



Covid-19 Coronavirus Update

This week has seen a number of developments regarding the spread of the Covid-19 Coronavirus and its potential effect on the workplace, with different countries taking differing approaches.

It is important to note that the situation is very fluid and government guidance is changing daily. We can therefore only provide a general guide that should be used with care. Furthermore, as we are not medical professionals. We cannot provide any medical advice on the virus, its treatment or transmission. This guidance is current for 13 March 2020.

What is the current status of the virus?

The government provides daily updates regarding Covid-19 Coronavirus, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>, the current risk level to the UK has been increased to High.

The effect on the UK remains low with only 590 of the 29,764 people tested confirmed as positive. There are cases in all areas of the UK, but the majority remain in London and the South East (219). Further details can be found [here](#)ⁱ and are updated regularly.

How can we reduce the risk to our business and employees?

Both the Government as well as ACAS continue to update their guidance as appropriate. The most up to date guidance for employers can be found at

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>
- <https://www.acas.org.uk/acas-publishes-new-advice-on-handling-coronavirus-at-work>

You will have seen this week that the Government is introducing, as a temporary measure, SSP from day 1 and the Chancellor announced that the cost of SSP for coronavirus-related absence will be covered for businesses with fewer than 250 employees, providing over £2 billion for up to two million businesses.

Government guidance regarding possible infections has moved away from isolation based on recent areas of travel in order to contain the virus to a symptom based approach designed to delay the spread of the virus. The current guidance is for anyone displaying symptoms of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature to self-isolate for a period of 7 days. Further details can be found [here](#)ⁱⁱ.

Developments within the workplace

We are starting to see some members reporting staff who are self-isolating. However, we are also seeing staff reporting potential contact with the virus but feeling fine and therefore turning up to work. These staff are the most difficult to deal with as the longer a member of staff remains on site the greater the potential for contamination.

The best preventative advice remains for employees and members of the public to be extra-vigilant with washing their hands, using and disposing of tissues etc. We are also starting to see questions regarding deep cleaning of buildings. The current guidance and best practice for decontamination in non-healthcare settings remains that published by Public Health England 26 February 2020 which can be found [here](#)ⁱⁱⁱ

We are currently advising members establish a clear policy to provide clear guidance to employees to reassure staff as well as to prevent excessive reactions or contamination of the workplace. In order to assist members, we have produced a Workplace policy titled Coronavirus (COVID-19): Temporary changes to workplace policies and procedures, which will be made available to members as needed. This policy is based on Government advice and is designed to provide a clear starting point to assist with dealing with common issues and allow employers to tailor the policy to their own workplaces.

In Conclusion

There remain many unknowns and as such a lot of volatility regarding the Corvid-19 Coronavirus. It must be remembered that the NHS provide the UK with a unique tool to deal with this sort of health crisis.

We will of course continue to monitor any developments in order to keep members informed. Don't forget, as an RMI member you have access to the RMI Legal advice line, as well as a number of industry experts for your assistance. Should you find yourself in the situation above, contact us at any stage for advice and assistance as appropriate.

Motor Industry Legal Services

Motor Industry Legal Services (MILS Legal Ltd) provides fully comprehensive legal advice and representation to UK motor retailers for one annual fee. It is the only law firm in the UK which specialises in motor law and motor trade law. MILS currently advises over 1,000 individual businesses within the sector as well as the Retail Motor Industry Federation (RMI) and its members.

ⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>