

**Living with Covid – updated guidance**

It’s been a while since we mentioned the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic, but the Government has recently announced new guidance for living safely with Covid. The guidance provides information for those with symptoms of respiratory infections, such as COVID-19; people with a positive COVID-19 test and their contacts; and advice on safer behaviours for everyone.

Workplace guidance

One of the main changes for employers is that the working safely guidelines for the various sectors has been removed, with employers instead needing to consider the needs of those at a higher risk of serious illness.

Employers are encouraged to be aware of Covid symptoms in order to reduce the risk of transmission between employees. If a member of staff has Covid-19 symptoms, then the respiratory infection guidance below should be followed.

To limit transmission within a business, employers should ensure that there is adequate ventilation in the workplace, that hygiene facilities are available and that any workspaces are kept clean and sanitised.

The requirement to explicitly consider Covid in a risk assessment has been removed, as has the need to inform public health of an outbreak, but employers can still consider it in their assessments should they choose to.

Previously, employers could reclaim SSP paid due to Covid related absences, but this is now not the case following the closure of the rebate scheme. Employers will need to ensure that they pay employees SSP for Covid absences if they have been absent for at least 4 days in a row (including non-working days), in line with regular sickness absences.

Whilst there is no obligation on someone who has symptoms to refrain from coming to the workplace, the guidance suggests that employers should allow them to work from home where possible, where that isn’t the case, to look at alternative options.

People with respiratory infections

From 1 April 2022, anyone with symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as Covid, and who have a high temperature or are not feeling well should limit contact with others and stay at home where possible. Anyone who has a positive Covid test result (whether because they chose to carry one out or were asked to) should again try to limit contact with others and stay home for 5 days following their positive result.

As has been the case throughout, anyone that tests positive should refrain from close contact with those who have a reduced immune system and are at risk of serious illness. The guidance in this case is that contact should be avoided with those at a higher risk of serious illness for 10 days.

Employees who are at higher risk of serious illness should be taken into account. They should be able to wear a face mask where possible and may need to work from home to reduce their risk, however the requirement for them to shield has been removed.

Leaving home whilst positive

In a slightly controversial move, those with a positive result will not be forced into isolation and instead, will be able to leave their homes, and continue to go to work, even whilst they have symptoms. However, there is guidance which should be taken into account:

* well-fitting face covering or masks should be worn
* exercising should be done away from others
* crowds and enclosed spaces should be avoided

If you would like any further guidance on how Covid-19 might impact you, then please get in touch with a member of the team on 01752 663295.