

CORONAVIRUS GUIDANCE

We are all aware that COVID-19 is spreading across the UK, and there is a great deal of uncertainty. Government guidance is published and updated online at the links below:

COVID-19: guidance for employers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>

COVID-19: guidance for employees

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-employees>

COVID-19: guidance for businesses

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

This guidance was prepared on 18th March 2020. Advice in above links is being reviewed daily; you should check these on a regular basis.

Staff absence from work through illness and self isolation guidance will occur. It is possible that in the current COVID-19 situation, employers may need to close down their business for a short time or ask staff to reduce their contracted hours. The above links give general guidance, but the most common questions we are currently being asked are:

1. do I have to pay my employees when I don't have income to cover their wages?
2. what can I claim back or get help with?

The answer to the first question is that it depends on the employment contract terms. Your employees should all have written terms and conditions. In the absence of written terms, you then need advice on standard contract terms and your established practice which will define your legal commitment. We would recommend you contact ACAS to get the correct information relating to your precise circumstances. <https://www.acas.org.uk/advice>
If you are an employer subject to the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board, you should also refer to the current Wages Board booklet, which you can find on our website at <https://www.bellogilvy.co.uk/> under the 'resources' tab.

If your employees are off sick or in self isolation (based on government recommendations) then there is a new form being prepared by Government but not yet available. We would suggest that until that form is available you get your employee to fill out and sign a self certificate stating that they are off sick under Covid 19 guidelines. This is important as it may be required in the future, so you should pass it to us to keep in your payroll records. There is a sample wording attached below that you can use until the Government form is available.

With that certificate completed we will on your behalf reclaim statutory sick pay for employees who qualify, as part of your payroll processing. This represents a change to current sick pay regulations (as was announced in the March 2020 UK budget), but (at the time of writing) only refunds sick pay for two weeks for any employee.

What you need to know

- businesses and workplaces should encourage their employees to work at home, wherever possible
- if someone becomes unwell in the workplace with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they should be sent home and advised to follow the advice to stay at home
- employees should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues
- frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products
- employees will need your support to adhere to the recommendation to stay at home to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) to others
- those who follow advice to stay at home will be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP) from the first day of their absence from work
- employers should use their discretion concerning the need for medical evidence for certification for employees who are unwell. This will allow GPs to focus on their patients
- employees from defined vulnerable groups should be strongly advised and supported to stay at home and work from there if possible

Tips for employers and employees:

- keep everyone updated on actions being taken
- make sure all emergency contacts up to date
- consider extra precautions for vulnerable staff
- be aware of symptoms
- make sure there are clean places to wash hands with hot water and soap, and encourage regular hand washing
- provide hand sanitiser and tissues for staff
- reconsider any travel to affected areas
- if someone shows symptoms of Coronavirus, they should self-isolate for 14 days

Symptoms of Coronavirus:

- high temperature (hot to touch your chest or back)
- a new, continuous cough
- shortness of breath

If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in the business or workplace they should be sent home and advised to follow the [stay at home guidance](#).

If they need clinical advice, they should go online to [NHS 111](#) or call 111 if they don't have internet access. In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.