

COVID-19 - Help For UK Employers

The COVID-19 pandemic is understandably a cause of significant worry for UK employers, who face the real possibility of large parts of the workforce being absent from work over the coming weeks. As part of the UK Government's response to the growing threat from the virus, it has announced measures to support employers, focusing on statutory sick pay ("SSP"):

1. SSP will be payable to individuals who are eligible and asked to self-isolate, even if they are not showing symptoms.
2. SSP will be payable from the first day of COVID-19 related sickness absence rather than there being an initial three day unpaid period.
3. For businesses with fewer than 250 employees, the cost of providing 14 days of SSP per employee will be refunded by the government in full for any employee who has claimed SSP as a result of COVID-19.

The government has also announced that anyone with a "new, continuous" cough or high temperature is to self-isolate – that is, stay at home, for seven days. This will inevitably increase sickness absences.

It is very likely that further measures will be announced as the epidemic in the UK progresses. These may include encouraging employees to work from home. It would be prudent to ensure that home-working systems and policies are fit for purpose now so that disruption to business can be reduced as far as possible.

These measures are in addition to the normal obligations to safeguard employees' health and safety and employers should already be taking appropriate steps to protect employees from the harm of the virus. These will vary from employer to employer but could include encouraging home-working, providing hand gel and disinfectant wipes for work equipment, allowing staff to stagger their commute times, limiting business travel, circulating up-to-date government guidance as and when it is issued and limiting unnecessary close contact between colleagues and visitors.

Related Capabilities

- Labor & Employment
- Labor & Employment Guides

The COVID-19 situation is ever evolving and employers should keep abreast of the UK Government's advice, which is likely to change over the coming days and weeks.

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