

Advice for employers on Coronavirus (COVID-19)



As the global spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues, the impact on the workplace is likely to increase. There are considerations as an employer and also a duty of care to employees that is required in light of this outbreak. The Government has also announced a number of remuneration packages to support employers during this time. [Click here for current Budget advice.](#) Below are a number of key points to be aware of:

GENERAL GOOD PRACTICE

1. Communication – be transparent with all your staff about the steps you are taking to ensure their safety and reduce the risk of exposure to the Coronavirus in the workplace.
2. Ensure all employee contact details and emergency numbers are up to date.
3. Ensure all line managers are aware of any relevant policies and procedures in case their staff are affected, such as sickness absence reporting procedure, sick pay policy etc.
4. Encourage employees to follow recommended good hygiene practices e.g. use of sanitising hand gel, appropriate use and disposal of tissues etc. and ensure you have good supplies of all items.
5. Where practicable to do so, support your workforce to stay at least 2 metres (about 3 steps), away from other staff.
6. Consider company travel arrangements and assess the priority/risk of any travel to affected countries.

ADVICE WHEN DEALING WITH INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES

- Latest government guidance now states
 - if you live alone and you have symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started;
 - if you live with others and you are the first in the household to have symptoms of coronavirus, then you must stay at home for 7 days, but all other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill;
 - for anyone else in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14 day isolation period. Please see link below right for fuller guidance.
- All employees should notify their employer as soon as possible if they are unable to attend work. Your normal policy on sick leave and pay entitlements will apply.
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be available for eligible individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 or those who are unable to work because they are self-isolating in line with Government advice.
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be payable from **day 1** instead of day 4 for affected individuals if the employee has to self-isolate for **14 days from when the symptoms start.**
- Employees are able to self-certify in the usual way that they have COVID-19 symptoms rather than visiting a doctor.

Unfortunately, because the guidance is being issued very quickly in response to the changing situation, there are many scenarios that have not been anticipated and where the correct course of action is not clear. Conflicting guidance is springing up on-line even between reputable sources. We have reviewed some of the guidance available and have taken the view that it is prudent to follow the detailed guidance published by Lewis Silkin solicitors who are referenced as a source by the House of Commons own online resource. They are updating their Employer FAQ file regularly which can be downloaded here - <https://www.lewissilkin.com/en/insights/coronavirus-faqs-for-employers>

ADVICE WHEN DEALING WITH BUSINESS-WIDE IMPACT

The government is now encouraging home working where possible so it is even more important to get your plans for that in place if you have not already adopted home working. Employers should ensure:

- Their applicable policies and procedures have been reviewed and up to date.
- All staff are aware of the procedures.
- All staff are aware of the communication channels if the workplace has to close, and all employee contact details are correct.
- Be mindful of the issues surrounding home working – if you have not got one – look to issue a specific home working policy. This will need to be tailored to your organisation but we have a template available that you are welcome to have – please email contingency@peopletime.co.uk to request a copy.

REMEMBER

- To maintain normal health and safety hygiene practices for your staff e.g. having anti-bacterial soap available in all washroom facilities.
- Tell all your staff BEFORE you need to apply your policies so they are all aware what the organisation's approach is.
- Record every decision and action taken so you have an audit trail of everything you've done.

USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-employees-employers-and-businesses>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

<https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

Important: Please note this is general guidance which we hope will be useful to you, however the coronavirus situation is evolving so you should be sure to follow the latest health advice given by the Government. Further, every organisation is different so it should not be treated as HR/legal/medical advice on your particular organisations circumstances.

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