



# COVID-19 Tool Kit

## Returning to work and business recovery.

This information is accurate as of Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020

We are all tasked with steering through these rough waters, resisting knee jerk reactions is hard but very necessary. The team at Apex are here to listen, support and advise. We are here to help answer any questions and to support you, your teams and your business through these challenges. Please keep talking to us, pick up the phone, send an email, we genuinely will do whatever we can to help. Never underestimate the old saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved'...

# Introduction

As we continue to progress through the lockdown period, the Government has announced some restrictions will be relaxed, and people will begin to start work again after being furloughed for the past few weeks.

You shouldn't assume that your business and your workforce will return to normal as pre Covid-19, a lot has changed in recent weeks and organisations will have to adapt and work differently to what was considered normality.

There are far more considerations organisations will have to make to adapt to a new way of working to protect their workforce. With no Covid-19 vaccine or cure insight, the Health, Safety and wellbeing your teams and the wider community will have to be a priority to ensure the successful recovery of the business.

The way you approach this change is key to the relationship you have with your teams and the reputation of your business.

We have mapped out some considerations and support to help with your planning, communication and engagement to return teams back to work.

# How can organisations prepare for a change in working conditions?

## Before you plan think about

- involving the right people in the planning
- remember to not rush back
- ask managers to predict any issues their team may raise
- be fair on who should return
- do you have what you need to implement the plans

## Make a plan to reintegrate the workplace

- phased work patterns
- who are in essential roles that can be returned first?
- who is not able to work from home and who is?
- How will home working be managed

## Implementation of the plan

- Trial periods of returned teams and review before having full teams back
- Home workers to remain at work with regular video call meetings, review and KPI's
- Stagger shift patterns to reduce the amount of people working at one time to business capacity- include reduced hours and job shares
- Implementing safe social distance and or Perspex shields between desks in offices
- Implementing staggered breaks and minimise the amount of people in gatherings and break out rooms.

# Health, safety and Wellbeing of staff returning to work?

Alongside the planning of return, think about actions around the obligations for H&S at work.

## Considering:

- Legal H&S considerations
- Strict procedures for cleaning and hygiene
- Sickness reporting and attendance at work management
- Commutes to work
- Sharing of equipment in the workplace
- Identifying and producing a list of vulnerable team members who have been advised to shield and how to accommodate those team members
- Important to listen to concerns from employees that have been affected by Covid-19
- To ascertain support for the team members mental health & wellbeing related illnesses because of Covid-19

- Review H&S obligations for RIDDOR, Covid-19 is reportable under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous occurrences regulations 2013
- Carry out risk assessments on reducing risks of spreading and contracting Covid-19 in the workplace in relation accordance with the management of H&S at work regs 1999
- Reviewing and updating any H&S policies or guidelines
- Look at adjusting H&S measures including the use of PPE, temperature checks, social distancing, self-isolation - what measure need to be in place.
- Does the workplace require a deep clean before teams return? Invest and implement strict cleaning procedures and/or services throughout the premises
- Invest and implement PPE as standard practice, supplying and issuing face masks, gloves, hand sanitiser, anti-bacteria hand wash, effective cleaning products for equipment, office furniture and communal areas.
- For public facing organisations, installation of plastic shielding screens, having one in one out systems within the premises

# Communicating and engaging with furloughed workers

## Other considerations:

- Have a Q&A documents available for team members
  - Involve team members and/or their representatives
  - Make available a list of useful websites or contacts numbers
  - Make any communication consistent, maybe same time each day/week to help team members be ready for any updates
- communicate any changes and plans to the workforce prior to their return, via recorded video message, emails or Video call.
  - Engage and consult with team members on any planned changes to their working terms and conditions and ensure agreement is given
  - Communicate any revised policies, procedures, and changes to the working environment
  - Being open and honest on returning people from furlough and how this will be implemented.
  - Having discussions with team members that have concerns and with team members who are classed as vulnerable or are living with people who are shielding

# Communicating and engaging with furloughed workers (Cont..)

- ❑ Be fair when addressing any forms of resistance to a change of conditions
- ❑ Amend any terms and conditions to employment agreements for their return, whether this is temporary or permanent change
- ❑ To give fair notice of when team members should return from furlough, this gives people an opportunity sort childcare, alternative caring services or to leave any temporary work team members may have started whilst being on furlough.
- ❑ Have return to work discussions with each team member, to update them on work related plans, markets, movements, expectations, policies and procedures and to listen to their questions or concerns.

# Employee welfare and potential issues

## Other things to consider:

- managing any employee welfare concerns,
  - possible workplace issues and
  - avoiding potential legal issues.
- ❑ Listen to individual concerns related to Covid-19, they may have experience bereavement or observed someone close to them suffer or indeed themselves and feel anxious about going back to work.
  - ❑ Think about free external support for employee's welfare needs, employee assistance support telephone line, links and number to other alternative sources of support.
  - ❑ You may have people who are unhappy about furlough ending, how the process has been managed, people scared to go back to work, concerned about their job security, why they have been chosen to return over others, good practice to address these issues on an individual basis and with a fair approach
  - ❑ not disregarding any grievance procedures or disciplinary action where it is fair to be applied.
  - ❑ Be cautious to those team members who may take liberties against any plans implemented. It is important to be firm but fair and communicate disciplinary consequences where necessary.

# Employee welfare and potential issues (Cont..)

- ❑ Should avoid making decisions which could be considered by some team members as discriminatory, ensuring a fair approach when planning is key.
- ❑ Ensure any revised policies or adaptations to procedures do not cause indirect discrimination to certain groups of people.
- ❑ Be aware of any harassment or bullying in the workplace towards people of certain heritages, BAME or people with health conditions, there has been a reported increase in such cases since Covid-19 began, address this promptly.
- ❑ Avoid breaches of H&S and failures to report under RIDDOR, by ensuring clear communication and revision of policies and procedures are acknowledge by everyone.
- ❑ Ensure everyone working from home know their responsibilities for the protection of data under the Data Protection Act 2018, to deal with any breaches or Subject Access requests promptly.

# FAQ's

- ▶ **Can I ask a team member with a shielding household member to come back to work or should they be left on furlough and to stay at home?**

Apex advise that this should be discussed on an individual basis and where possible the individual should work from home. If this is not possible, you may want to consider the option of agreeing and keeping that individual on furlough.

- ▶ **What about team members who need childcare to work**

Again this should be discussed on an individual basis and a common-sense approach taken. Where there is no alternative for childcare you may want to consider agreeing with the individual to continue with furlough. You should avoid the assumption that any team members who have children have childcare issues and to avoid indirectly discriminating against this group.

- ▶ **Can a business who are just about coping to work from home that can fully implement a "Covid safe " environment for their team go back to work in their normal environment ?**

The Governments latest publication states that sectors of the economy that are allowed to be open should be open, for example this includes food production, construction, manufacturing, logistics, distribution and scientific research in laboratories. Where your sector does not fit into this and where people can work from home it remains that they should continue to do so for the foreseeable future, to avoid the spread unnecessarily to others in the workplace and wider community.

**Further guidance is due to be published later this week, on workplace measures and how to support employers returning their people back to work.**

**We will keep you updated as and when the information is published.**

# Signpost to Relevant Support/ Helplines

- ▶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19> - In depth information on support for businesses.
- ▶ <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus> - ACAS is the independent employment advisory service for you and your team.
- ▶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy> - The Governments Covid-19 recovery strategy
- ▶ <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/riddor-reporting-coronavirus.htm> - Guidance on reporting Covid-19 in the workplace for infected team members

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# Stay Safe

From the whole team at Apex, whether you are in the office, at work, or at home, stay safe!

We are all optimistic that we will see the best of people during these challenging times, so we all need to look after ourselves and others.

We are grateful for your support, and we will do our best to continue to support you.

On our website, there are regular coronavirus updates, here is the link:

<https://www.apexhr.co.uk/news/>