

Covid-19: How can I conduct my business?

Suddenly Covid-19 has made an appearance into all our lives. We find ourselves in the midst of a global crisis, unprecedented in living memory. As the dust settles after the initial shock of life changing almost beyond all recognition, most of us are left in confusion as to what we should be doing.

There is plenty of advice available to all of us about how we should be leading our personal lives, but very little about how company owners and directors should be conducting their business.

This fact sheet aims to make things clearer for how you should be operating, but may not answer all your questions. Please do give us a call if you need to.

Definitions

New terms have come into common use:

social distancing: reducing social interaction between people. In practice this means staying at home where it is possible to do so, only making essential journeys, and keeping a 2m distance from others where possible.

self-isolation: staying at home for 14 days with no contact with anyone outside of your household.

shielding: protecting those people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to Covid-19 by minimising their interaction with other people.

Rules for businesses:

- If your business premises is a place where people gather, you will have had to close your premises. This does not mean you have to stop work. If you can conduct your business in another way, such as making deliveries, then you can do so.
- If work can be carried out from home then it should be.
- If you or your employees cannot work from home, they can still go to work. The government is NOT saying that only people doing “essential” work can go to work.
- You may continue to carry out work in other people’s homes, provided your tradespeople are well and have no symptoms. No work should be carried out in a household which is isolating or in which an individual is shielded, unless it is an emergency.
- Any person who shows symptoms of Covid-19, or lives in a household where another member is showing symptoms, must self-isolate for 14 days (7 days if he or she lives alone). Your employees are eligible for statutory sick pay from day one of their absence if they are self-isolating. You must not ask anyone to come into work who is self-isolating.

What does this mean for your business?

Government guidance tells us:

- Where your employees are working from home, you must take every possible step to facilitate this.
- Where your employees are still working away from home, you should ensure that they maintain social distancing where it is practical to do so. Social distancing must be observed while they are travelling to and from work.

What we advise:

- If your business is still operating, you have a legal duty to protect the health and safety of your workers, and others who may be affected by your activities. The requirement to carry out risk assessments and put in safe working arrangements has not been changed by the current situation. What the pandemic means is that now there is an additional foreseeable risk which must be considered in your arrangements.
- Your risk assessments and safe working methods must all now include the hazard of Covid-19, and you must detail what steps you are taking to mitigate the risk. This may include changing working methods to enable social distancing; providing more hygiene facilities; providing PPE. Your employees (and subcontractors and agency-workers) must be made aware of the measures you are putting in. You may have to carry out training or tool-box talks to ensure everyone works safely. In the event that a prosecution or civil case arises, you must be able to prove that you took reasonably practicable steps to protect your workforce.

As your source of competent support, Safety Concepts has all the tools to help you with your arrangements for managing the Covid-19 risk.

Call: 01903 885297

Email: contact@safetyconcepts.co.uk