



CORONAVIRUS: ADVICE TO EMPLOYERS

WHAT IS THE CORONAVIRUS

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as MERS-CoV and SARS (CoV). COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan City, in Hubei province, China in January 2020.

The incubation period of COVID-19 is between 2 to 14 days. This means that if a person remains well 14 days after contact with someone with confirmed coronavirus, they have not been infected.

COMMON SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

The following symptoms may develop within 14 days of exposure to someone who has COVID-19:

- Cough
- Difficulty in breathing
- Fever

COVID-19 can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

HOW COVID-19 IS SPREAD AND PREVENTION OF THIS

From current knowledge of other coronaviruses, COVID-19 is mostly likely to spread when there is close contact (within 2 metres or less) with an infected person.

Respiratory secretions produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes containing the virus are most likely to be the main means of transmission. It is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes (for example touching a door knob or shaking hands then touching their own face).

Public Health England recommends that the following precautions be taken to help prevent people catching and spreading COVID-19:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in the bin straight away.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touches objects and surfaces.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.



WHAT TO DO IF A MEMBER OF STAFF OR THE PUBLIC WITH A CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19 HAS BEEN IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Current guidance is that closure of the workplace is **not** recommended.

Employers should be contacted by the local PHE Health Protection Team to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.

A risk assessment will be undertaken by the Health Protection Team and advice to the management of staff and general public will then be based on this assessment.

The Health Protection Team will also provide advice to anyone who:

- Has been in close fact-to-face or touching contact with the employee with the confirmed case.
- Has talked with or been coughed on for any length of time while the employee was symptomatic.
- Has cleaned up any bodily fluids.
- Is in close friendship groups or workgroups with the employee.
- Any other employee living in the same household as the employee with the confirmed case.

Staff who have not had close contact with the original confirmed case do not need to take any precautions and can continue to attend work.

GUIDANCE & LATEST UPDATES ON SELF-ISOLATION

NEW REGULATIONS

Subject to eligibility requirements, employees who are required to self-isolate (and cannot work from home) are to receive statutory sick pay in accordance with government regulations.

- The current rate for statutory sick pay is £94.25 per week
- To qualify for SSP you must:
 - be classed as an employee of the Company
 - earn an average of at least £118 per week

***Please note that the government has not yet introduced the regulations to confirm that employees shall be entitled to SSP from day 1 in cases of self-isolation due to COVID-19. It is anticipated however that this will be introduced imminently.*

***In the budget announcement, it was also confirmed that employers with less than 250 employees will be reimbursed by the government for any statutory sick pay they pay to their employees for the first 14 days of sickness absence where this is due to COVID-19. This scheme again has not yet been implemented however it is anticipated that it will come into after the day after the regulations day 1 SSP eligibility (outlined above) come into force.*



EMPLOYEES WITH POTENTIAL EXPOSURE BUT NO SYMPTOMS

Any employee who has been exposed to a confirmed case however is not presenting symptoms must self-isolate for 14 days as this represents the potential incubation period.

They should inform their line manager as per the Company absence policy.

EMPLOYEES WITH SYMPTOMS

Employees who are presenting any symptoms of COVID-19, however mild, are required to self-isolate for 7 days from when the symptoms start. There is no requirement to call NHS111 to go into self-isolation. If symptoms persist past 7 days, employees should contact NHS111 online at 111.nhs.uk for further guidance.

Subject to eligibility requirements, employees who are required to self-isolate (and cannot work from home) are to receive statutory sick pay in accordance with government regulations.

Please refer to the below link for guidance on arrangements for staying at home:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO SELF-ISOLATE HOWEVER HAVE NOT SPECIFICALLY BEEN ADVISED TO AND HAVE NO SYMPTOMS

Employees who voluntarily self-isolate without symptoms, and without the Company's agreement, could take paid or unpaid leave, although this will depend on the precise circumstances.

Employees should be requested to follow normal absence reporting procedures and communicate with the Company accordingly.

EMPLOYEES WHO RESIST SELF-ISOLATION

Employees that are refusing to self-isolate may have to be placed on medical suspension.

If the Company reasonably believes that an employee may be suffering from Coronavirus, they may be reported to the relevant authorities to enforce isolation in accordance with government regulations and guidance. If it was confirmed that the employee is suffering from Coronavirus, any pay issued in excess of the entitled sick pay whilst on medical suspension may be recouped accordingly.

*****Please note that the above may be subject to contractual provisions. We strongly advise that you contact CG Professional for further advice in relation to this prior to taking such action.***



SUGGESTED ACTIONS AND STRATEGY

- Implement an internal communication strategy so that employees are aware of the measure that are being taken to manage the situation
- Keep up to date with Government & public health guidance – provide updates to senior management when new guidance is issued
- Keep employees well informed of latest development and advice (issue the CG Employee Guide as a memo to all staff)
- Promote working from home where possible. It has been reported that up to a fifth of the UK's workforce could be off sick during the peak of the coronavirus outbreak. If an employee's role allows for home-working then this should be accommodated accordingly.
- Reduce the spread of infection by providing soap and hand sanitiser gels, especially in communal areas like kitchens and coffee areas. Provide staff with hand sanitisers. Think about frequent wiping down of communal spaces such as kitchens, handrails on stairs, lift buttons, door handles, etc.
- Increase the frequency and intensity of office clearing, consider a deep clean.
- Consider if there any employees that may be deemed to be at a higher risk i.e. any with pre-existing health conditions, weakened immune systems, the elderly and pregnant employees. It may be appropriate to speak with them individually to address any concerns they may have and what they Company may be able to do to assist e.g. work from home.
- Consider Company policy on hand-shaking.
- Develop a flexible resourcing plan e.g. provide additional training in critical areas and/or client-facing roles; zero hours bank if the business suffers staffing shortages
- Implement Working Time Regulations 1998 directives to ensure compliance if employees are requested to work longer hours to cover during increased periods of sickness absence
- Have plans to operate on a skeleton crew:
 - identify key services and roles that are essential and cannot be put on hold;
 - identify those individuals and managers who have transferrable skills, who can fulfil more than function and could be allocated to more essential roles.

For Further Guidance Visit : cgproffesional.co.uk