

Can People Still Go to Work in the UK?

Yesterday evening, the UK Government announced unprecedented restrictions to day-to-day life in a bid to combat the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic in the UK. These included severe restrictions on movement which will impact on people's ability to work where they are not working from home.

The Prime Minister directed that individuals are now only allowed to leave their home (1) to shop for basic necessities, (2) for one form of exercise a day, (3) for any medical need or to help a vulnerable person and (4) "travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home".

This was unclear as to whether it is the work that needed to be essential, or the travel. The Government has since published guidance - "New rules on staying at home and away from others" – [here](#) – which refines the position slightly so that:

...individuals can leave their home for "travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home".

For the time being at least, this indicates that employees can go to work (regardless of what that work is) if their work "absolutely cannot be done from home". This position was confirmed by the Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, this afternoon.

Employers should therefore decide whether there is any way their employees can possibly work from home and act accordingly.

Many businesses – such as non-essential shops, restaurants, cafes, leisure centres, libraries, indoor and outdoor leisure facilities and hotels (excluding for permanent residents and/or key workers) - have been forced to close their premises already so there is no question of most of their employees going to work for now.

There is also growing pressure to keep public transport – especially in London – clear for use by key workers. This is currently encouraged but to date non-key workers have not

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been banned from public transport. They are however strongly encouraged not to use it, which may create problems for non-key workers trying to get to work.

Where staff to still go to work, social distancing will need to be enforced (e.g. keeping at least 2m apart from other people) – as always, employers have a duty to protect the health and safety of their employees.

The Government will review its measures in three weeks but it must be likely that they will be refined and/or extended before then.

For further information, please contact [Bob Cordran](#) or [Natalie Taylor](#).

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