



The road out of lockdown

A quick guide to what the following statements from the government mean for businesses



“The government is clear that workers should not be forced into an unsafe workplace.”

- Legal obligation to protect health, safety and welfare of employees as far as reasonably practicable.
- “Covid-19 secure guidelines” for each sector to comply with.
- Risk assessment – to be completed before any return; undertake in consultation with employee representatives and unions; should be published (particularly larger businesses).

“All reasonable steps should be taken by employers to help people work from home. But for those who cannot work from home and whose workplace has not been told to close, our message is clear: you should go to work.”

- Default position – work from home if you can.
- Key principles: social distancing; stringent cleaning processes; where people cannot keep 2m apart – manage transmission risk.
- Communicate new measures to employees and update policies and practices.



“At its most effective, full involvement of your workers creates a culture where relationships between employers and workers are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving.”

- What if employees refuse? Communication and engagement increases buy-in at the outset.
- Consider each individual circumstance and reasons for concerns before taking action – be mindful of protected characteristics such as disability, pregnancy, ethnicity, sex.
- Government expects “socially responsible decisions” and “pragmatic agreement about working arrangements”.

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“This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that as a business or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics.”

- Ensure that measures and decisions do not adversely impact certain groups.
- Spotlight on reasonable adjustments – including consideration of alternative roles.
- Are contractual variations required e.g. when changing working patterns, hours and shifts?



“The Government is supporting millions of families and businesses, but cannot protect every job and every business.”

- Furlough scheme extended to 31 October 2020 (with changes from August).
- Work-force planning still needs to be considered now (role changes, redundancies, changes to terms of employment/working patterns).
- Start planning and consulting early.

“The world will not return to ‘normal’ after COVID-19; much of the global economy is likely to change significantly. The UK will need to be agile in adapting to and shaping this new world.”

- Focus on agile and flexible working to continue – key benefits such as impact on carbon footprint and increase in diversity.
- Investment in technology and better use of space imperative – to assist with economic growth, aid disaster recovery planning and embrace the future world of work.
- Mental well-being and stakeholder engagement at the forefront for all in the long road ahead.



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