1 Introduction

1.1 This risk assessment outlines the health and safety risks we have identified within our organisation consequent upon the Covid-19 pandemic only. Our arrangements and measures to control and manage those risks and key issues to be addressed are contained in our separate Health and Safety Policy to which reference should be made. This risk assessment forms part of that Policy.

The risks are assessed based on the office being fully open as normal, as opposed to the current scenario which is that the office is closed to clients and visitors and access to the office for employees is supervised by a Board Member attending daily in rotation.

The “office” consists of:-
a) a large unit 1 with a capacity of about 80 people, with a semi-separate kitchen/dining/break out area, male toilets, female toilets, a client/visitor reception area with two toilets off the reception area, four smaller interview rooms and four larger interview rooms.
b) A smaller unit 2 which has a capacity of about 40 people, with an integral kitchen/dining/break out area, three toilets and a large Board room.
c) The office is open from 8.45 to 5.30 Monday to Friday and not open at the weekend.
d) The office is cleaned daily in the evening by outside contractors.
e) The air conditioning systems in each unit do not recycle air.

The risk assessment has been prepared by a Board Members’ sub-committee comprising Malcolm Thomas, Jon Wilby and Mark Moseley and with reference to current government guidelines.

2 Responsibility

2.1 The person with overall responsibility for this risk assessment is Mark Moseley.
2.2 Individual delegated responsibilities for particular health and safety issues are documented in the Health and Safety Policy.
2.3 The sub-committee will conduct frequent reviews of this risk assessment to ensure it remains effective. Records Covid-19 risk reviews will be maintained and documented in our health and safety annual review record by Mark Moseley and any necessary amendments will be made to the health and safety plan as appropriate.
2.4 All members of staff in the firm have a role to play in complying with health and safety obligations and are encouraged to make further suggestions in relation to measures we could undertake. If a member of staff has a suggestion, they should contact Mark Moseley.
2.5 We are fully committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with that commitment, in accordance with our whistleblowing policy, we actively encourage all of our staff members, who have serious concerns over any real or perceived health and safety issues, to voice those concerns openly. Our whistleblowing policy can be found on the Intranet under “Policies”. Staff may contact any Board member or HR (anonymously if preferred) express their concerns or use the HSE form available at https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm or by telephone on 0300 003 1647.
3 Location and access

3.1 The master copy of this document is located with Mark Moseley. Copies are available from him and a copy will be placed on the Intranet.

4 Communication

4.1 A copy of this risk assessment will be provided to all staff.

4.2 The risks identified by this risk assessment will be addressed by specific measures to be documented and communicated to all staff.

4.3 The risk assessment committee has consulted with the Health & Safety representative (Kelly Hennel) when preparing this risk assessment.

5 Reporting

5.1 Any incidents of exposure to coronavirus in the workplace will be reported to HSE under the RIDDOR Reporting of Covid-19 requirements.

6 Assessment

The identified risk:
Transmission of virus

a) Between employee to employee
b) Between employee and client
c) Between employee and visitor

This could cause harm to the infected person and cause a further spread of the disease which could cause harm to the family of staff and others (and may cause harm to the business if the offices became “infected”). The potential impact of infection on individuals, especially vulnerable individuals and their families and to wider society is high and there is a medium likelihood of the risk occurring. The overall risk level is high.

Particular transmission risks:-

It is known that the virus can be passed on through the air and by touching infected surfaces and thereafter touching faces and that the duration of exposure increases risk of infection. Therefore the particular risks are:-

i) Physical contact between employees, clients and visitors
ii) Passing objects (ie envelopes, files etc) between employees, clients and visitors
iii) Employees, clients and visitors touching surfaces (ie furniture, door handles, kitchen utensils, fridges, copiers, taps, keyboards, calculators, pens, stationery,
iv) Employees, clients and visitors being in close proximity, ie in the same room for short periods of time, or further away for longer periods of time.

v) Employees working face to face with each other for extended periods of time.

vi) Some employees, who have already been identified will be extremely vulnerable or vulnerable to the effects of the virus.

What should we do about this risk?
The government guidelines are that it is important for businesses to carry on whilst playing their part in preventing the spread of the virus. All employees should be encouraged to work from home unless it is impossible for them to do so. It is likely that most lawyers will continue to work from home and that there will be a reduced need for secretarial and administrative support (most secretaries and administrative persons cannot work from home).

Accordingly, we have produced a set of measures designed to reduce and mitigate these risks. Those measures (current V1 18.5.2020) will be issued to all staff and kept under review. They form part of this risk assessment and therefore part of the mandatory Health & Safety Policy which is enforceable by disciplinary action if necessary. We have had regard to current Government Guidelines and in particular the document Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres Guidance for employers, employees and the self-employed dated 11 May 2020. As such, we have considered all aspects of the physical layout of our offices and our regular activities including the following specific issues:

1) Managing the risk
2) Who should be in the office.
3) Social distancing at work (arriving, leaving, work stations, meetings & moving around the office)
4) Managing clients and visitors.
5) Cleaning
6) PPE
7) Supervision
8) Post & deliveries.

18 May 2020