RETURNING TO WORK

INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

THE INSURANCE CENTRE

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RETURNING TO WORK

Now that the majority of the country has been in lockdown for a number of weeks, we are starting to see the number of new cases of COVID-19 fall. While the government has indicated that some form of social distancing is likely to remain in place until a vaccine is developed, we may see an easing of lockdown measures for certain sectors over the coming weeks to enable businesses to begin trading again.

As your broker, we appreciate that alongside the risk management and insurance advice you usually require from us, we can also offer guidance on the practical side of mobilising your workforce once again. To enable you to create a plan that prioritises the health and wellbeing of your people, customers, and suppliers, we have compiled a range of useful links and helpful pointers in the following document.

As always, should you require any further assistance please get in touch with a member of our team.

AS YOUR FIRST PORT OF CALL, PLEASE REFER TO THE LATEST GUIDANCE FROM THE AUTHORITIES

- The UK government
- Health & Safety England
- The Scottish government
- The Welsh government
- Northern Ireland Direct

Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy

This document describes the progress the UK has made to date in tackling the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and sets out the plans for moving to the next phase of its response to the virus. **Click here** to read the recovery strategy.

Staying alert and safe (social distancing)

Click here to read more on which businesses are required by law to remain closed to the public.

Staying safe outside your home

The following guidance may be updated following the Government's consultation with relevant sectors, industry bodies, local authorities, trades unions, the Health and Safety Executive and Public Health England. **Click here** to find out more.

FIVE KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FIRST

The following pointers should help you to form an initial plan for your particular business needs. Carefully consider each step and fully document your plan by completing a risk assessment.

1. How do you anticipate your business will operate in the short, medium and longer term?

2. What are the key operations needed in the initial opening, and then operating phase?

3. How will you manage social distancing?

4. How will cleaning – initial and ongoing – be managed?

5. How will you manage general and respiratory hygiene in the workplace?

REASSURING EMPLOYEES' CONCERNS AND MEETING THEIR NEW NEEDS

The lockdown period will have created a number of challenges for your people, which need to be considered as part of your re-opening process. Potential issues include:

- Mental health issues such as anxiety or depression
- Fear or apprehension about catching the virus, particularly where there are underlying conditions such as Asthma or other vulnerabilities
- Where an employee has to be shielded or where someone else in their household is being shielded for 12 weeks
- Childcare or other care issues

You should consider how to put appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure any needs such as these are catered for, and anticipate that certain members of staff may be unable to return to work as a result of these challenges.

One option to reassure your people might be to implement a Code of Conduct which sets out what the business will do to protect employees (such as cleaning, hygiene and distancing) and what employees can do in return to help their employer.

IMPLEMENTING A PHASED RETURN

Limiting the number of employees on site will help you to adhere to social distancing rules.

• Can employees work a shift system or staggered working? This can help to avoid rush hour and staff overlaps

• As far as possible, arrange staff into cohorts so that where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same individuals

• Can certain employees work from home?

• Can certain processes be modified to avoid contact between staff?

CLEAR COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Your People

Be clear in your communication to employees and remain in regular contact to update them on next steps and answer any concerns. Keep promoting the message that people need to stay at home even if they have only mild symptoms of COVID-19. Display posters with this message in your workplaces. Combine this with other communication channels commonly used in your organisation or business.

Your suppliers and contractors

Speak to your suppliers, including materials, maintenance, inspection, cleaning, etc. to ensure materials and services are available before opening to ascertain their position. Discussions on procedures and risk should provide a consensus. Any measures will need to be flexible in the short, medium and long term.

Your customers

Signage may need to be considered, such as floor markings to facilitate compliance with the two-metre rule. This includes entry points to buildings, toilets and communal break areas where queues may form.

HYGIENE AND CLEANING CHECKLIST

• Deep cleans of all areas and facilities, including heating, air conditioning, etc. should be undertaken

• Following the initial deep clean, a regular cleaning regime will need to be developed. Cleaning desks, workstations and surfaces before and after work should be a minimum and this may need to be extended to include cleaning throughout the working day, between shifts etc

• In areas such as kitchens, staff canteens, etc. special considerations may be needed in terms of hygiene and cleaning

• Ensure that waste management has been reviewed. Measures for managing potentially contaminated waste will need to be considered

PRACTICAL MEASURES CHECKLIST

Remember to test:

• Ensure that legionella testing etc has been completed and that investigations have been completed for the presence of pests (rats for example)

• Ensure the fire safety and security equipment has been tested (sprinklers, alarms, emergency lighting, extinguishers, access control systems, etc) and are in working order. In addition, you should ensure that the service providers have been given notice of any changes to procedures put in place during the lockdown phase

Remember to review:

• Your site and facilities layout, this may need to change due to social distancing rules

• Your risk assessments to ensure they reflect the new way of operating, this should include your Fire Risk Assessment, General Assessments, Manual Handling, DSE, PPE, COSHH, RIDDOR, etc.

• Business travel and site visit policies and procedures

• Emergency planning procedures – fire, first aid, etc. to ensure there is appropriate cover in line with your assessments

• Any insurance warranties or conditions to ensure you comply. For example:

  • Alarm and other security conditions – is your alarm company able to monitor and respond to your alarm system?

  • Unattended machinery or processes conditions – do you have enough staff to operate machinery correctly, or are they operating unattended?

  • Heat Application Warranties – are you able to re-visit sites to check that use of heat has not caused an issue?

  • Waste Removal Warranties – are contractors able to remove waste from your site?

ALL EMPLOYERS MUST CARRY OUT A COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

There are interactive tools on the Health and Safety Executive website Interactive Tools (HSE) to assist you in doing so. If you have fewer than 5 workers, you do not have to have a written risk assessment.

Employers have a duty to consult with their employees on health and safety and it is normal practice to discuss measures you propose to manage the risks from COVID-19. Your employees are often best placed to understand the workplace risks and have a view on how to work safely.

You should share the results of your risk assessment with your employees. If you have 50 plus employees, you are expected to publish it on your website. You must display the linked notice in your workplace to show you have followed government guidance Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020.

It is important to ensure that both managers and employees receive training as to any new procedures and protocols that need to be put in place.

Before opening:

Make sure that the office is clean. More detailed steps can be found on gov.uk Cleaning the workplace. If the workplace has been closed during the lockdown, you may wish to consider other maintenance/housekeeping issues e.g. heating and water.

WHAT IF A MEMBER OF STAFF BECOMES SICK WITH THE VIRUS AFTER WE RETURN TO SITE?

Consider measures needed in case of a re-occurrence of the virus amongst staff, and preparations made for the closure and deep clean of the premises in this instance. This plan should include:

• Identification of a room or area where someone who is feeling unwell or has symptoms can be safely isolated

• How they can be safely transferred from there to a health facility/home

• Agree the plan in advance with your partner health care provider or health department where possible.

Consider the need for health declarations or taking the temperature of employees when returning to work.

USEFUL RESOURCES

The following links may prove useful to certain business sectors. Please feel free to share these with any suppliers, contractors or business contacts you feel might find this helpful.

Tradespeople, cleaners or nannies

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#working-in-peoples-homes-as-a-tradesperson-cleaner-or-nanny

Key point: No work should be carried out in people's homes if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, no matter how mild. Notify clients in advance of your arrival and regularly wash your hands. Carry hand sanitiser at all times.

Construction

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#construction

https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/work-equipment-coronavirus.htm

Key point: Ensure that all plant and machinery is in correct working order, has been inspected, tested and maintained and that any statutory inspections (of lifts, LEV, Pressure Systems, etc) have been completed.

People who work in or from vehicles

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles

https://qbeeurope.com/resilience/commercial-motor-vehicles-and-covid-19/?utm_source=LinkedIn&utm_medium=static-image&utm_campaign=Resilience%20-%20April%20-%20UK&utm_content=LA174A

Key point: Schedule to limit exposure to large crowds and rush hours where appropriate.

Property

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-landlord-right-to-rent-checks

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities

https://www.bravo-group.co.uk/press/covid-19-unoccupied-property-pack-risk-management-and-insurer-stance-available-to-download-now/

Key point: If a shared or landlord-controlled premises you will need to ensure you consult, coordinate and cooperate with the landlord or other occupiers. Multi-tenure operations will need to carefully consider access (e.g. social distancing on stairs or in lifts) and may only be able to open on a limited scale so that this can be controlled.

Retail

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#retail

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52431295

Key point: Limit the number of people in the store at any one time and use signage to remind staff and customers about the two metre rule. Put up plexiglass barriers at points of regular interaction where possible.

Factories, plants and warehouses

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses

Key point: Consider who is essential to be on site; for example, office staff should work from home if at all possible.

Labs and research facilities

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/labs-and-research-facilities

Key point: Consider providing additional parking or facilities such as bikeracks to help people walk, run, or cycle to work where possible.

Offices and contact centres

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres

Key point: Limit passengers in corporate vehicles, for example, work minibuses. This could include leaving seats empty.

Restaurants offering takeaway or delivery

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery

Key point: Consider washing uniforms on site rather than by individual staff members at home.

Shops and branches

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches

Key point: Introduce more one-way flow through buildings. Providing floor markings and signage should remind both workers and customers to follow to social distancing wherever possible.