

COVID-19: Employment Law and Colleague Support

This briefing outlines the measures the Government has introduced to support employers during the COVID-19 outbreak, information on colleague safety and approaches to the recruitment and onboarding of new colleagues.

Support for Employers

Statutory Sick Pay

The Government is introducing measures to allow employers with up to 250 employees to reclaim up to fourteen days of SSP paid for sickness absence due to COVID-19.

SSP is now payable to people who are staying at home on government advice, not just those who are infected. Employees claiming SSP due to COVID-19 are now entitled to pay from day one of absence, rather than the fourth day of their illness.

The Government is advising employers to use their discretion around the need for medical evidence for a period of absence where an employee is advised to stay at home due to suspected COVID-19.

Employees not entitled to SSP may be eligible for Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC). Employees claiming for either ESA or UC are no longer required to produce a fit note.

How can I find out more?

- ACAS has produced more information on self-isolation and SSP [here](#).
- Government guidance on SSP is available [here](#).

Self-Isolation

[Government guidance](#) on self-isolation states that anyone who lives alone and displays the COVID-19 symptoms of either a new continuous cough or high temperature should self-isolate by staying at home for seven days.

People living with others who contract symptoms should self-isolate for seven days, with other household members self-isolating for 14 days.

Anyone displaying symptoms must self-isolate for a further seven days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of how long they have already been self-isolating.

Colleague Safety

Colleague Hygiene and Cash Handling

Government guidance states that employees should wash their hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, using hand sanitiser if necessary.

There is no official advice on cash handling or the need for personal protective equipment.

Regularly touched objects and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected using normal cleaning products.

How can I find out more?

- Government guidance on cleaning of non-healthcare settings is available [here](#).
- ACS has developed Assured Advice on [managing health and safety](#), [food safety and hygiene](#) and [water refills services](#).

Violence and Abuse

Whenever there is significant social and economic change, there can be knock on effects related to crime and disorder.

Retailers should ensure that staff are informed of potential new risks, for example dealing with product shortages.

How can I find out more?

- ACS' animation of Managing Violence and Abuse in Convenience Stores is available [here](#).
- ACS #alwaysreportabuse [posters](#) are available to display in-store to support colleagues.

Recruitment and Onboarding

Increased customer demand and self-isolating colleagues are factors which could contribute towards staffing shortages at short notice. Retailers may wish to consider two routes to restoring or increasing staffing levels.

1. Contact local employers within industries (e.g. hospitality, leisure) facing steep reductions in demand to offer paid working hours to their staff. An arrangement could be agreed whereby a retailer pays the employer directly for their staff to work within a store. Consent would be required from both the employer and employees. Retailers may wish to pursue this route with trusted local businesses considering the extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19 to streamline recruitment and onboarding procedures, but ACS cannot guarantee there are no legal risks associated with this approach.
2. Hire new colleagues at relative speed. ACS can supply members with template employment contracts and staff handbooks via its Legal Advice Service and Assured Advice can be used to train new colleagues in areas of key legal standards, for example on [preventing underage sales](#) and [storing and selling fuel](#). More details about Assured Advice is available [here](#). Acas' [staff inductions guidance](#) and [template induction checklist](#) may support retailers with legal requirements for onboarding staff. Security staff must be SIA-registered, regardless of prior experience in the security industry. The register of SIA licence holders can be searched [here](#).

For more information on recruitment and onboarding please contact Steve Dowling, ACS Public Affairs Manager, via steve.dowling@acs.org.uk or 01252 533009 / 07384 818131.