

Confirmed: furlough scheme extended

The Government has released an important update on the Job Retention Scheme, which was implemented to help employers retain staff during the coronavirus crisis. We take a closer look at what employers now need to know about the Scheme below:

- The Scheme has been extended until the end of October 2020, meaning it will cover a period of eight months in total.
- Until the end of July, employers from all sectors will be able to continue to furlough staff and claim 80% of their wages from the Government, up to £2,500 per month per employee.
- Currently, furloughed staff should do no work for the company. From August, employees are expected to be allowed back to work on a part-time basis and the employer can still use the Scheme.
- Employees will still need to be paid 80% of their wages, however, wage costs are expected to be shared between the employer and the Government in situations where staff return part-time.
- More information on this is expected by the end of May 2020.
- Meanwhile, guidance for submitting claims through the online portal has also been updated.
- The portal now has a 'save and return' option, meaning claims to cover a specific period do not need to be made in one attempt, however, all claims for that specific time period must be done at the same time.

Government outlines roadmap for lockdown relax

The Government has outlined a provisional three-stage plan for easing the lockdown. From 13 May, those who cannot work from home are encouraged to return to work if their workplace is open. In June there will be a 'phased' reopening of shops, whilst it is aimed to reopen hospitality from July.

Did you know?

These plans come with a number of conditions and may be subject to changes depending on the spread of the virus and if it starts to peak again. It should also be noted these plans relate only to businesses in England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are set to continue with lockdown for now.

Guidelines for reopening companies published

To coincide with the partial reopening of businesses in England, the Government has published health and safety guidelines for eight different business sectors. They include the requirement to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff and to avoid discrimination as a result of the coronavirus.

Did you know?

Employers are being encouraged to promote alternative methods of commuting to work without using public transport, such as cycling or using a car. Options to explore include expanding current car parking or bike storage facilities. Alternatively, shift times could be staggered to avoid peak time travel.

Tribunal: consider disability before dismissal

The employment tribunal has ruled that a NHS worker who regularly accessed records concerning her condition and was dismissed as a result was subjected to discrimination. This is because the Trust had failed to take into account how anxiety relating to her condition caused her to act in the way she did.

Did you know?

Discrimination claims will succeed if an employer knows, or could reasonably be expected to know, that an employee is disabled. This is the case even if the employee has not previously disclosed their condition. Employers should therefore always consider this when assessing behaviour of staff.

With further details on the Job Retention Scheme changes coming by the end of May, employers should keep an eye out for any action they need to take. For assistance with managing staff through this period, call using our 24 hour Advisory Service.

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