

Keeping your workforce safe

We have all heard about the dreaded COVID-19 and for almost everyone this crisis has had a significant impact on their daily lives either personally, at work, or both.

Whilst the restrictions imposed by the UK Government are still very much in force having recently been extended, some companies are looking at ways to ensure that they can maintain operations for its clients in line with the guidance whilst most importantly at the same time ensuring the safety and health of its employees in the process.

What must employers do?

All companies have a legal obligation under law to ensure the safety and health of all persons working for the organisation, or who otherwise may be affected by its operations, whether this is within the workplace or external environment. This also takes into consideration external factors such as COVID-19 or other such diseases or conditions.

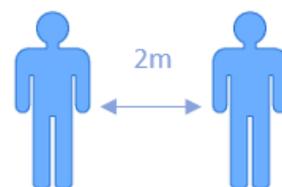
Employers also have a moral obligation and duty of care to look after their staff whilst at the same time adhering to the instruction and advice given by the British Government.

What measures should be taken within the workplace?

As companies start to look at options for remobilising staff into the workplace, everyone should be looking primarily at whether there is a need to have people in the office at all, or whether home working could, with some potential policy changes, extend beyond the lockdown period.

Where this is not possible, employers should ensure they consider the following measures (by no means exclusive list):

- Smaller numbers of staff within the office at any one time, stagger working times or utilise other areas of the office/building such as redundant meeting rooms or other suitable swing space.
- Enforce and maintain social distancing – make sure that workstations are separated, stagger break times or access to welfare areas and toilets – this may mean creating unisex facilities (noting The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 will still apply). Provide general posters throughout the workplace to continually promote the 2m rule especially tighter areas such as corridors & stairs.
- Encourage and promote good hygiene – provide plenty of antibacterial hand gels, cleaning products, antibacterial sprays & wipe for staff to use. Affix posters around the workplace in prominent and suitable locations to continually promote the importance of good hygiene throughout the work environment.
- Ventilation - make sure that the workplace has good fresh air ventilation.
- Increase the cleaning regime for the workplace.
- Remind everyone that if they have flu-like symptoms that they should return home immediately, advising their line manager as necessary if they are at work. If they are home, they must not come into work.
- Brief all staff regularly on any developments or changes in the official guidance.



What else should be considered?

Before you allow persons back into the office or workplace after a period of absence employers should also consider:

- Are fire safety systems & alarms in working order and have they been tested?
- Has anything about the work which employees undertake changed – i.e. is there more scope for extending remote working opportunities for some staff meaning an increase in Lone Working?
- Are water systems safe i.e. flushed through to prevent risk from bacterial hazards such as Legionnaires disease?
- Emergency planning – Many business continuities plans (BCP's) have been tested to their limits with the latest crisis. This is a perfect opportunity to review the BCP for effectiveness, and implement any lessons learnt so that should this re-escalate or another similar event occur, your business is more than well prepared.
- Arrange for increased cleaning regimes especially if this requires external contractors.

What if someone has had or is suspected to have COVID-19 in the workplace?

If someone has flu-like symptoms at work, they should advise their line manager and return home immediately avoiding contact with anyone else. If anyone has been in contact with anyone who has COVID-19 or other flu like symptoms they should self-isolate for 14 days.

Ensure that any areas of the office that anyone with flu like symptoms has touched or been into is appropriately cleaned and disinfected.

How can Shore help?



Shore are experienced & professional Health & Safety Consultants with decades of experience between the team. We can offer bespoke practical advice on how to comply with the current COVID-19 restrictions and discuss how they apply to your specific business or workplace, and help you to find sensible ways of keeping everyone safe.

Shore can provide advice and guidance on the following:

- Employee wellbeing during lockdown
- Managing your workers
- Preventative Measures
- Emergency Planning advice

Whilst we are all still working from home, the whole team at Shore are still fully contactable via the wonders of modern technology.

Please contact us on 01206 230820 or info@wemakeshore.co.uk for a chat or to see how we can help.

Further Information

- World Health Organisation - www.who.int
- UK Government - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Health & Safety Executive - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>
- Institution of Occupational Safety & Health – www.iosh.com