

How is the Coronavirus going to affect you as an employer?

Who should self-isolate? Those experiencing a new continuous cough and/or high temperature are advised to self-isolate. All those that fall in the vulnerable person category are advised to self-isolate. If your staff are unsure whether they should self-isolate, they should check the NHS website or call NHS 111.

How long for? Those who live alone or are the first person in the house to experience symptoms must self-isolate for 7 days from when the symptoms began. Once the first person in the household is experiencing symptoms, everyone else in the house must self-isolate for 14 days. If anyone else starts experiencing symptoms they must self-isolate for 7 days from which the symptoms began.

Who is a vulnerable person? Those in the higher risk category are adults 70 or over, under 70 with an underlying health condition, and those who are pregnant.

What should vulnerable people do? They are advised to exercise social distancing measures, including working from home and avoiding public transport. Employers should allow all high risk employees to work from home where possible, if it is not possible and they are refusing to self-isolate, you should send them home.

Are my employees key workers? There is no legal definition of a key worker, and the guidance is open to interpretation. If you are unsure you should advise your employees' to contact their child's school to ask if they can continue to attend school.

If my employees are not key workers, what are their options to take time off? If your employees need time off to care for their children, they should request annual leave or unpaid leave if you are agreeable. If you need them to continue working you may want to consider flexible working arrangements such as working from home or altering their hours to times when they can arrange childcare.

Can I reduce my employees hours? If the employment contracts allow, you can place them on short time working. For the definition to be satisfied, you must ensure their weekly remuneration is reduced by at least 50%. Employees will also be entitled to Statutory Guarantee Pay on any days they do not work.

How much is Statutory Guarantee Pay? It is currently £29 per day for a maximum of 5 days in any 3 month rolling period, however this will increase to £30 on 6 April 2020.

What if there is no work for my employees? If there is a reduction in work and the employment contracts allow, you can lay your employees off. They would be entitled to Statutory Guarantee Pay for any days they are not offered any work. You may also consider making redundancies among your staff.

Can I request evidence of absence from work? Employees can self-certify for the first 7 days of absence so they do not need any evidence. Thereafter, you may request evidence however an isolation note can now be used for someone experiencing symptoms or living with someone experiencing symptoms.

If you require any advice please contact a member of the team at FTA Law on 0330 088 2275.