



An employer guide to

Getting back to work after lockdown



PENINSULA

Introduction

Although the lockdown is to continue for a number of weeks—we know you'll be looking to the future when some of the restrictions reduce and more businesses are allowed to start opening their doors again.

Here at Peninsula, we've come up with six simple steps to help you prepare, plan and implement any changes you may need to make in order to adhere to social distancing measures and other advice from the government.

1. Building preparation

Evaluate what measures need to be put in place in your premises to ensure the safeguarding of employees, contractors and visitors. A risk assessment should be carried out ensuring you involve and consult your employees throughout this process.

Staff may be feeling anxious about returning to work and what measures your company is putting into place to safeguard them.

Involving staff in your risk assessment process means that not only are you getting the correct input, meeting your legal obligations as an employer, but you are relieving some of that staff anxiety by including them in decision making for safeguarding matters.

A deep clean of the premises might be required before opening, and on a regular basis depending on the nature of the business, alongside a number of other measures included below.

2. Communicating with employees

The next step a business should take is to prepare the workforce for returning to work. Business owners will want to create a plan to decide who will return to work and when. There is no set way to do this, but the following should be considered in the decision process:

- Needs of the business itself regarding who needs to return first (for example managers first, employees second etc.)
- Which staff members are considered vulnerable or extremely vulnerable, taking into account individuals they may live with
- Which employee groups are able to continue working at home and which need to return to work

Any plan should be documented, clear to follow and communicated to all employees. Employees who have to continue to stay at home due to being vulnerable/highly vulnerable, living with those who are classed as vulnerable/highly vulnerable, or who need to stay at home due to other COVID-19 factors should be supported to do so.

3. Implementing social distancing

Social distancing is reducing day-to-day contact with other people as much as possible. In the first instance, businesses and workplaces should encourage and enable their employees to work at home wherever possible.

This will not be the case for everyone, and as an employer, you must ensure social distancing measures are followed in the workplace.

These measures can include:

- Ensuring a minimum two-meter distance between people
- Avoiding small and large gatherings (so, where practicable, meetings should take place virtually or over telephone systems)
- If you have a large workforce, you will want to ensure you are not crowding your workforce, so this might mean staggering breaks and work patterns
- Restricting or limiting the number of customers inside your premises at any time, for example, a one in, one out policy
- Specifying seating/desk arrangements for staff to ensure minimum work distances are adhered to
- Using digital means for transferring paperwork, such as invoices, delivery notes and pro forma, instead of hard copies
- Using contactless payment methods, such as contactless card terminals or pre-payment via online banking rather than cash handling

4. Limit access and control

Until further advice from the government, you will want to limit visitors and contractors to your sites/buildings. One suggestion is to only allow business-critical visitors and contractors access.

These might include:

- Those delivering or collecting goods in order for the business to function
- Contractors undertaking statutory repairs & services such as fire systems maintenance or LOLER (Lifting Operations & Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998) Thorough Examination & Inspections
- Contractors undertaking emergency maintenance works
- Members of the public purchasing goods

Additional control measures you might want to consider are:

- Drop off and collection points for deliveries, with enhanced safety measures for staff who enter or work in this area, such as regular cleaning and disinfecting of equipment and use of protective gloves
- If practicable, separate entrance and exit points for staff to prevent cross contamination

For public-facing employees, additional control measures may be:

- Installing plexiglass shields/clear plastic shielding screens as appropriate at points of regular interaction with customers (these will need a regular cleaning and disinfecting program)
- Regulating entry into the premises (such as one in, one out)
- Signs to control movements, such as one-way systems and enhanced floor marking

5. Ensure high levels of hygiene

Maintaining high levels of hygiene at your business premises and by your staff will minimise the spread of COVID-19. As mentioned earlier, you may need a deep clean of the premises prior to opening. How often you need to undertake deep cleans will depend on the nature of the business. You should communicate your hygiene measures to employees, usually in the form of a tool box talk.

However, a number of measures can be taken in-house, including:

- Putting disinfectant sprays and wipes in prominent areas throughout the business, such as entrances and exits, kitchen areas, offices, points of customer interaction and drop off/collection points
- Considering low-touch or no-touch doors, switches and other fittings
- Removing shared tools and equipment and ensuring staff have personal tools and equipment instead
- Implementing a clean desk and self-sanitising policy for staff, ensuring they are empowered to keep their own equipment clean

6. Staff hygiene

It is also important that staff keep high levels of personal hygiene to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading. The two main forms of hygiene in this area are:

1) Respiratory hygiene

Ensuring all sneezes, coughs or blows of the nose are caught in tissues that are disposed of immediately, and hands washed after. This is also known as “Catch it, Bin it, Kill it” by the NHS.

2) Hand hygiene

Correct hand-washing technique is important. The key steps are:

1. Wet hands with water
2. Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces
3. Rub soap in liberally to form a thick lather (bubbles) all over the hand, including between fingers & thumbs, wrists and nails.
4. This should be done for at least 20 seconds
5. Rinse hands with water
6. Dry hands with a disposable paper towel

Note: make sure hands are dry. Wet hands can spread bacteria 1000 times more than dry hands.

Prepare now to succeed later

It's worth taking the time to prepare your business now while the UK is still in lockdown, and while you can still claim grants from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

For expert advice on how to get your workforce ready for life after lockdown, contact Peninsula's HR and health & safety experts on 0808 145 1899.