COVID-19 - Return to Work Ready

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Following months of disruption, the UK lockdown is slowly beginning to ease and businesses now need to ensure that they are sufficiently prepared to reopen 'COVID-ready'.

We have supported a number of businesses throughout the pandemic, assisting both with the immediate response and with readiness to return. It will be critical to the successful return for businesses that they are compliant with government standards, and we are here to support you as you do so.

We have set out below the range of areas you will need to consider, to ensure you and your employees return to work safely.

Employment

- ensuring **compliance with sector specific Government Guidance** and HSE guidance on making sure your workplace is COVID-secure
- how to **deal with/pay returning furloughed staff**, whether back full time and/or on a reduced/more flexible basis from July onwards
- consultation with employees and/or representatives regarding **risk assessments** and to answer their concerns, outlining the steps taken to ensure safety at work, or at home where homeworking applies
- **hygiene**, including the necessary measures for employers and employees, both before opening, in preparation and on return (including PPE)
- **social distancing**, including advice as to how this is being implemented in relation to visitors, contractors, use of common areas and holding meetings
- **travel** – how staff should be advised to get to work and work-related travel
- **mental health** – support and guidance for employees and OHS specialists to help with staff issues relating to stress and mental health
- **testing and data protection issues** - self-testing/certification by employees and data protection issues regarding workplace medical testing and related information gathering initiatives
- **updating/consulting on your employment policies/contracts** including:
  - phased or rotated returns to work
  - home working/flexible working
  - sickness absence – self isolation and pay/SSP/Shielding
  - use of accrued holiday
  - virtual disciplinary and grievance protocols
  - health and safety updates for COVID
  - data protection updates for COVID
  - travel.

Health and Safety Regulatory

- relevant **risk assessments and creating COVID policies** (with direct reference to the appropriate Government/HSE guidance)

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Our team have dedicated considerable time in producing content to help support businesses throughout this pandemic, from podcasts to shorter sector-specific blog posts.

Please visit our website for further information.

- **appointing health and safety consultants** to carry out risk assessments and to advise on practical guidance/policies
- **risks and liabilities** if there is a failure to comply with the legal requirements for returning to work safely
- **obtaining advice in the event of an investigation** resulting from an alleged failure to comply
- obtaining advice in relation to **customer facing protocols**, including risk management and response.

Commercial

- guidance on **all aspects of existing commercial contracts** as the restrictions are eased
- advice on **supply chain, operations and logistics**
- advice on how best to **transform and expand your online and digital infrastructure** to meet changing consumer habits
- concerns regarding **insurance terms or claims**
- **indemnities/waivers** in any new or revised commercial arrangements.

Real Estate

- negotiations with landlords for **rent concessions and lease restructures**
- **planning and leasing advice** for operators wishing to diversify how they trade from their premises
- exercising **break rights** in commercial leases
- taking **temporary space** to enable outdoors trading or to provide additional space for the safety of your staff and customers
- **avoiding or minimising claims** under commercial leases
- advice on **commercial lease moratorium** on landlord remedies for tenant breaches.

If you are having any issues with your preparations to become COVID secure, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. We would be delighted to offer you a **complimentary 30-minute session,** whether by phone or video conference, to discuss your particular business needs and scope out any future work required.

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