing labour resource requirements. Practices will have to strategically plan their individual labour requirements and people strategy to protect the future of the business. With this mind we have prepared a guide to support practices on reintroducing team members back into practice following a long period of furlough.

Practices must have a clear people strategy plan knowing that we expect a phased return to the practice over what could be a prolonged period.

To support the economy the chancellor has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (commonly known as the furlough scheme) upto the end of October 2020. However, he further highlighted that the government will be reaching out towards employers for “employer support”. This comment insinuates there may changes to the Job Retention Scheme and the actual finer detail of any changes are yet to be released.

Timing and the nature of any relaxation of restrictions are expected from early June 2020 therefore it would be sensible to consider all the employment options and have the capability to move quickly from one scenario to the next.

Our focus should be how we take care of our team members to safeguard their health and well-being. Many team members will be concerned and anxious about returning to practice or travelling to and from work. They will want to know that their health and wellbeing along with practice patients is our number one priority and that we

are taking care of this on their behalf. This should be at the heart of any decisions we formulate/ It will also allow us to stay within the boundaries of employment law.

The guide will cover immediate priorities:

1. Furlough Extension
 - 1.1. Furlough Extension Template Letter
2. Re-introduction into Practice
 - 2.1 Contact team member(s)
 - 2.2 Letter to confirm Covid-19 clear and training received
 - 2.3 Key Considerations; managing holidays, sickness.
3. Alternative considerations: Short Time Working, Layoff, Redundancy
4. Briefing document and letter templates

1. Open and Honest – Furlough Extension

As business leaders we must have a strategy in place to communicate with our team on a regular basis. Firstly, to reassure them that their health, well-being and their safety is our top priority. Additionally, so that a future staffing plan for the business can be circulated.

As measures start to ease it will be critical for practice owners to plan their individual workforce requirements in-order to continue to meet their operational needs. Government announcements say restrictions will start to ease from June 2020, however, we anticipate not all team members will be immediately required to return back into practice. This will be a gradual process as the number of patients attending the practice eventually ramps up. There may will be an initial flurry and then a settling down of activity. It may be that we need to operate longer clinic times and of course, measures around infection control and social distancing. Team members that are not required to return to practice must be informed preferably

by conversation with a follow up of a furlough extension template letter. At all times there must be an audit trail of all conversations held with team members and a record of conversations can be kept.

Practices must put into place a communication strategy for those team members that are to remain on furlough. It is good practice to regularly update team members to provide reassurances so they can feel confident in their return to work at a later date.

We should try to remind team members that they can be expected to return to work at anytime with sufficient notice, and where possible try to include a brief outline of any new procedures put into place.

In this instance a Furlough Extension Template letter is provided as part of this pack.

Ref DOC 1.1



August 2020

Week 1-2
Review July performance.

Week 2-3
Review Sales to Labour Cost and people strategy plan with Practice Buddy.

Week 3-4
Contact Team Members.

By August 2020 we envisage significant changes to job retention scheme which will mean revising your plans.

2.-2.3 Reintroduce Team Members Into Practice

Practices need to consider the skill set they will need to deliver the high level of service that our patients have come to expect of us for their individual practice(s). We will need to carefully consider our approach to team members who are expected to return to work after a long period of furlough. Once a proposed rota is in place the next steps will be to contact the relevant team members and inform them of any decisions made. We suggest that this be done by an initial phone call followed up by an email. The email should set out what they will be expected to do once they return into practice for example; watch PPE video, training on different aspects of day to day duties. they can also be reminded about what they need to do if they start to feel unwell and who they can speak to if they have any concerns.

A key element to the success of this approach will be clear communication with staff around expectations and having open discussions about what duties will look like. This should form part of your wider communication strategy with team members.

Example Email:

Dear xxxxxx,

It was great to talk to you today and even better to know that you and your loved ones are all keeping well.

Following on from our conversation I'd like to outline the main points that we discussed;

We look forward to seeing you back into practice on 2nd June 2020.

We want to take great care of you and our px;'s health, so we have implemented the following as measures to protect everyone;

- You will receive a briefing and a demonstration of how to use PPE
- You will be requested to sign a declaration letter to confirm that you are clear of Covid-19
- You will also be asked to sign another letter confirming that you have been briefed and will abide by the new safety measures
- We will have some new ways of working
- We discussed the reasons flexibility will be required
- May need more bullet points depending on what is discussed

Managing a team member(s) to return into the practice will depend on individual practice(s) plan.

Practices should take a pragmatic approach and consider the skill set that will be required to continue to provide a high level of eyecare service based on the social distancing / infection control measures, and clinic demand, whilst keeping a close eye on labour cost.

Remember that individuals who are requested to return into practice have been away from work for quite some time, so their mindset must be taken into consideration. They could be reminded about what they need to do if they start to feel unwell who they can speak to if they have any concerns. Pay particular consideration to those who are in the official 'shielding' categories - our view is that these individuals are likely to be the last group that will return to being physically present on site. The government may even go as far as recommending the period of isolation should continue for longer.

Consider whether these team members can be allocated tasks that can be done from home.

Team members who are reluctant to return

It is our expectation that those who are in the official 'shielding' category will be asked by the government to remain in lockdown for a longer period than the wider workforce. There are those who may fall outside this official category who have concerns about returning to work - perhaps due to their own medical condition or because they are living in a household with someone who is 'shielding' or vulnerable.

This may lead to a situation where the official government advice is that they can return to work but the staff member in question may be reluctant or even refuse to do so. In this case, we would encourage in the first instance to have an open and honest conversation with the team member and listen to any concerns. Try to resolve or reassure them that several safety measures have been put into place. The specific reason for an individual not wanting to return will be important and it may be that the matter can be resolved with some creative thinking, for example:

- Can they work from home for as long as possible and be placed in a group of staff who physically return at a later stage?
- Can they be moved away from high contact duties to those that require less contact, to reduce the risk of infection?
- Can you implement a grouping strategy whereby a team member can work with certain team members in set physical areas so as to keep the same group of individuals together?
- Can any flexible working duties be implemented? In this regard, longer term we anticipate there will be an increase in the number of flexible working requests made and it will be harder to justify rejecting such requests, particularly where a team member has been successfully carrying out their work, flexibly for a period of time.

Key Considerations

Rota planning at the best of times can be quite stressful and in the midst of a pandemic may be even trickier.

Rota Planning

Practice owners may have some understanding about each of their team members personal circumstances. For instance, a team member may be caring for dependents, caring for a vulnerable person, or a personal underlining health issues. It is imperative that you do not discriminate against these individuals and talk to them and explain the rationale behind any decisions made. For those team members that are not re-introduced back into practice you must hold a discussion and confirm in writing that the team member is in agreement with any proposed rota plan. An extension to furlough letter maybe sufficient to confirm they accept decision that has been made.

If in the instance two or more team members request to return to work when only one person is required, you must make notes of their reasons on choosing a particular team member.

Reasons could include.

- Seniority
- Their responsibilities may differ.
- They can perform duties that others may not be able to do.

The majority of practices do have part-time team members therefore you could consider re-introducing more than one team member on a part time basis. Further guidance on short time working can be found in section 3 of this document.

Annual Leave

Team members that are re-introduced into the practice will certainly have accrued annual leave entitlement since the beginning of lockdown, therefore it would be a good idea to discuss pre-planned holidays as soon as possible.

At the start of a team members re-introduction into the business, you can ask them if they have any pre-booked holidays. If the pre-booked holiday(s) do not align with the practice rota, this will open up an opportunity to discuss

various other options such as; reschedule holiday, cancel, or in some cases the company could offer to buy back holidays.

You can decline holiday requests on reasonable grounds or alternatively you could see this as an opportunity to utilize that time to re-introduce other team members back into practice.

The government has announced that annual leave entitlement can be carried forward for upto two years.

Unexpected Leave

Unexpected sickness absence could be one of the top reasons why a person may not be able to come into work. Therefore it is important that when you talk to team members who are still on furlough, they are made aware that the practice is operational and we envisage bringing people back into practice soon as possible.

If a person is feeling unwell they must follow normal sickness absence procedure. In the event that they experience symptoms of Covid-19, government guidelines must be followed. You may consider recalling another team member back into practice.

With restrictions still in place for schools, team members may unexpectedly require time off to care for a dependent. In this instance talk to the team member to understand how long they expect to be out of the business. We will review case by case and a decision will need to be made as to whether another team member should be re-introduced back into practice. Normal policy on company time off to care for dependents will apply.

DOC 1.1.

Team member letter – Continue to remain on Furlough

Practice header

Dear.....

Firstly, thank you for your patience during these uncertain times and agreeing to be placed on furlough to support the business.

On Sunday 10th May 2020 the government announced their intentions of easing lockdown and explained steps which would be taken to get there. Some of our services require close contact with patients and there has been no indication as to when routine examinations for opticians will be relaxed. So, for now, we ask that you remain on furlough.

The government has also announced that furlough will be extended until the end of October 2020. The CJRS will remain in its current state until the end of October 2020. There will be changes to the scheme as of July 2020 and as of yet these details have not been released. We are staying close to the updates and will continue to ensure we are planning appropriately through these challenging times.

As the practice adapts to the situation, there may be a requirement for certain team members to come off furlough temporarily to work before being placed back on to furlough. If this affects you then we will contact you directly. Please do not be offended or concerned if you are not asked to come in to work. The practice is limiting expenditure to protect the business and your jobs for the future. If you are asked to come in to work then please rest assured, we are doing all we can along with guidance from the government and NHSE to ensure that our team is safe and that risks are mitigated.

There is a lot of uncertainty and challenge across the nation right now and it's important that you look after yourself mentally and physically. Hakim Group have set up a series of free webinars from some of the best speakers around the world. You can join in on future talks and watch previous ones at www.strongertogetheroptics.co.uk/webinars

If you are struggling with any aspects of your wellbeing then please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

We will keep you updated with any changes but in the meantime please feel free to contact me at anytime with any questions or concerns.

Stay safe

Name

Practice

3. Alternative considerations

Layoffs and Short Time Working

The current furlough scheme is due to end at the end of October 2020 and as it stands, is also due to be change from July through to October. The UK government are looking for “employer support” and the details of what this actually means is yet to be released. If the furlough funding ends or is insufficient to allow teams to continue to be employed at their normal rate of pay rate then we may be forced to make very tough business decisions.

What are your options if there is a need to temporarily reduce labour cost?

There are 2 options to temporarily reduce the labour costs in practice:

- 1 Lay-offs: This is where a team member is asked not come into work for an agreed period.
- 2 Short-time working: This is where a team member has their hours temporarily reduced for an agreed period.

These options may help avoid redundancies but should still be avoided where possible.

Can I use these options for my team?

To use either approach, it must be either:

- Written into the team members contract
- Agreed for the industry
- Agreed with the team member

Is there a limit to how long I can implement either measure?

In short, no. However, if a team member is put on either measure for 4 or more weeks in a row or 6 or more weeks across a 13 week period then they can apply to you for redundancy. This is covered further on.

Holiday entitlement

Team members continue to accrue holiday in the usual way during lay-offs and short-time working.

Pay during lay-offs and short-time working

Team members who are laid off or put on short-time working are entitled to pay for days they do no work at all. This is called ‘statutory guarantee pay’ and is the legal minimum an employer must pay. Statutory guarantee pay is £30 a day for a maximum of 5 days in any 3-month period. If a team member would usually receive less than £30 per day then this will be paid at their own daily rate.

To be eligible for SGP the team member must:

- Have been employed for a month
- Not refuse any reasonable alternative work
- Reasonably make sure they’re ready for work

What other financial support may be available to my team?

Whilst your team are laid off or on short-time working they may be entitled to Universal Credit or Jobseeker’s Allowance. They can find out more information on the links below:

Universal Credit on GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit>

Jobseeker’s Allowance on GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance>

Can they work elsewhere during this time?

Most of our contracts have a clause which requires the team member to work exclusively for us unless permission is given. Team members may request to apply for alternative jobs during this time to support them financially. This will still be at your discretion and will be on a case by case basis.

Applying for redundancy when on short time working or lay off

If a team member has been on short-working or lay off for 4 or more weeks in a row or 6 or more weeks over a 13-week period then they can apply for redundancy. Once they hand in their request for redundancy you have 7 days in which to respond with a counter-notice. The counter-notice must detail that they will be able to return to their full number

of hours within the next 4 weeks and cannot be laid off or have reduced hours for 13 weeks following. If you cannot commit to this then you will need to accept the redundancy request.

If you do not respond to the application for redundancy within 7 days then the team member can resign and claim redundancy payment from you.

How do I choose who to put on to short-working or lay off?

When selecting team members to not come in to practice, ensure that your decision is based on capability and operational need. You can't discriminate against protected characteristics. These include:

- Age
- Disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership
- pregnancy or maternity
- race (including colour, nationality, ethnic and national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

If you have multiple people in the same role then you may consider spreading the reduction across all of the team members to avoid any risks of discrimination.

Probation period, under 2 years' service and forced retirement

Overview

Any new starter to HG is subject to a 6-month probation period. If any of your team are still on probation then it is sensible to extend their probation period by at least another 3 months. By extending their probation period you have the flexibility to end their contract within this time. Due to furlough you may also not have a full understanding of how they operate and so may be passing them through their probation without fully understanding their capability if they would have been in practice.

Extending a probation period

To extend a probation period you will need to speak to the team member and explain the reasons for the extension and for how long. A fair extension would be the length of time the team member has been out of practice and on furlough. E.g. if the team member has completed 2 months of their probation period and went on furlough on the 1st April, it would be reasonable to extend their probation 4 months after furlough ends. This will be case by case and should a team member be close to the end of their probation period e.g. 5 months, and not have shown any cause for concerns then you may not want to extend their probation period. Ending a probation period.

There may be 2 reason for ending a probation period:

- The team member isn't performing to the standard required
- The practice can no longer sustain the team member's wage

Should you need to end a probation period, you will need to meet with the team member to explain the reasons and follow up the conversation with a letter. The team member will receive one week's notice pay and any outstanding holiday. If a team member is on furlough then you may wish to extend their notice period to the end of furlough as they may struggle to find an alternative income during this time. This may also benefit you as you can enforce they take their holidays during this time. By forcing them to take their holiday during their notice period you will only have to pay 20% of their holiday pay as 80% can be claimed back through the furlough scheme.

Passing a probation

If you have a team member who is due to pass their probation and you are happy with this then contact the team member to let them know and congratulate them. Please follow this up with a letter to confirm.

Under 2 years service

Team members under 2 years service do not have the same employee rights as those over 2 years service. This means that they are not entitled to statutory redundancy and also can't claim against their employer for unfair dismissal.

However, do be aware that if a dismissal is due to the following reasons then a team member is protected from day one:

- Direct or indirect discrimination against a protected characteristic
- Team member has whistle blown
- Team member has exercised a statutory right

If a team member is under 2 years service then any performance issues, conduct or absence can be treated more severely with a quicker process than somebody with over 2 years service. Before starting any process for team members under 2 years service please contact HR@hakimgroup.co.uk.

Early retirement

Being dismissed due to reaching a certain age was abolished from law in 2011 other than for certain industries, of which optics isn't one. This means that you can't dismiss a team member purely because they are near retirement age. If you are in the position where you need to reduce labour costs then you may ask the open question to all the team as to whether anybody would like to discuss the option of early retirement. Be careful not to direct the question to any one person as this may be perceived as discrimination against age. If a team member approaches you to discuss the option of early retirement then you can talk through this with them. You may be able to offer a contribution to their pension or offer them a lump sum payment. The advantage of early retirement is that you can avoid the redundancy process and by them asking you for early retirement, also minimises the risk of any legal recourse.

Redundancy procedure

There will be tough business decisions you will need to make. Making redundancies is one of the hardest parts of running a business. Throughout all the stress, you need to follow strict government guidelines or else risk expensive employment tribunals.

Your practice may only have enough business to require significantly fewer team members. In such a situation, the end of the CJRS may require you to make redundancies. While you need to follow the correct legal process take

any steps you can to support team members through this process.

Redundancy will be tough for many people, especially off the back of a very challenging time. Be very mindful of how you communicate, continue to support them and treat their health and welfare as a priority. You must consult with team members – even if there is no option but to make redundancies – before formally giving notice. This should include the reasons why they are being made redundant.

Government guidance on redundancy consultation is available on the Gov.uk website. Remember that redundant staff are entitled to receive notice (or payment in lieu); holidays and other contractual entitlements. This is a cost your business will have to pay.

Step 1: Establish whether there is a genuine redundancy situation

- Is there a closure of the business for which the team member was employed?
- Is there a closure of the place of business where the team member was employed to work?
- Is there a reduced requirement for team members to carry out work of a particular kind?

Step 2: Consider pool and selection criteria and list any alternative vacancies

- Establish how many redundancies are being proposed.
- Fewer than 20 redundancies are being proposed then it will be necessary to follow a fair procedure in relation to each team member at risk of redundancy.
- Consider the appropriate pool of employees if selection will be necessary.
- Establish a proposed set of objective selection criteria if selection will be necessary.
- Put together a list of alternative vacancies on a group wide basis.

Step 3: First meeting

- Meet with all of the team members who might be made redundant (as a group).
- Explain the reasons for the potential redundancies.

- Explain how many jobs are at risk of being redundant (making sure it is clear that the redundancies are only a possibility at this stage).
- Explain that ways of avoiding the redundancies are being explored (for example, restrictions on recruitment, alternative employment, re-training, taking voluntary early retirement under the pension scheme, voluntary redundancy, short-time working and restricting overtime).
- Ask the team members for suggestions of ways to avoid redundancies.
- Consider asking for volunteers for redundancy.
- Explain the pools and proposed selection criteria (if relevant).
- Explain the right to take time off to seek alternative employment.
- Take a note of the meeting.

Step 4: First letter

- Confirm the information given during the meeting in writing.
- Include a copy of the selection criteria and scoring guidelines if relevant.

Step 5: Collective consultation

- Collective consultation under TULRCA will only be necessary where 20 or more redundancies are being proposed within a 90-day period.
- If necessary, hold elections to elect employee representatives.
- Consult the appropriate representatives (with a view to reaching an agreement) on ways and means of avoiding or reducing dismissals and mitigating their consequences.
- The consultation will usually also cover the appropriate pool(s) for selection and the selection criteria.

Step 6: Collective consultation

- Score each potentially redundant employee using the selection criteria and scoring guidelines.
- Ensure that at least two line managers conduct the scoring, to help ensure scores are objective.

Step 7: Second letter

- Write to those team members that have been provisionally selected for redundancy, inviting them to a meeting to discuss their provisional selection.
- Include an invitation to bring a trade union representative or colleague to the meeting.
- Ensure that the letter is reasonably detailed, setting out the reasons for the redundancy situation and for provisionally selecting the team member for redundancy, and summarising the consultation that has been held with them to date.
- Explain that no final decision has been made at this stage, and that a further meeting will be arranged if their selection for redundancy is confirmed.
- Allow the team member a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before holding the meeting.

Step 8: First individual meeting

- Consult with each team member individually about their scores, the proposal to select them for redundancy and the terms of the redundancy.
- Consider any comments from the employee, particularly in relation to their scores.
- Discuss details of any available alternative roles within the group (including those which would require some retraining and posts on a lower grade).
- Take a detailed note of the meeting.

Step 9: Follow up

- After the meeting, follow up any suggestions made to avoid the redundancies and consider any representations made on scores.
- If any team member's score changes as a result of this process, check if this will result in a change to the group of team members that have been provisionally selected for redundancy.
- If so, repeat the relevant parts of the procedure with any team member that have been selected for redundancy as a result of the review.

Step 10: Second individual meeting

- Where a decision has been made to make a team member redundant, invite them to a further meeting.
- Allow the team member to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.
- Assuming that nothing has changed, confirm that the employee has been selected for redundancy.
- Go through the redundancy package.
- Remind the employee of the right to time off to seek alternative employment.
- Take a detailed note of the meeting.

Step 11: Dismissal letter

- Write to the team member confirming the decision to dismiss them as redundant and specify the termination date (termination may be with immediate effect if the employer is paying the employee in lieu of notice).
- Explain the calculation of the redundancy payment and any other payments to be made.
- Confirm that the team member has the right of appeal. Explain how to appeal and the relevant time limit.

Step 12: Appeal

- If a team member appeals, invite them to attend a further meeting to hear the appeal. If possible, the meeting should be held by someone senior to the person who held the previous meeting(s).
- Allow team members to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.
- Following the meeting, write to the team member confirming the outcome of the appeal and that this is a final decision.

Temporary lay off letter template

Practice header

Dear team member

It is with regret we have to inform you that we are laying off certain team members due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will alleviate the risk of redundancies, due to the financial uncertainty and a steep decline in practice income for the foreseeable future.

Please rest assured that this is only a temporary situation. You will receive Statutory Guarantee Pay during this time and you will accrue holidays during this time.

The date for your lay off begins on the date.....

This period will end on date.....

In the event this date changes, there will be calendar notice of 14 days. All other terms and conditions of your contract remain.

If you have any questions then please get in touch me with on (insert number). We appreciate that this is a time of uncertainty for everybody and would like to thank you for your patience and understanding.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Role

Practice

Reduced working hours template

Practice header

Dear team member

It is with regret we have to inform you that we are reducing the hours of certain team members due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will alleviate the risk of redundancies, due to the financial uncertainty and a steep decline in practice income for the foreseeable future.

Please rest assured that this is only a temporary situation. You will receive Statutory Guarantee Pay for any hours not worked and you will accrue your usual holiday during this time. The date of your reduced hours begins on the date. All other terms and conditions of your contract remain.

Your hours have been reduced from XX to XX.

This period will end on date. In the event this date changes, there will be calendar notice of 14 days.

If you have any questions then please get in touch me with on number. We appreciate that this is a time of uncertainty for everybody and would like to thank you for your patience and understanding.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Role

Practice



PEOPLE - TEAM MEMBER

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

Briefing document from Sharks which will be delivered to team members who are working in a practice, following a phased relaxation of lock down measures, in line with government guidelines:

If the team member has been continuing to work in practice:

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your hard work and contribution during what has been a truly turbulent time and today I would like to brief you on the next steps of our practice trading plan, based on government updates and announcements

If the team member is returning from Furlough:

Welcome back to the practice during your time in Furlough. I appreciate that this has been a truly turbulent time and wasn't the workplace that you left, but today I would like to brief you on the next steps of our practice trading plan, based on government updates and announcements

I want to highlight our key priorities when making decisions based on the government guidelines:

- Make the safety of our patients and team members our primary concern
- Comply with the guidance of our insurers
- Stay up to date with the latest, fast changing guidance on PPE and Infection control

Currently the recognised sources of guidance are FODO, AOP, AOI, College of Optometrists, Public Health England and the NHS. Our priority is to ensure that our patients and our team members operate safely and effectively, whilst understanding when to use PPE and how it should be applied to each situation based on the guidance available

Based on the latest information, we are going to gradually allow patients back into the practice for routine services, but we have had to significantly change our ways of working as a team to ensure we meet the safety parameters. To achieve these standards, we have changed / altered the layout within the practice to meet the minimum social distancing rules of 2 metres which will protect you and our patients. Over time these measures are likely to change and I will continue to keep you updated with any amendments to our trading plan

These are the key headlines I would like to bring to your attention:

- We will be encouraging all team members to wear masks during their time in practice, to reduce the risk of infection
- All patients will also be requested to either bring their own mask, or we will provide one for them before they enter the practice
- We will be either limiting patients one at a time in the practice with a closed door approach, or limiting the number of patients in the practice at any one time based on social distancing measures
- Patients will only be able to access certain areas within the practice and will not be allowed to browse general displays and touch the range of frames. We will provide a selection of frames based on the patient requirements which will be thoroughly cleaned using the materials provided before putting them back on display, ready for the next patient
- Social distancing measures are to be observed across the whole practice and apply to back of house areas
- I want to bring to your attention the internal signage, which is to remind you of importance of preventing the spread of

Covid-19 and to enable you to guide our patients as they come into the practice

- All team members and patients to use hand sanitiser gel or regularly wash their hands for cleanliness
- Team members should not report for work if they are suffering from any symptoms of COVID-19 and should contact their Fish / Shark to notify them in line with the practice absence policy. There are signs in the back of house areas to highlight this
- Regular cleaning and decontamination sessions will be carried out at the end of each trading day throughout the practice and following each patient completing their appointment. This will include the sanitisation of any frames and areas that the patient has been in contact with throughout their time in the practice
- I as the Shark, will ensure that the practice has the appropriate level of PPE for you and our patients and stock will be checked and ordered on a regular basis

You will receive a letter from me today which I would like you to sign to confirm the information that we are sharing with you as well as cover any questions you may have. I'd like to thank you for your ongoing support, whilst reiterating that the health and wellbeing of everyone in the team is at the heart of any decision we make over the coming weeks



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LIFE AFTER LOCKDOWN

HG TEAM MEMBER LETTER

HG notification update - Covid-19

Dear (insert name)

Firstly, welcome back to work or Thank you for your continued support and contribution (please delete as appropriate) at (insert practice name). We are aware that the last few months have been turbulent and unprecedented but the whole HG team appreciates your patience and determination during this difficult period.

The return will not be seamless and we are expecting it will take a long time for us to see some form of normality. While we are truly happy to welcome you back to your place of work, it is not the workplace you left in March and for the foreseeable future there will be much change to how we, and you, service the needs of our (insert patients or practices).

Through all this, I want to assure you that the safety of our patients and our team members remains our primary concern and we are working within the advice provided by our insurers and guiding organisations, whilst staying up to date with the latest information regarding PPE and infection control.

To support your return to work, your Shark or department head will brief you on our approach to the revised trading environment, which is developed to comply with the NHS, College of Optometry, GOC, AOI and HSE best practice guidelines. Rest assured, we will be continuously reviewing our own strict internal standards to protect you, your practice team and our patients.

It will be different, it will be challenging, but we are confident that we can work together through this continuing situation and adapt our ways of working as government updates continue to be shared.

As and when restrictions relax further we will update the briefing documents you have received and communicate clearly with you regarding ongoing expectations.

We are asking you all to sign this confirmation of receipt, acceptance and understanding of the information you have been briefed on, namely;

- Social distancing measures
- Adherence to PPE guidance and decontamination procedures
- Practice trading plan

Together, this is our commitment to work together and do everything we can to ensure we can get back to work and win the fight against this horrible disease.

In signing below you are committing to following, in full, the critical contents of the HSE requirements and our briefing documents and you understand that if you have any queries or are unsure of any aspect you need to ask your Shark or department head before signing below, as this training forms a critical part of your contractual relationship with us as your employer.

Signed: _____
Team member Name

Date: _____

Signed: _____
for Employer

Date: _____



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COVID-19 RETURN TO WORK FORM

_____ **Opticians Limited**
COVID 19 PRE-RETURN TO WORK FORM

Employer and Employee Declaration

I (name), being an Employee of _____ Opticians Limited hereby declare as follows;

- 1 That I have been furnished with this pre return to work form/declaration by my Employer three clear days before my return to work.
- 2 That on the date of my return to work after the COVID 19 emergency (date), that, I to the best of my knowledge and belief have no symptoms of COVID-19.
- 3 I further declare and confirm that the I am not self-isolating or awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.
- 4 That I have accurately and truthfully answered the questionnaire set out at the foot of this declaration and further confirm and declare that if any answer to such questionnaire is “Yes”, that my Employer has strongly advised me to follow the medical advice I have received or, alternatively, to seek medical advice before returning to work.
- 5 I confirm I have been provided with an induction training for all workers by my Employer. This training included, amongst other things, the latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health.
- 6 I have further been advised by my Employer what I, as a worker, must do if I develop symptoms of COVID-19.
- 7 I have been furnished with details by my Employer of how the workplace is reorganized to address the risk from COVID-19 and also given an outline of the COVID-19 response plan, the identification of points of contact from my Employer and the other employees together with certain any other sector specific advice that is relevant to the business of _____ Opticians Limited.
- 8 I have been advised of the arrangements for the putting in place of the necessary controls identified in the risk assessment to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace by my Employer.
- 9 I understand my Employer will be implementing temperature testing in line with Public Health advice. To assist with the return to work, myself and other Employees have been advised that we/I can find details of existing supports and resources in place for businesses/Employees impacted by COVID-19 at: <https://dbej.gov.ie/en/Publications/Supports-for-businesses-COVID-19.html>

QUESTIONNAIRE (please circle)

- 1 Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days? **Yes / No**
- 2 Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days? **Yes / No**
- 3 Are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days (i.e. less than 2m for more than 15 minutes accumulative in 1 day)? **Yes / No**
- 4 Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time? **Yes / No**
- 5 Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time? **Yes / No**

Declared by Employee

Witness: _____

Dated: _____

Declared by Employer

Witness: _____

Dated: _____



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DAILY CHECKLIST FOR PRACTICE SET UP/CLOSE DOWN

To be completed, reviewed and acted upon daily during the team huddle before trading commences

Date: _____

Completed by: _____

Action	Completed
All COVID-19 signage in place	
Inventory check of Infection control materials, wipes, cleaners, disinfectants, tissues, PPE	
All sanitisation stations cleaned and stocked	
All workstations, touch points and cough screens cleaned	
All tools and instruments decontaminated	
All frames cleaned and decontaminated	
Check doors locked and windows open	
No magazines, leaflets or movable marketing accessories displayed	
Team brief on infection control measures to include regular hand washing and decontamination routine	
Check that all team members are healthy with no symptoms of Covid-19	
Team review of social distancing measures, confirm all team members understand how to comply with them	
Check that all social distancing measures are in place, floor markings clear and secure, furniture in place, cough screens fitted (if applicable)	



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PATIENT PRE-SCREENING TELEPHONE CHECKLIST

All patients should be called and spoken to directly the day before their appointment. Please complete the checklist below for each patient and retain as a record in the practice:

Team member: _____

Patient name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Before a patient visits the practice it is important to prepare them for the social distancing and infection control measures that they will encounter to ensure that their visit is as comfortable as possible. Some patients may be nervous or anxious about leaving their homes so knowing what to expect will help to remove uncertainty and demonstrate that you have their wellbeing at heart.

Action	✓
Please call the patient in advance of their face to face appointment	
Introduce yourself and explain why you are calling: Hello (px name), I wanted to give you a call ahead of your appointment tomorrow with the optician	
Explain: Due to COVID-19, we are taking additional measures to reassure and protect patient's health when they come into the practice for their appointment. (outline measures and confirm patient isn't suspect covid-19)	
Explain: You will need to wear a mask during your visit and we will provide one if you forget to bring yours	
Inform: Only one patient is allowed in the practice at a time to allow time for full and thorough disinfection in between Appointments	
Inform: The practice doors will be locked on your arrival and you will be greeted and shown to the waiting area when you enter	
The relevant safety sign will be displayed inside and outside the practice	
Explain: Changes may have been made to the practice layout and the optometrist will be wearing PPE. Where possible we will be abiding by social distancing rules which is 2 metres as advised by the government. You will be assisted when choosing frames by our dispensing team and rest assured everything will be fully sanitised before and after your visit. Sanitiser hand gel will be available in the reception, testing room and practice area. Please use the gel when entering the practice, during and before leaving.	
Confirm their attendance and ask the patient to turn up at least 5 minutes prior to their appointment	

It is vital to ask patients several screening questions about COVID-19 before they visit the practice. We are not able to see any patient who has symptoms of COVID-19 face to face, if they answer YES to any of the following questions, politely explain that we are not able to see them face to face until they have tested negative for COVID-19 or completed the appropriate self isolation period. Arrange an appointment for a telephone appointment with the Optometrist for further investigation and explain that we can still consult with them remotely.

Covid - 19 screening questions	✓
Have you tested positive for COVID-19?	
Do you have a new, continuous cough?	
Do you have a high temperature (37.8C or over)?	
Does anyone in your household have a new, continuous cough or a high temperature?	
If you or anyone in your household has tested positive for coronavirus, are you still in the self/household isolation period?	
Do you have shortness of breath?	
Do you have any unusual/uncharacteristic redness in either/both eyes? (conjunctivitis can be a presenting sign of COVID-19).	
Persistent pain or pressure in the chest?	
New confusion or inability to arouse?	
Bluish lips or face?	

- If the patient passes the Covid-19 screening proceed to book an appointment for a face to face consultation
- If the patient answers yes to any of the questions book a remote consultation and advise the patient to call NHS 111 or speak to their doctor
- Patients and visitors exhibiting signs of being sick should be rescheduled and advised to self-isolate within government guidelines



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CHECKLIST FOR PATIENTS AS THEY ENTER THE PRACTICE

Please complete the following checklist, before the patient is due to enter the practice or at reception area and retain this as a record along with the telephone.

Team member: _____

Patient name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Action	✓
Check whether patient has brought their own mask, or whether they would like one provided to them before entering the practice	
Introduce yourself and role within the practice	
Please invite the patient to clean their hands using the sanitiser gel, before continuing their journey	
Confirm the patient details, including email, phone or mobile number	
If operating in a closed door environment, please remind the patient that their appointment time is up to an hour long	
If the practice is handling more than one patient at a time, ensure they are aware of the social distancing measures in place	
Ask the patient whether there has been any changes to their health, since they were spoken to during their initial telephone call to confirm their appointment - If there has been changes to the health in line with COVID-19 symptoms, then do not progress any further with the appointment and advise the patient accordingly	
Highlight the safety measures in place which were covered during the initial phone call to confirm the appointment, which are being implemented as per the government guidelines in order to protect them. This includes the social distancing measures within the practice and how PPE is being used to support this	
Refer the patient to the relevant safety notices being displayed	
Please confirm with them that the practice and that anything they do touch or handle has been cleaned using disinfectant products	
Following this, show the patient the areas which they can access and how their appointment journey will be conducted	
Explain the frame selection will be aided by our dispensing team and we will take them through the appropriate steps when we come to choose the frames	
Also, please remind them to clean their hands using sanitiser gel when going into the test room and prior to leaving the practice at the end of their appointment	
Make the patient comfortable and ask them to make you aware of any concerns they may have during their appointment	



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LIGHT TOUCH SIGHT TESTS

Light touch sight testing routine

For essential eye examinations or “routine” post lock down with sustained Covid-19 infection in the community.

This document has been compiled to help deliver eye examinations with the need to comply with social distancing and infection control. It is not intended to be prescriptive but to provide a framework for Optometrists to use in conjunction with our key principles of:

- Use professional judgement
- Act in the interest of the public
- Act in good conscience

- 1 PPE to be worn; fresh pair of Gloves (remove after each patient and thorough hand wash); type IIR surgical mask (Sessional); fluid resistant gown (single use)
- 2 Decontamination of slit lamp, trial frame and/or phoropter in front of patient
- 3 Avoid routine pre-screening during lock down or sustained COVID-19 in the community – determine the need for and which test types to use based on patient needs & presenting risk factors
- 4 History and Symptoms to be performed remotely prior to the face to face episode or at 2m
- 5 VA's in current glasses if patient has them or unaided (D/N) + Pinole
- 6 Pupil reactions
- 7 OMB => restrict to quick cover test unless symptoms dictate further investigation.
- 8 Autorefractometry or ret dependent on practitioner preference or start with current Rx if known and quick subjective
- 9 External/Internal Examination at Slit lamp avoid Direct ophthalmoscopy
- 10 If IOP is clinically necessary, use applanation – DO NOT PERFORM NON CONTACT TONOMETRY
- 11 Are Visual fields clinically necessary? If yes, will confrontation suffice?
- 12 Further tests/investigation? (Clinically driven)
- 13 Enter Rx onto system then print and sign copy of patient Rx for the patient
- 14 To reduce time spent at <2m consider using a disposable paper record card to record test results and then transfer the results onto Optix or your PMS after patient has left room, this should be done immediately so that record keeping is contemporaneous
- 15 During three-way handover away, consider the additional volume of talking at 2m and ensure privacy is maintained to ensure GDPR compliance
- 16 Enter remaining clinical details after patient has left the room
- 17 Decontaminate any surface patient has had contact with Plus wipe down the slit lamp cough guard before the next patient enters the room.

Urgent/emergency eye examination

1 to 6 above Plus any additional tests required (In most if not all cases a subjective refraction would not be required).

If you are considering referring a patient, consult your local trust to establish if they are likely to see the patient? If they say not do you feel you are able to manage the patient perhaps with reviews? Or refer the patient to a more highly qualified local colleague or member of the HG central remote team for them to manage?.

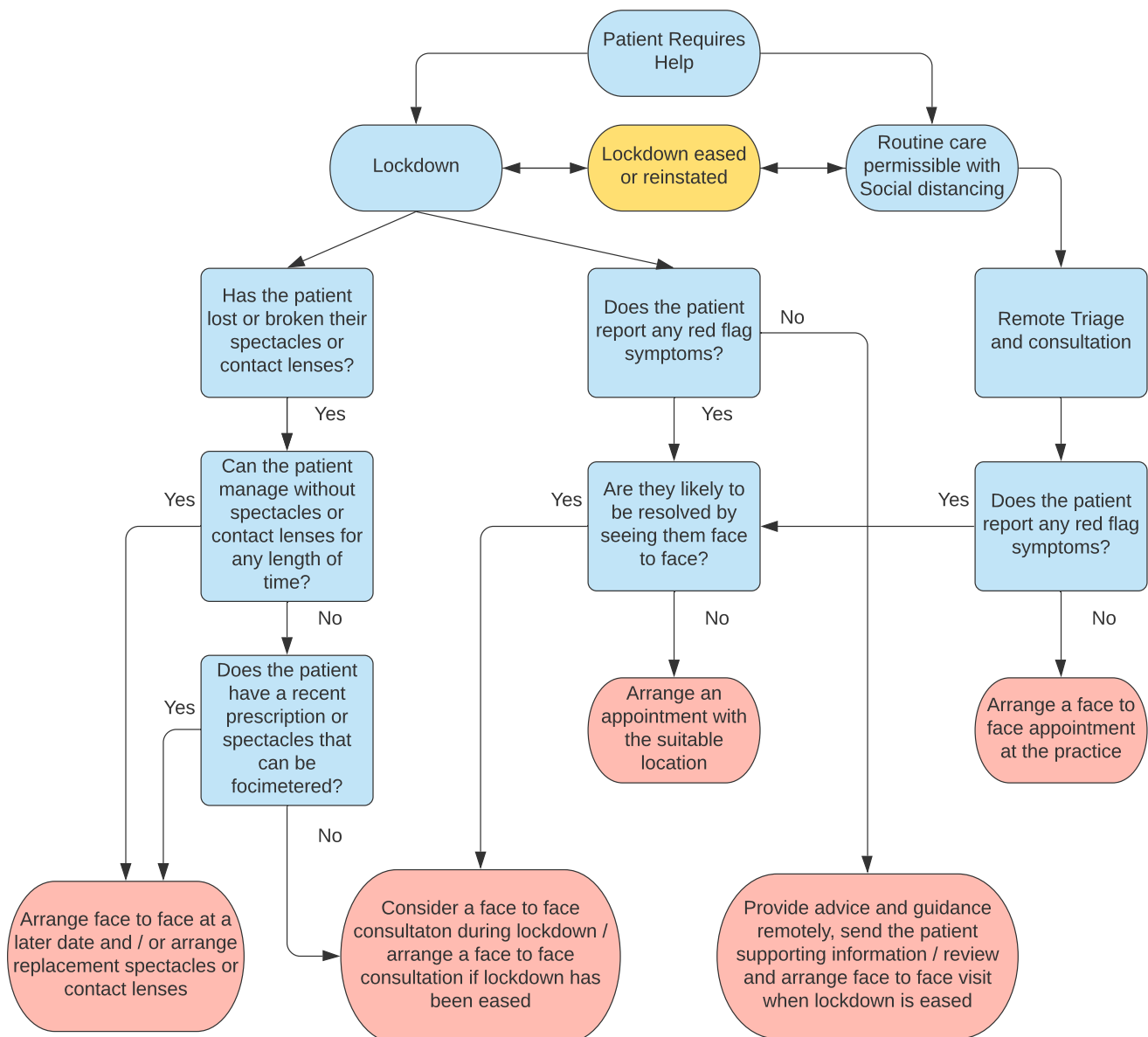
This is based on the latest existing AOP guidance, so this will need to adapt following new measures being agreed.

The first and perhaps most important consideration is whether you need to see the patient at all, or can you help them in another way?.

Life after Lockdown decision making flowchart

Patient Flow Chart - Do I need to see them?

Adapted From AOP guidance





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GUIDE TO HOUSEKEEPING & CLEANING

As part of the new patient journey and government guidance we are advising are practices to conduct the following cleaning exercises:

- An initial deep clean in selected practices if required (ROI). This will include hard and soft furniture and fixtures and fittings and initial deep clean of instruments
- A subsequent shut down cleaning exercise following each trading day in preparation for the next including workstations computer keyboards
- Cleaning between each patient in all patient area's in practice including spectacle frames that have been tried on and credit card machine

Initial Deep Clean

A thorough clean of the whole practice to include a deep clean of the following:

- Floors
- Touchpoints - door handles, grab rails, work surfaces, PDQ machine
- Workstations - keyboards, switches, tools, instruments, worktops
- Hard and soft furnishings (In both customer facing and staff only areas) - chairs, tables, desks, kitchen,
- Fixtures and fittings - Displays, frame bars, surfaces
- Frame stock - all frames
- Instruments - handheld and fixed

End of day cleaning routine

To be complete daily after trading has ceased when the practice is free from patients:

- Floors
- Touchpoints - door handles, grab rails, work surfaces, PDQ machine
- Workstations - keyboards, switches, tools, instruments, worktops
- Hard and soft furnishings (In both customer facing and staff only areas) - chairs, tables, desks, kitchen,
- Frame stock - frames that were handled that day
- Instruments - all chin rests, head rests, cough guards and hand held instruments used that day

New normal customer journey touch point cleaning routine

To be completed after every customer visit and before the next customer is admitted to the premises (unless stated otherwise*):

- Touch points - including PDQ machine and sanitisation stations
- Workstations - wipe down surfaces
- Frame stock - every frame handled during the dispense, *before the patient tries on the frame and before the frame is returned to the display - [See the Dispensing section of the life after lockdown customer journey](#)
- Instruments - chin rests, head rests, cough guards, phoropters, and all handheld instruments used during the consultation. *Wipe contact points before customer touches them and after the consultation has been completed
- Tools and measures - All tools, rulers and pupilometers used during the appointment
- Waiting area and consulting room seating

Cleaning products

There is a current lack of research into surface cleaning for SARS-CoV-2, however, there is some research on other coronaviruses. The following antimicrobial agents have been shown to be effective against other coronaviruses:

Ethanol: Concentration: 70%

Exposure time: One minute

Virus reduction (%): >99.9

Products that contain 70% Ethanol(alcohol) = Clinell Wipes, AZO wipes with 70% IPA

Sodium hypochlorite: Concentration: 0.1%

Exposure time: One minute

Virus reduction (%): >99.9

0.1% Hypochlorite solution can be made using household bleach mixed with water to the correct concentration

For wiping down equipment and frames (as long as they won't damage them) but you must ensure they contain one of the active ingredients in sufficient quantities and that you can get sufficient contact time for the active ingredients to work. Research shows that sodium hypochlorite 0.1% and a solution containing 70% ethanol were effective against other coronaviruses on small surfaces. For larger areas such as floors, 0.5% sodium hypochlorite is advised.

Similar results were obtained for common disinfectant/detergents containing sodium lauryl ether sulphate, alkyl polyglycosides or coco-fatty acid diethanolamide, although they may require a longer contact time (five minutes) to achieve the same results².

Where can I find those chemicals?

Sodium hypochlorite is found in most household bleaches. Therefore, if the household bleach has a 5% concentration to begin with, a 1:50 dilution will give the required concentration of 0.1%. If you require a different concentration or the initial concentration varies you will need to adjust the ratio.

Note: Household bleach will be damaging to some surfaces, in those cases decontamination can be carried out with a household detergent followed by a solution containing at least 70% ethanol.

- Sodium lauryl ether sulphate also known as sodium laureth sulphate is found in many soaps and cleaners
- Alkyl polyglycosides are a class of surfactants also found in cleaning products
- Coco-fatty acid diethanolamide also known as cocamide DEA, or cocamide diethanolamine is also found in soaps

Why do these products work on coronaviruses?

Soaps disrupt the outer lipid layer of the coronavirus, breaking them apart and then trapping any virus fragments allowing them to be rinsed away.

How quickly do they work?

Sodium hypochlorite 0.1%, 0.5% and ethanol 70% were shown to reduce coronavirus activity by a significant amount after one-minute exposure time.

What about soft surfaces such as chairs?

Best practice is to replace soft furnishing with furniture that has hard, easy to clean surfaces. If this is possible do not use a bleach or water based solution to clean soft furnishings as this may give rise to mould growth, or discolouration. Use a 70% alcohol based sanitiser which would be sprayed onto the surface of the seat then lightly wipe over using a clean dry cloth, and allow product to dry.

What should I do in practice?

First you need to check the manufacturer's instructions to make sure the cleaning products won't harm equipment or fixtures and fittings. As you may be using a bleach-based product you will need to consider the effect on the colour of anything cleaned. If in any doubt contact the manufacturer.

To be effective you need to:

- Ensure that the cleaning agents contain ingredients proven to work on coronaviruses, and
- Allow cleaning products sufficient contact time before being wiped away

Wherever possible use a disinfectant/detergent solution followed by either a sodium hypochlorite 0.1% solution or a 70% ethanol solution. However, in some instances that won't be practical or possible:

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends 70% ethanol solutions are used to disinfect reusable equipment between patient uses as long as it is safe to do so. This would apply to headrests, chinrests, handles, trial frames and similar
- The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) recommends a 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution for non-healthcare settings

Evidence suggests that 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution is effective against other coronaviruses. Therefore, in our opinion, 0.1% sodium hypochlorite is sufficient for general cleaning purposes as practices should not be seeing patients with COVID-19.

Can I use antimicrobial wipes?

Yes, for wiping down equipment and frames (as long as they won't damage them) but you must ensure they contain one of the active ingredients in sufficient quantities and that you can get sufficient contact time for the active ingredients to work.

Examples of antimicrobial wipes include:

- Clinell wipes
- AZO wipes with 70% IPA

Any other wipes with a 70% ethanol content should be equally suitable.

Adapted from the AOP

<https://www.aop.org.uk/coronavirus-updates/coronavirus-how-to-disinfect-optical-equipment-and-premises>