

## COVID UPDATE

### Changes for Employers in Stage 4 on 19 July 2021

The government has [published new guidance](#) for employers on the removal of COVID-related legal restrictions from 19 July.

Key elements:

- Working from home instruction is lifted
- Social distancing guidance is disapplied
- In line with health and safety requirements, [risk assessments](#) are required
- Returns to previously closed workplaces should be discussed with relevant staff and trade unions
- Some [extra guidance](#) is provided for regions with high Delta variant exposure

Government guidance outlines six priority actions for employers:

1. Health & safety risk assessment
2. Provide adequate ventilation
3. Increase cleaning
4. Ensure self isolating staff do not attend a workplace
5. Facilitate people 'checking in' at venues
6. Communicate safety measures to staff and visitors

### Considerations for Local Authorities

For employers, the removal of the specific COVID legal restrictions means reviewing provisions to ensure the safety of workplaces and that the particular circumstances of staff are duly considered. This is because employers' general duty of care to their workers remains in place, including their duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and related legislation. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has produced [guidance on keeping workplaces safe](#) as the restrictions are eased, which emphasises the need to update risk assessments. It also reminds employers that considerations around ensuring adequate ventilation, sufficient cleaning and good hand hygiene remain in place. Employers should share the results of risk assessments with their employees and their trade unions and discuss any concerns they may have. Separate workplaces should be risk assessed accordingly, e.g. offices, vehicles, depots, call centres, schools etc each of which may present their own particular challenges and may require specific COVID-related risks to be addressed.

Employers will also need to consider what steps they may need to take in respect of workers who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV). Where possible that will include allowing CEV workers to work at home; if they need to return to the workplace, specific measures that may need to be taken. The Government has produced [guidance](#) on this, alongside [HSE guidance](#). One key piece of advice in the Government guidance is as follows:

“Individuals may choose to limit the close contact they have with those they do not usually meet with in order to reduce the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19, particularly if they are clinically extremely vulnerable and when COVID-19 disease levels in the general community are high.”

The guidance also indicates that it may be possible to place CEV individuals on the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#), which is available until 30 September 2021.

The latest [joint NJC circular](#) for the local government services workforce will be available shortly. There is also information available with specific reference to [schools](#).