

IMPLEMENT A COVID-19 SAFETY STRATEGY FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

Employers are being urged to mitigate the workplace risks of coronavirus transmission with the implementation of a Covid-19 safety strategy, as daily case numbers remain high.

Safe Team (a division of HR Team) lead consultant, Paul McLaughlin, explains: "Employers have a general duty to ensure - so far as is reasonably practicable - the health and safety of all employees, and to provide a safe working environment." To ensure compliance, employers will need to have the following in place in the current pandemic situation:



STEP 1: EMPLOYEE INDUCTION TRAINING

- Communication of the latest up-to-date advice and guidance on public health;
- Guidance on what a worker should do if he/she develops symptoms of Covid-19;
- Details of how the workplace is organised to address the risk from Covid-19;
- An outline of the organisation's Covid-19 response plan;
- Identification of points of contact for the employer and the workers;
- Any other sector-specific advice that is relevant.

STEP 2: A COVID-19 SAFETY STATEMENT

STEP 3: A COMPLETED COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT ON THE PREMISES

STEP 4: A STANDARD OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE FOR COVID-19

STEP 5: AN APPOINTED COVID-19 COMPLIANCE OFFICER

If you do not have these measures in place, please contact HR Team's Safe Team today and we'll ensure your organisation is fully compliant and protected.



HELPING EMPLOYERS OVERCOME THE KEY CHALLENGES OF LEVEL 5 LOCKDOWN

Many businesses are now having to think on their feet to ensure survival during lockdown and beyond, and HR Team's experts are on-hand with commercially-focused advice on how to make the right decisions.



Director, Breda Cullen, says HR Team's consultants are making a number of recommendations on how to implement the various options available to employers faced with very difficult decisions at this time.

The key employment challenges in lockdown

1. Adhering to the latest government guidelines and restrictions in Ireland
2. Making temporary lay-offs or introducing short-time working
3. Considering redundancies
4. Homeworking

Employers have a number of options available to deal with these challenges, as their businesses face operational reductions and closure.

Lay-offs and short-time working:

- Temporary lay-off is an option when an employer is temporarily unable to provide an employee with the work for which they were employed.
- Short-time working is also an option

- when operations have been reduced. Short-time working means employee's hours of work or pay are reduced to less than 50% of normal weekly working hours or normal weekly pay.
- The legislation does not specify notice periods as to when employees should be notified regarding temporary lay-offs or short-time working.
- There must be an explicit and agreed contract clause with an employee to exercise the above.

Reduced hours of work

Many Employers are reducing hours of work either via short-time working or through consultation. It is very important to follow a process:

- Speak to employees first.
- Explain the changes you need to make.
- Explain the reasons for the change.
- Employee circumstances should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Other alternatives to be considered, such as redeployment.

Redundancies

- In the first instance, unless you are sure that the role is permanently not needed, you can continue with a temporary lay-off or short-time working.

- This situation can be reviewed periodically in line with government announcements and the public health authorities.

There are two key requirements when considering redundancy. There must be a genuine redundancy rationale and a meaningful consultation process carried out prior to making the final decision.

The redundancy process for employers:

- Put employees 'at risk' of redundancy.
- Consult with all employees who are affected.
- If there are more individuals than jobs, and you plan on keeping some staff, conduct a selection process using objective-based criteria such as experience, qualifications and length of service.
- Consider if you need to apply collective consultation.
- Seek volunteers if appropriate.
- Issue redundancy.
- Provide opportunity to appeal.

Homeworking considerations for employers

- Ensure a safe working environment and have a homeworking agreement to clarify terms and conditions.



HELPING EMPLOYERS OVERCOME THE KEY CHALLENGES OF LEVEL 5 LOCKDOWN

CONTINUED...

- Clarify pay arrangements and hours of work for homeworking.
- Provide the relevant equipment and materials needed for homeworking.
- Clarify if telephone and internet costs will be reimbursed or be at the cost of the employee with guidance on security of information, data protection and confidentiality of data.

What's next?

Review where your business is positioned in terms of level 5 restrictions.

If your business is closing, ensure that temporary lay-offs are notified in writing and continue to communicate with staff throughout.

If you remain open, ensure you have a robust safety strategy in place. Where short-time working is to be introduced, ensure you communicate clearly in a letter to employees that their hours may be reduced.

If you are making redundancies, ensure you follow the correct consultation process.

In homeworking situations, ensure employees working from home have full clarity on a homeworking policy.



HR Team has been very active in keeping employers up to date with employment law and relevant HR advice in relation to Covid-19. Whether you have a specific HR question related to Covid-19 or you want to keep up with the ever-evolving developments, we would like you to join us as we discuss the key areas that are affecting all employers right now.

Who should participate?

Line managers, supervisors/team leaders, middle/senior managers, HR personnel and business owners/employers. The cost is complimentary.

Employment Law Advice During Covid-19

November 19, 2020: 10am - 11am

Homeworking - Managing staff motivation and mental health during Covid-19.

December 3, 2020: 10am - 11am

The Redundancy Process – How to stay legally compliant

December 17, 2020: 10am - 11am

HOW TO BOOK:

CONTACT HELLO@HRTEAMGROUP.COM

CALL +353 (1) 695 0749

(FROM ROI)

OR 028 71 271 882

(FROM NI/UK)

Do you have an employment law or human resources question?

We help business start-ups, SMEs and large multinational organisations. Call to speak to us today on any aspect of employment law or strategic human resource services. Tel 01 695 0749 or NI 028 71 271 882.



HOW TO MANAGE YOUR ANNUAL LEAVE BACKLOG



ANNUAL
LEAVE

Annual leave is paid time off work granted by employers to employees. It is essential to note that the employer is obliged to provide a certain amount of leave to their employees annually.

Regardless of the employee's length of employment or status, everyone is entitled to paid time off, whether they are part-time, full-time, temporary, or casual workers.

How can you manage your employee's annual leave?

The spread of coronavirus has had many impacts on businesses. One of these impacts being the accumulated amount of annual leave for employees.

An employee accrues annual leave for any hours worked. If an employee has been laid off, they do not accumulate it during this period. Please note, employees accrue public holiday entitlements the first 13 weeks on lay-off. A part-time employee will only qualify for a public holiday benefit if they have worked 40 hours in the five weeks preceding the public holiday.

The majority of employees will have annual leave entitlements remaining for 2020. This will not be easy for many

businesses. To manage this successfully, HR Team recommend the following:

Annual Leave Policy

Communicate the details of this policy to your employees. This policy sets out an employees' entitlement to paid leave, identifies the relevant leave year period and accurately details the approach to carryover untaken leave.

Statutory leave needs to be taken and should not be paid to the employee instead. Any annual leave over the statutory entitlement can be paid.

Communication

Inform your employees that everyone still has annual leave to take in a limited amount of time. Remind them, that it needs to be approved by management before they book any time off.

Encouragement

Actively encourage staff to take annual leave. It may be advisable for you to meet with individual employees

who have a substantial number of days remaining. A record of these conversations should be kept on their file.

Reminders

Keep track of an employee's annual leave entitlement using a tracker. Where an employee still has annual leave remaining, you can issue them with reminders, primarily as the relevant leave year draws to a close.

Employers are not required to force employees to take annual leave, but they must be able to show they have attempted to encourage their employee to take it. This means that employees must be:

- Fully informed of their entitlements.
- Actively encouraged to take their annual leave.
- Advised that the company will require them to take their holiday at a specific time.



If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact HR Team.
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