

Implications for employers of monkeypox outbreak

The government is advising close contacts of those with a confirmed case of monkeypox to self-isolate for 21 days, which means they should not attend work during this period. We look at the key issues for employers.

- Monkeypox is a rare virus that doesn't spread easily; transmission generally requires close bodily contact with someone who has the virus (such as touching their skin or sharing bedding). The infection usually clears up on its own after between 14 and 21 days.
- Medical experts have given reassurance that this is not currently being considered along the same lines as Covid-19.
- Close contacts of a confirmed case who should self-isolate for 21 days includes anyone who has had unprotected direct contact (such as household contact) or high risk environmental contact (i.e. changing a patient's bedding without appropriate PPE).
- Government guidance also states that those who have unprotected exposure to infectious materials including droplet or airborne potential route (i.e. entering patient's room without wearing appropriate PPE and within 1 metre of a confirmed case or driver and passengers in a shared car or taxi with a confirmed case) should be excluded from work for 21 days if the work involves contact with immunosuppressed people, pregnant women or children (school year 6 and under).
- If the employee cannot work from home, they should receive full pay if they are required to isolate by the employer, to avoid the risk of a claim for unlawful deduction from wages.
- If an employee has a confirmed case of monkeypox, they should be treated under normal sickness rules.

4-day week pilot begins in June

From June to December 2022, more than 60 UK companies are trialling a 4-day week, with no loss in pay for employees, in the biggest ever trial of a 4-day week in the world. More than 3,000 workers representing more than 30 sectors are receiving 100% pay for 80% working time, although they are expected to maintain 100% productivity. The pilot is a voluntary scheme which employers could choose to sign up to.

Did you know?

Although the deadline to sign up to the pilot has now passed, some employers may choose to implement their own 4-day working week (following a proper consultation process).

'Real Living Wage' rates to be announced early

The Living Wage Foundation has said that the 'Real Living Wage' rates (not to be confused with the National Living Wage) for the next year will be announced in September. Participating employers will be encouraged to pay staff the new rates as soon as possible. The rates are usually announced in November, however it has been brought forward to support low paid workers affected by rising inflation and the cost of living crisis.

Did you know?

Employers voluntarily choose to become a living wage employer (there are over 10,000 of them participating in the scheme) and agree to pay the rates recommended by the Foundation.

Requirement to work at weekend was discrimination

An employment tribunal has upheld a claim for indirect sex discrimination and constructive unfair dismissal brought by a working mother, who had been required by her manager to start working weekend shifts, despite her lack of access to childcare at the weekend. The tribunal found that the imposition of this practice put women at a significant disadvantage, as statistically they were more likely to be primary or single care givers to children.

Did you know?

In relation to the constructive unfair dismissal claim, the tribunal concluded that the failure to have proper regard for the claimant's childcare issues breached the implied term of trust and confidence.

There is no legal requirement for employees to inform their employer that they are a close contact of a confirmed case of monkeypox, but employers may want to consider making it a contractual requirement. Contact our 24-hour Advisory Service for up-to-date guidance on this and more.

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