**Guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19)**

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**What you need to know**

* businesses and workplaces should encourage their employees to work at home, wherever possible
* if someone becomes unwell in the workplace with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they should be sent home and advised to follow the advice to stay at home
* employees should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues
* frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products
* employees will need your support to adhere to the recommendation to stay at home to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) to others
* those who follow advice to stay at home will be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP) from the first day of their absence from work
* employers should use their discretion concerning the need for medical evidence for certification for employees who are unwell. This will allow GPs to focus on their patients
* if evidence is required by an employer, those with symptoms of coronavirus can get an isolation note from [NHS 111 online](https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19), and those who live with someone that has symptoms can get a note from the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/)
* employees from defined [vulnerable groups](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people) should be strongly advised and supported to stay at home and work from there if possible

**Sick pay**

Those who follow advice to stay at home and who cannot work as a result will be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP), even if they are not themselves sick.

Employers should use their discretion and respect the medical need to self-isolate in making decisions about sick pay.

Anyone not eligible to receive sick pay, including those earning less than an average of £118 per week, some of those working in the gig economy, or self-employed people, is able to claim [Universal Credit](https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/) and or contributory Employment and Support Allowance.

For those on a low income and already claiming Universal Credit, it is designed to automatically adjust depending on people’s earnings or other income. However, if someone needs money urgently they can apply for an advance through the journal.

**Certifying absence from work**

By law, medical evidence is not required for the first 7 days of sickness. After 7 days, employers may use their discretion around the need for medical evidence if an employee is staying at home.

We strongly suggest that employers use their discretion around the need for medical evidence for a period of absence where an employee is advised to stay at home either as they are unwell themselves, or live with someone who is, in accordance with the public health advice issued by the government.

If evidence is required to cover [self-isolation or household isolation](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) beyond the first 7 days of absence then employees can get an isolation note from [NHS 111 online](https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19) or from the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/).

**What to do if an employee needs time off work to look after someone**

Employees are entitled to time off work to help someone who depends on them (a ‘dependant’) in an unexpected event or emergency. This would apply to situations related to coronavirus (COVID-19). For example:

* if they have children they need to look after or arrange childcare for because their school has closed
* to help their child or another dependant if they’re sick, or need to go into isolation or hospital

There’s no statutory right to pay for this time off, but some employers might offer pay depending on the contract or workplace policy.

ACAS has more [information on coronavirus](https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus) and can help with specific queries by phone.

