

Peter Lynn & PARTNERS

Solicitors

During these unprecedented times, we want to reassure people that no matter the legal need, we are here for you. Our staff are available remotely to continue offering expert legal advice, so contact us via the details below to make contact.

COVID-19 ADVICE FOR BUSINESSES:

Employment Law

Please note this is accurate at the point of writing. This is a fast-moving situation, and regular updates will be required.

As the Coronavirus continues to impact on businesses across the UK, we offer some advice on the common questions we are facing.

Should my staff be working from home?

Not all occupations enable staff to work from home, but in the interests of safety, allowing people to work from home if they have the ability to do so is both safe and sensible. The use of technology is encouraged – lap-tops, mobile phones, etc. – however planning and talking through the homeworking scenario with staff is vital as is the development of a home working policy.

What if staff are unable to work from home?

For the time being, businesses that are not forced to close should adhere to the governments social distancing advice and apply this advice to the workplace by:

- Re-organising office layouts
- Reducing staff numbers where possible
- Enforce safety procedures and provide sanitation equipment

Can my staff receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)?

Employees who are sick, are self-isolating or are looking after someone who is self-isolating may be entitled to SSP at the current rate of £94.25 per week for up to 28 weeks.

This is available from the first day of absence, and it is prudent to ensure your company sickness policy is followed, and while £94.25 is the minimum and employee can receive, it is up to the employer if they want to "top up" this figure in line with their employment contracts.

Can I make staff take annual leave?

Yes, as long as you do so in line with the terms contained in your employment contracts.

What is this new furlough status, and how do we process this?

The new grant for employers is open to all employers who employ staff. Staff must not work and must be sent home. Employers can then register through HMRC to obtain 80% of all wages costs up to a maximum of £2,500 a month per employee.

This requires changes to be made to the terms and conditions of the employment contract, and these should be agreed in writing.

Can I let staff go?

While employers should investigate all options available to maintain staff numbers, it is also vital that businesses survive the economic slow-down, so here are some considerations for business owners:

- Voluntary leave or redundancy could be introduced to the workforce, as could reduced hours over a period of time to try and soften the blow.
- Review the termination terms of your employment contracts while being mindful of unfair dismissal claims. Generally, two-years continuous employment is needed to bring such a claim.

For advice on these or any other Employment Law question you may have, contact Stuart Atherton, Head of Employment or Nia Godsmark, Senior Solicitor on 01792 450010 or email Employmentlaw@plandp.co.uk

We are able to offer advice, review existing employment contracts and help you through this challenging period without the need for a face-to-face meeting.

"Preventing Legal Problems"

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