

## **New guidance on coronavirus self-isolation**

**As part of its continued efforts to tackle the coronavirus outbreak, the government has now widened the category of individuals who are under advice to self-isolate. Here, we take a look at the current position:**

- From Friday 13 March, all employees who have even mild symptoms of coronavirus including a continuous cough, or a fever, are advised by the government to self-isolate at home for a period of seven days following the onset of their symptoms.
- In addition, all those who live in the same household as someone who has symptoms should now self-isolate for a period of 14 days.
- Provided they meet other qualifying conditions, including earning at least the lower earnings limit, all those who are under advice to self-isolate are entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP) during their absence.
- The government has announced that SSP will be payable from day one rather than day four, however, exact details on when this will be introduced is awaited. It appears that when this is implemented, it will have retroactive effect from 13 March 2020.
- It was also confirmed that the government will meet the SSP costs of companies with under 250 employees up to a maximum of 14 days per person.

### **Airline staff facing 'temporary redundancies'**

As demand for travel decreases due to the coronavirus outbreak, airlines such as British Airways and Easyjet are starting to lay-off increasing numbers of staff. This is because the companies are unable to provide work as a result of the reduced demand for their services, with planes continually being cancelled.

#### **Did you know?**

Companies may lay staff off temporarily on reduced pay if the contract of employment allows for this. However, if the period of lay-off lasts for longer than four continuous weeks, or six weeks in total in a 13-week period, some employees may be able to claim statutory redundancy pay.

### **National Living Wage of £10.50 per hour by 2024**

As part of the 2020 Budget, Chancellor Rishi Sunak confirmed that, provided economic conditions allow, the government has set a National Living Wage target of two-thirds of median earnings within the next four years. The Low Pay Commission is also to launch a consultation asking for views on what 2021 rates should be.

#### **Did you know?**

All workers aged 25 and over are entitled to the National Living Wage, the highest age band in minimum wage rates. The government has previously announced that from 2021 all those aged 23 and over will be entitled to receive this rate, and that this will be extended again in 2024 to include workers aged 21 and over.

### **Dismissal due to criminal charges was fair**

The Employment Appeal Tribunal ruled that the potential damage to a charity's reputation that would have occurred if their employee had been convicted of criminal charges meant they acted reasonably in dismissing him. This was the case even though the employee was later found not guilty of the charge.

#### **Did you know?**

Employers reserve the right to dismiss employees for some other substantial reason (SOSR) e.g. reputational damage, however they will need to demonstrate they have taken steps to establish a genuine concern for this type of damage. Criminal charges do not automatically make a dismissal fair.

Employers are increasingly having to permit staff to work from home in order to delay the spread of the coronavirus. For up to date information on the latest developments involving the coronavirus outbreak, and key steps employers can take, please call our 24 hour Advice Line.

Please contact the 24 Hour Advice Service for advice on your specific situation before acting on the information in this publication.