

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.

Sources of New Temporary Colleagues

Increased customer demand and self-isolating colleagues could contribute towards staffing shortages at short notice. An innovative way of restoring or increasing staffing levels would be to contact local employers within industries (e.g. hospitality, leisure) facing steep reductions in demand, and offering to take on their staff. An arrangement could be reached for a retailer to pay their employer directly for their staff to work within a store (consent would be required from both the employer and employees). Alternatively, you could employ new staff as your employees, and a standard temporary contract and other employment resources can be supplied by ACS on request.

Rapid Induction

New team members will need to be working on the shop floor in quick time. You could focus on the key elements for onboarding new team members. The crucial legal compliance processes are:

- ACS Assured Advice guides, for example on [preventing underage sales](#) and [storing and selling fuel](#), may be priorities for your business
- Your fire safety policy and procedures
- Your security and personal safety policies

These can be briefed and read by new colleagues in a few minutes.

If you are bringing in new colleagues *specifically* in a security role, they must be SIA-registered. The register of SIA licence holders can be searched [here](#).

Key Workers

The Prime Minister confirmed that schools will be closed from Friday 20th March, except for the children of key workers. The definition of key workers is set to be published today (Thursday 19th March).

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.