

# Your employees



Managing a workforce of any size can have its challenges, let alone one that is recovering from a global crisis. Many businesses will have [furloughed employees](#) or made the difficult decision to make a number of their workforce redundant. For those businesses that haven't, it's highly likely they will still face having to make difficult choices, albeit further down the line.

The knock-on effects of the COVID-19 outbreak have changed the way employers engage with, and effectively manage, their employees. The processes, policies and guidelines that worked previously may no longer be fit for purpose for your business, or for your workforce, in the new working landscape. With COVID-19 forcing many businesses to facilitate their employees to work from home, essentially overnight, business owners, as well as their employees, have seen the potential benefits and opportunities remote working can bring.

## Current workforce and future recruitment

- **Redundancies** – Ensure that correct procedures are followed and your HR team has all the resources they require to deal with the process. Our [blog on mass redundancies](#) outlines the risks involved and key points to consider if you're planning to make more than 20 employees redundant.
- **Identify skills gaps** – If your business has diversified its product line, or moved into a new market, then you may need to consider targeting recruitment at these emerging opportunities, which may include recruitment from outside of the UK.
- **Training and development** – Identify where you can upskill your employees to allow for resource sharing. This is a useful exercise to determine which departments are over/under-resourced.
- **HR teams** – Ensure your HR team has all the resources it needs to deal with an increased number of people-related issues and that they keep up-to-date with the various guidance issued by the government.
- **Brexit** – Support your EU staff to make the necessary application under the government's EU Settlement Scheme, to regulate their immigration status so they can continue working for you beyond the end of Free Movement.

**Continued...**

## Need more help?



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# Your employees

## Current workforce and recruitment cont'd...

- **New immigration system** – If you currently recruit skilled workers from outside of the UK, including EU nationals, and do not have a sponsor licence, you need to apply for one in advance of the new immigration system that is due to come into effect from 1 January 2021. Our [blog on the new points-based immigration system](#) outlines how you should prepare for the change now.

## Employment contracts and policies

- **Flexible working** – With employees having experienced the benefits and flexibility of a better work/life balance, prepare for a surge in flexible working requests as the UK adopts a 'new way of working'.
- **Review existing policies** – Ensure that you are ready to deal with any such requests. If you don't have a formal policy on flexible working then you should consider introducing one now.
- **Right to work** – Update policies related to pre-employment checks, particularly right to work checks, to incorporate changes post Brexit and ongoing changes to the Home Office policy and process.
- **Remote working** – Review your existing remote working policy to ensure safe working, productivity and compliance. Our guide sets out [seven practical considerations for employers](#).

- **Plan ahead** – If you don't already have a remote working policy in place then now is the time to introduce one. Work with your HR team as well as your employees to ensure it works for everyone. Map policies against staffing needs to ensure you have contingency plans in place.
- **Expenses** – If adopting a remote working policy, consider including additional provisions for work-related costs your employees may incur when working remotely, such as printer paper and ink.
- **Contracts of employment** – You may need to make changes to employees' contracts of employment where there are changes to the working hours or days, rates of pay or the nature of work.
- **Check what elements of employment contracts can be changed** – Even if you don't have to legally consult your employees, it's still a good idea to talk to any affected employees before making changes, to avoid potential grievances and, in a worst-case scenario, claims.
- **Statutory sick pay** – Ensure your HR team is fully aware of the most up-to-date guidance relating to [statutory sick pay and self-isolation](#), including the criteria for employees to claim, when this should be paid from, and who is responsible for funding the cost.
- **Annual leave** – Following the government's announcement allowing employees to [carry over four weeks of holiday](#) into the next two leave years, you may wish to set out guidelines for how this could be managed. With recent guidance suggesting that businesses, in some

circumstances, can force employees to take holiday during furlough leave, you may wish to consider this further.

## Benefits and rewards

- **Existing benefits** – Review your existing benefits package to see if it's still relevant and offers value to your employees.
- **Value of existing benefits** – Identify, if you're able to, if you're paying for benefits that aren't being taken up by your employees.
- **Access to wellbeing support** – Ensure that your employees are aware of where and how they can access mental health and psychological support services. This could be provided by dedicated internal resource or through an external employee assistance plan.
- **Cycle to Work scheme** – As more and more people return to work, people will be looking at alternative ways of commuting to the workplace. If you don't offer this already, the government's Cycle to Work scheme may be a worthwhile addition to your benefits package.
- **Bonus and incentive schemes** – It may be wise to review your current compensation packages, such as annual bonuses and performance-related pay. Assess if/how you may still be able to reward employees if the business has suffered a significant financial hit.

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# We are here to support you

Shakespeare Martineau has launched a free legal helpline offering bespoke guidance on a range of subjects from employment and general business matters, through to director's responsibilities, insolvency, restructuring, funding and disputes.

We also have a team of experts on hand for any queries on family and private matters too.

Available from 10am-12pm Monday to Friday, call **0800 689 4064**

## Prefer a video call?

We understand sometimes it's better to talk face to face. So in addition to our free helpline we're offering businesses the opportunity to [book a free 20 minute video session](#) via Zoom with our employment and commercial law specialists.

Designed as a one stop shop for all your commercial and employment queries, these video calls will put you in front of a team of senior lawyers, ready to work through the issues affecting your business and employees.

## C-19 Business Pledge

Shakespeare Martineau has joined over 300 organisations in a global initiative – pledging to support its people, clients and its local communities through the coronavirus crisis. The pledge encourages businesses and universities to be a force for good by making a commitment to do what they can to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

## Supporting you

In response to the pandemic we created our [coronavirus hub](#) which includes advice, guidance and insight to help you navigate through these uncertain times. As we all begin to adapt and prepare for the future, our hub will evolve to provide you with further help and resources for surviving, reviving and beginning to thrive in life and business, throughout the challenging times ahead.

[Listen and watch our latest podcasts](#), webinars and video content

Or why not [contact us](#).

