



# Long Covid safety-critical roles checklist

Guidance for returning to work, issued by the  
Construction Industry Coronavirus (CICV) Forum

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Long Covid is a condition that, at the time of writing in October 2021, currently affects approximately 60,000 people in the UK – and numbers will inevitably continue to rise as we move through the pandemic.

Sufferers can require practical, medical, and emotional support similar to that already offered by employers for conditions such as cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome (also known as ME) and diabetes.

## What is Long Covid?

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the Royal College of General Practitioners define Long Covid as:

*“Signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with COVID-19 which continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis.”*

It is important to note that it is not necessary for the person to have had a positive test for COVID-19 when they were acutely ill to meet this definition. This is because many of those who are now affected didn't access a test, either because they were unavailable, because their initial symptoms did not meet the COVID-19 definition, or because they chose not to, which is more common among those who cannot afford to self-isolate.

## Long Covid symptoms

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Feeling unwell after exercise
- Respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath, sore throat and persistent cough
- Continuing fever
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Fast heart rate or palpitations
- Neurological problems such as loss of concentration, 'brain fog' or ringing in the ears
- Loss of feeling in extremities.

A recent large study of patients discharged from hospitals in England showed that within 140 days many also developed new diagnoses, including diabetes, heart disease and liver disease.

As some of the symptoms of Long Covid could have an impact on safety-critical roles, it is important to consider any new conditions that may have developed. Health issues or conditions that affect an individual's performance or present a risk of sudden incapacity could have serious consequences

## General recommendations for safety-critical work

It is recommended that a suitable risk assessment of any activity will identify whether it has a safety-critical nature and whether, in the event of worker incapacity, this would likely result in significant harm to the worker performing the task or to another individuals. Safety-critical work (or roles) are defined in the Faculty of Occupational Medicine's *Guidance on alcohol and drug misuse in the workplace* 2006 as:

*“Where the ill health of an individual may compromise their ability to undertake a task defined as safety-critical, thereby posing a significant risk to the health and safety of others.”*

## Construction workers

Within the construction industry, a number of workers are identified as 'safety-critical workers' (SCW). Such employees must not be suffering from medical conditions or be taking medical treatment likely to cause:

- Sudden loss of consciousness
- Impairment of awareness or concentration
- Sudden incapacity
- Impairment of balance or coordination
- Significant limitation of mobility.

## Safety-critical roles

The following roles have been defined as 'safety-critical' in construction:

- Asbestos licensed worker
- Diver
- Geotechnical
- LGV/HGV driver
- Maritime operative (specialist)
- Plant operator
- Scaffolder/rigger
- Slinger/signaller/banksman/traffic marshall
- Steel erector structural/fabricator
- Steeplejack
- Tunnel boring gang
- Roadside (high speed)
- Tunnelling
- Confined space worker
- Working at height, where control measures are not practicable
- Other tasks as identified by the risk assessment process.

# LONG COVID SAFETY-CRITICAL ROLES CHECKLIST



## → The law

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, employers have a duty of care to prevent the ill-health of their workers. This is relevant to those employed in safety-critical tasks.

Allowing a medically unfit employee to perform a safety-critical role could result in breach of certain regulations, such as the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999).

Further information is available here:

<https://bit.ly/Management-HS>

<https://bit.ly/Schedule-3>

## Things to consider

- Return to work meeting, also sometimes called 'return to work interview'.
- Medical clearance before returning to work.

Depending on the job role:

- If the work involves heavy lifting or other exertion, then the individual must have medical checks on their heart and lungs before returning to the task.
- There may be other health checks that are required if the individual is in a safety-critical role.
- If the individual has any pre-existing health conditions that have been aggravated by COVID-19, any previous work restrictions must be reviewed. This includes medicals for previously undisclosed conditions.

## Workers with Long Covid

- Where it is suitable for workers with Long Covid to return to work, any issues relating to Long Covid should be factored into an individual risk assessment.
- Some tasks and or activities may need reasonable adjustments to avoid risk of injury to the worker or others.
- For example, some safety-critical functions may not be appropriate for an individual suffering fatigue or dizziness.

## Further information

- HSE occupational health standards in the construction industry:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr584.pdf>

- Government support for people affected by COVID-19:

<https://www.mygov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19>

- HSE health surveillance, safety-critical medicals and coronavirus (COVID-19):

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/health-surveillance.htm>

- Third Force News (TFN) survey:

<https://tfn.scot/news/scots-more-severely-affected-by-long-covid-survey-finds>

- Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland:

<https://www.chss.org.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-information-and-support/long-covid/>

# LONG COVID SAFETY-CRITICAL ROLES CHECKLIST



| RETURN TO WORK CHECKLIST   |     |    |          |             |
|--|-----|----|----------|-------------|
| 1. Does the employee perform a safety-critical role as defined below? (Tick all that apply)  | Yes | No | Comments | Referral to |
| Asbestos licensed worker   |     |    |          |             |
| Diver  |     |    |          |             |
| Geotechnical   |     |    |          |             |
| LGV/HGV driver   |     |    |          |             |
| Maritime operative (specialist)  |     |    |          |             |
| Plant operator   |     |    |          |             |
| Scaffolder/rigger  |     |    |          |             |
| Slinger/signaller/banksman/traffic marshall  |     |    |          |             |
| Steel erector structural/fabricator  |     |    |          |             |
| Steeplejack  |     |    |          |             |
| Tunnel boring gang   |     |    |          |             |
| Roadside (high speed)  |     |    |          |             |
| Tunnelling   |     |    |          |             |
| Confined space worker  |     |    |          |             |
| Working at height, where control measures are not practicable                                |     |    |          |             |
| 2. Does the individual perform any other safety-critical task as defined by risk assessment? |     |    |          |             |



# LONG COVID SAFETY-CRITICAL ROLES CHECKLIST (cont.)



## RETURN TO WORK CHECKLIST

| 3. Is the individual suffering from any of the Long Covid symptoms listed below? (Tick all that apply) | Yes | No | Comments | Referral to |
|--|-----|----|----------|-------------|
| Fatigue  |     |    |          |             |
| Headache   |     |    |          |             |
| Feeling unwell after exercise  |     |    |          |             |
| Respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath, sore throat, and persistent cough                    |     |    |          |             |
| Continuing fever   |     |    |          |             |
| Gastrointestinal problems  |     |    |          |             |
| Fast heart rate or palpitations  |     |    |          |             |
| Neurological problems such as loss of concentration, 'brain fog' or ringing in the ears                |     |    |          |             |
| Loss of feeling in extremities   |     |    |          |             |
| Dizzy spells   |     |    |          |             |
| Ongoing loss of smell and taste  |     |    |          |             |
| <b>List here any other symptoms not mentioned above</b>  |     |    |          |             |



# LONG COVID SAFETY-CRITICAL ROLES CHECKLIST



## RETURN TO WORK CHECKLIST

|   | Yes | No | Comments | Referral to |
|---|-----|----|----------|-------------|
| 4. Could any of the Long Covid symptoms impact the individual's ability to perform the role/task safely?  |     |    |          |             |
| 5. How does the employee feel their symptoms may affect the work/task they are doing?   |     |    |          |             |
| 6. If performing a safety-critical role, has the individual reported any new medical conditions as a result of a COVID-19 infection likely to affect their ability to perform their role safely and without risk to others? |     |    |          |             |
| 7. Is it necessary to repeat the safety-critical medical due to new medical conditions being declared?  |     |    |          |             |
| 8. What reasonable adjustments will be required to allow individual back to work?   |     |    |          |             |

### DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the responses provided above are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE AND DATE

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE AND DATE

Please note: The information on this form will be maintained as confidential. Any questions should be directed to your manager or human resources representative.

## CICV Forum members



## Further information



[www.cicvforum.co.uk](http://www.cicvforum.co.uk)



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