

General 'people' considerations in the lifting of restrictions and easing lock-down



We are still in lockdown but are about to move to the emergence stage, as and when we see the easing of restrictions, we will see many more people returning to the workplace.

This document contains details of some the things that you should think about in terms of your people and getting ready for the lifting of the lockdown and beyond.

PEOPLE

Your people are critical to the success of your business. You may have furloughed employees, they may be working from home, they may have experienced more flexibility around their work routines, hours and expectations. How does an employer now get their employees on board, educate them and help them to adapt to the new 'normal'? An employer should take this time as an opportunity to re-consider how they operate and also to look at different ways to utilise their people and their skills for the benefit of their business and their customers.

1. How will you now manage your employees' performance, your employees' appraisals and work reviews?

They may be in a role where they need some further training, processes may have changed, or, they may just need a recap. Have the tasks they perform changed or maybe just the focus? How will you communicate and manage these changes against the performance of your employees? Do you need to change their roles? How will you do this? How about performance management paperwork such as training plans, training evaluation, reviews and appraisals?

2. Have you considered the practicality of getting back to work?

You may experience some resistance from teams and a return to work, this will be for a variety of reasons including anxieties around contracting the virus and / or passing it onto household member or, difficulties in travelling to and from the workplace? How will you manage this process? Consider childcare arrangements – your office may reopen before schools and nurseries.

3. Will we all return to the previous work environment?

Have you considered the possibility that not everybody will return to the office? What arrangements are you considering? Do you need to think about a permanent or temporary scaling back of your operations? Do you need to think about working from home or continuing to support that? Is there anything you need to consider from an Employment Law or H&S perspective such as flexible working or even contract variations – temporary/permanent?

4. Getting back to work and re-socialising

This applies not only to furloughed and non-furloughed employees but also those that have been and will continue to work from home versus those whom have been or will have to be physically present at your business premises. You will need to plan to manage any friction that may arise between those employees.

As an employer, you will have to consider the social implications of COVID-19 – and manage expectations e.g. desk and seating arrangements, communal areas, car parking, lunch breaks, and the

General 'people' considerations in the lifting of restrictions and easing lock-down



need for lengthening the working day and staggering shifts. Will you need to consider a phased return to work for those that have been furloughed? Consider communications to inform staff what new procedures and protocols including cleaning and working practices. If you are making changes to their contracts, how will you communicate and consult with them and seek agreement? Remember, as an employer, you are unable to unilaterally change a contract of employment, if you do so, you may just find yourself in 'hot water'! How will you re-establish a structure and routine for everyone? How will you facilitate meetings, 121's, reviews, communications?

Very importantly, recognise the contributions that have been made by all employees; furloughed, non-furloughed, homeworking or returning from sick leave.

5. Motivation & employee engagement

How have you or how do you continue to keep your teams engaged and motivated? How have you communicated with your employees during lock down. Have you managed to capture any feedback on how engaged your employees felt or still feel? Do you have any plans to increase communications and engagement and make people feel more involved?

Will you provide welcome back gifts to both those who physically return to the workplace but also those that commence remote working? How will you ensure that your employees feel valued, and welcome back to the work premises (as appropriate)? Think about how you welcomed an employee back after long term sick, an operation or, maternity leave. Will you supply gifts on desks (e.g. wine or chocolate) or, will you arrange a gift delivery if they are working from home?

6. Employee Wellbeing

Do you have any support in place for wellbeing? Do you have an EAP in place or any counselling service that will assist with employees with issues around anxiety, stress, bereavements, martial issues, abuse or trauma. If you don't, do you have a list of readily available support services? Are your managers equipped to help support their teams? Do you have a Mental Health at Work First Aider? Do you need to re-communicate your values and culture or do you need to reassess these? If yes, who will be involved in shaping these and how will you communicate these and ensure your managers are ambassadors?

7. Management and leadership

Evaluate how, as a business, you are communicating with your management team. What are your expectations of them and how they communicate to their teams? Are your managers and supervisors equipped and empowered to positively lead your teams especially in such unprecedented times? Consider training for all managers especially those that you may have identified as being weaker in their communication and leadership skills.

8. Health & Safety

COVID-19 infection control. Have you complied with the legal duty to review your risk assessments and record the significant findings in light of the pandemic? Have you shared these with your employees or do you intend to do so? Transparency in an environment of increased anxiety may well

General 'people' considerations in the lifting of restrictions and easing lock-down



be the best policy. Have you asked for your employees' thoughts and input or have you invited them to make suggestions in terms of adjustments to working practices or processes.

Can people continue to work at home if not, can you ensure social distancing in your workplace?

What measures can you realistically implement to ensure that your business can comply with the social distancing rules? Do you need to review your staffing requirements to be able to meet them? Are shift patterns or working patterns going to need to be adapted to reflect social distancing?

If they can return to work have you considered pre-return medical questionnaire concentrating on COVID19 symptoms, reporting history and also determining whether they are extremely vulnerable or vulnerable. Consider giving each individual clearance to return.

Have you considered collective and personal protective equipment, and hygiene policies and procedures? Have you trained your staff on your health and safety processes? What are your policies on response to and reporting of an infection affecting the workplace? Consider the usage of PPE outside the workplace e.g. on public transport – will you supply PPE to your employees for this purpose?

Are you allowing visitors to the workplace and what have you done, not only to ensure they are aware of the measures you have taken to ensure infection control and social distancing but also reassure your employees that any visitors have been adequately briefed?

If you want to discuss any of the above or require guidance please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Absolute Works Team on 01926 355560.