



ActifHR

Where people matter...

November 2020 Update

Welcome to this month's update - where we discuss the latest guidance and legislation.

In this Edition we report on:

- Furlough Scheme extended until March 2021
 - How you can best support your remote staff
 - What happens if someone tests positive at work?
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Furlough Scheme extended until March 2021

The Chancellor has just announced (5th November), that the Furlough will remain open until 31 March 2021.

For claim periods running to January 2021, employees will receive 80% of their normal salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. The scheme is more generous than the previous scheme running in September and October. The percentage may be reviewed for February and March.

The key points are:

- Employers can claim even if the employees has not previously been furloughed

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- Flexible furlough will continue, so employees can still do some work.
- Employees who have been furloughed previously can continue to have their reference pay and hours based on the existing furlough calculations (as under the old scheme). Those employees who have not been furloughed before will have different pay/hours reference period. Full guidance will be provided on 10 November, but broadly the pay is based on 80% of the wages payable in the last pay period ending on or before 30 October 2020 (for those on fixed wages), or 80% of the average payable between the start date of their employment or 6 April 2020 (whichever is later).
- Employees can be furloughed if they are shielding as long this is in line with public health guidance (or need to stay at home with someone who is shielding). That does not, of course, mean they **have** to be furloughed.
- Employees that were employed and on the payroll on 23 September 2020 who were made redundant or stopped working for their employer after that date can also be re-employed and claimed for if the employer is prepared to do so.
- the Job Support Scheme and the Job Retention Bonus have been put on hold (for now).

Employers: We can assist businesses with advice on the extension of this Scheme.

Contact us: For a furlough agreement letter which you need employees to sign for £45.

How you can best support your remote staff

It might not be ideal for businesses to have all, or perhaps most, of their staff working from home, but in a country-wide lockdown situation, there may be little choice. So as a responsible business owner, what can you do to ensure you and your managers provide the right levels of support and communication to keep employees happy, engaged and productive?

Some top tips

1. Make sure their workspace is set up correctly and that they feel comfortable working there. If you have the budget, you could ask them to purchase a work chair or desk. Ensure they have a dedicated space that is quiet and undisturbed. Any issues with broadband speed or inferior software or hardware should be dealt with early on.

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2. Establish structured and regular daily/weekly check-ins, or one to ones, as a forum where employees know they can talk to you and any concerns or questions can be dealt with properly. Consider providing different communication channels including email, video conferencing and of course the good old-fashioned telephone.
3. In conjunction with your employees set expectations, accountability and responsibilities. This will ensure that they know what they should be doing, when and how their performance will be monitored and measured. Be open with them if you need to monitor them.
4. Provide opportunities for remote social interaction. This could be time at the end of weekly calls to discuss non-work items, or you could host virtual coffee mornings, after work drinks, quizzes etc. These types of online events promote a sense of belonging and purpose.
5. Put in place employee development plans so they know you are taking their job path/career progression seriously. Arrange more learning and development opportunities, so they can enhance their skills. Remember to offer consistent encouragement, motivation and emotional support. Ask frequent probing questions, listen to any concerns and empathise with their struggles.

Employers: Investing in your employees now will ensure they are better prepared for the world of remote working as it becomes the new norm.

Contact us: We can provide a **Remote Working Policy** for £60 and a handy guide on how to handle **10 different types of absences and what to pay** in these circumstances for £35

What happens if an employee tests positive?

If employees attend the workplace (as it is not practical or efficient for them to work from home), what do you do if an employee tells you they have tested positive?

The business need to act swiftly and closely to follow government guidelines on cleaning the workspace, while taking appropriate measures to reassure and protect other employees. Developing scenario plans and template communications for a situation like this is a useful way to make sure you can respond in a timely and appropriate way. This minimises stress levels for everyone involved.

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Make sure you also have clear communication to employees so that there is no panic in the workplace. Maybe the employee who tested positive was in a bubble in one part of the workplace and this area can be deep cleaned and the other employees in the bubble can self-isolate, until they can obtain test results. However, if the employee has been in touch with more members of staff, across other areas of the business, a workplace shut down to facilitate deep cleaning will be required, with employees undergoing tests before they can safely return to work.

Make sure you keep communicating to employees about what is happening to create the trust and openness needed to keep people safe and feeling confident to return to and stay at work.

It is important that employers tell staff to not talk about any cases at work openly or on social media as businesses want to ensure they can make their workplace safe, without information being spread about the workplace into the wider community.

Employers: We can guide your business through the risk assessment process and the documentation you need for as little as £400 for the package.

Contact us: Please see our most recent webinar with Silverstone Technology Cluster <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B76pvp6LlIQ&feature=youtu.be>



Caroline has a wealth of experience supporting business clients with practical hands on HR and Employment Law advice. Caroline's pragmatic approach helps businesses of all sizes deal with complex HR situations. She qualified as a Solicitor in 1999 and now acts as a specialist Human Resource / employment Law Consultant to business.

Caroline Robertson, Director



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