

COVID-19: Returning to work after lockdown and the issues facing UK employers - how we can help your business



Different businesses will face different challenges as the lock down restrictions are eased. These will range from getting staff back into the workplace, whether returning from furlough leave or from home working, to decisions around cutting costs and redundancies.

But common to all employers as they plan their exit from lock down will be following the most up to date government and public health guidance and making sure health and safety considerations are top of the agenda. Employers will also be under pressure to consider whether new ways of working such as home working or different working hours are needed to comply with their health and safety obligations and government guidance.

Here are just a few of the areas in which we have expertise and can assist:

- How to safely integrate employees back into the office, including advising on: complying with the COVID-19 secure guidelines, conducting risk assessments; and the data protection implications of testing and health questionnaires
- What steps employers can take to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of employees returning to the office
- Advising in relation to health and safety concerns raised by employees about their working conditions
- Issues surrounding employees' travel to and from the office, and wider business travel
- Giving lawful instructions, and the interplay between the employer's instructions and the employee's right to refuse in light of their genuine and reasonable health and safety concerns, and whether disciplinary action is appropriate
- Dealing with flexible working requests (including home working)
- Drafting or amending policies to deal with the new working environment and to ensure compliance with the law
- Options available to employers to reduce costs, such as redundancies, lay-offs, redeployment, amongst others
- Cross-jurisdictional issues arising from employees working in different jurisdictions
- The potential discrimination issues surrounding returning to work, particularly relating to: employees with primary child-caring responsibilities; vulnerable employees; those with mental health issues; demographics who are more susceptible to contracting the coronavirus.

To find out how we can support your workforce return to work safely and lawfully, and deal with the challenges brought about by the coronavirus, do not hesitate to contact the Clyde & Co Employment team.